

KOSHIEEN: JAPAN'S FIELD OF DREAMS

A Film by Ema Ryan Yamazaki

OPENS ON NOVEMBER 20, 2020 in Virtual Cinemas Across the U.S.

For more information on how to access the film, please visit:

<https://www.firstrunfeatures.com/koshien.html>



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Log line

Intimately following coaches and players in their quest to win the historic 100th National High School Baseball Tournament, KOSHIEN is a dramatic and emotional journey to the heart of the Japanese national character and window into the struggle to balance tradition with progress.

Synopsis

Mizutani *Kantoku's* (head coach) whole life has been in preparation for the historic 100th *Koshien*, the wildly popular High School baseball tournament that defines the Japanese summer. A stubborn but passionate man, his martial brand of baseball in Yokohama maintains all that is beautiful, if extreme, in the uniquely Japanese form of the sport — rigorous year-round training, shaved heads, and self-sacrifice. The players believe in his message that their primary goal is to grow as human beings, so cleaning the grounds and keeping impeccable manners are as important as honing their skills.

However, beyond the company line, Mizutani boils with desire to validate his career by reaching the sacred grounds of *Koshien*. Having always prioritized his work over family responsibilities, he has never seen his 15 year-old son, Kosho, play baseball. Rather than take him onto his own team, calling on his well-earned web of connections, he sends Kosho away to be raised by a disciple *Kantoku* in the remote prefecture of Iwate. Sasaki *Kantoku*, though, has outgrown the ways of his mentor. After having raised Major Leaguers Shohei Ohtani and Yusei Kikuchi, he has a progressive vision that proposes a new direction for the sport. Sasaki takes inspiration from bonsai — although wires are needed to guide young branches, those wires must be taken off at the right time. So too does modern baseball require a delicate balance between enforcement and autonomy for players.

Across Japan, four thousand schools begin knockout competition, with only one winner from each prefecture able to advance to *Koshien*. Will all of Mizutani's good deeds add up to a miracle, or will he prove to be a relic of a bygone era? Can Sasaki, with Kosho in tow, challenge the system in a culture where the nail that sticks up is liable to be hammered down? In the crucible of the Japanese summer, the scoreboard will be their report card, and a referendum on their values.

Director's Statement

Growing up in Japan of mixed-race, I had many reservations about the Japanese way. After high school, I moved to New York to study film and begin my career as a documentary director and editor. Unexpectedly, while I learned so many valuable things in America, I also gained a deeper appreciation for Japan – such as the trains running on time, people patiently lining up, consideration of others, and a sense of personal responsibility. These traits, learned from a young age, are so normal in Japan that they are taken for granted. After directing my first feature film (about the creators of Curious George), I vowed to return to the place of my birth to tell stories about that would both bring a deeper understanding of the Japan to the rest of the world, but also provide Japanese people with a new perspective on what makes them unique and that they should value in themselves.

Koshien, the colorful national high school baseball tournament that captivates Japan every summer, provided an ideal context — helmets in a perfect line, strict adherence to rules, team-first mentality — an extreme microcosm of Japanese society itself. As a society's strengths may also its weaknesses, in recent years Koshien culture had been forced to re-examine its values.

Japan is facing a crucial moment in time as the nation at a crossroads struggles to find the balance between “character building” traditions and more moderate ways to educate the next generation of successful adults. Much of the struggle Japan faces is universal — how to keep tradition while adapting to the influences of globalization, and how to honor where we have come from while facing a future that is no longer the same.

I often feel that Japan is only known for specific things internationally — sushi, anime, and salarymen, to name a few. I hope that this film provides a more complicated and human view of Japanese people, and provides hints of understanding of why Japan is the way it is — where it has come from and where it might be headed.

Bios

Emma Ryan Yamazaki (Director / Editor)

Born in Kobe and raised in Osaka, Japan, by a Japanese mother and British father, Emma grew up navigating between cultures. As a teenager, Emma's passion was modern dance, through which she learned discipline and self-expression. Her interest in filmmaking began in middle school, when she was given the opportunity to tell stories using a video camera. When she was 19, she moved to New York and attended New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, focusing on documentary and editing. Upon graduating from NYU, she began her career as an assistant editor, mentored by documentary mogul Sam Pollard.

During her first year out of film school, Emma was selected through an open-call process with Al Jazeera English to make *MONK BY BLOOD*, a 25-minute documentary about a family that runs an 800-year-old temple in Kyoto.

In 2014, Emma was an editor on CNN's docu-series *CHICAGOLAND*, executive produced by Robert Redford. She went on to edit and co-produce *CLASS DIVIDE*, an HBO documentary directed by Marc Levin, which won the Grand Jury Prize at DOC NYC in 2015. In 2016, she co-directed a documentary for NHK on Martin Scorsese's film *SILENCE*.

In 2017, Emma's first feature length documentary, *MONKEY BUSINESS: THE ADVENTURES OF CURIOUS GEORGE'S CREATORS*, was released worldwide. The documentary uses animation, archival materials and interviews to tell the incredible story of Hans and Margret Rey, the authors of the beloved children's book series *Curious George*. For the film, Emma successfully raised over \$186,000 on Kickstarter.

Acquired by The Orchard, the film premiered at the LA Film Festival and won the Audience Award at the Nantucket Film Festival.

Having lived in New York for 9 years, Emma developed a new perspective toward her homeland of Japan, gaining an appreciation for the core values that had shaped her own character.

With a desire to tell more complex stories about Japan than what is typically available in international media, Emma decided to create a base in Tokyo from the spring of 2017.

In 2018, Emma embarked on her second feature documentary *KOSHIEN: JAPAN'S FIELD OF DREAMS*, exploring the cultural phenomenon of Japanese high school baseball as a microcosm of Japanese society. In co-production with NHK, the film is an intimate and dramatic journey following coaches and players from two high schools during the historic 100th summer *Koshien* tournament.

KOSHIEN examines the past, present, and future of Japan's national obsession, as it struggles to balance character building traditions with more moderate ways to educate the next generation of successful adults. It premiered at DOC NYC in 2019.

Also in 2019, Ema directed a 47-part mini-documentary series for NHK that aired in tandem with its annual historical “Taiga” drama, IDATEN, featuring stories about the history of Japan, sports, and its Olympic quest. Additionally, her 11-part short documentary series about baseball player Ichiro Suzuki, “#dearICHIRO”, was commissioned by Yahoo! Japan. In 2020, Ema completed her 5-year long project on the renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre’s long-time Japanese Associate Artistic Director, Masazumi Chaya. The 49-minute documentary, CHAYA: AILEY’S KEEPER OF THE FLAME aired on NHK.

Ema edits all of her own work. In 2017, Ema married film producer Eric Nyari, and they frequently collaborate as producing/directing partners.

Eric Nyari (Producer)

Eric Nyari is President of Cineric Creative as well as International Representative for renowned restoration house Cineric, Inc.

Eric has produced numerous films in Japan, including director Amir Naderi's *CUT*, opening Opening Film of the 2011 Venice Film Festival’s Orizzonti section. He produced *Monte*, an Italy/USA/French co-production, which premiered at the 2016 Venice Film Festival with Naderi receiving the Glory to the Filmmaker Award

In documentary, he produced the critically acclaimed portrait *Ryuichi Sakamoto: Coda*, which premiered at Venice in 2017. The companion concert film, *Ryuichi Sakamoto: async Live at The Park Avenue Armory*, premiered at the 2018 Berlinale.

Eric has managed 4K restorations of Kenji Mizoguchi's *Ugestsu*, *Sansho the Bailiff*, and *A Story from Chikamatsu* with Martin Scorsese's The Film Foundation, as well as Yasujiro Ozu's *Late Spring*.

Recently, he has produced Ema Ryan Yamazaki's *Koshien: Japan’s Field of Dreams*, a special co-production with NHK on the occasion of the 100th National High School Baseball Championship and Takeshi Fukunaga’s *Ainu Mosir*, which was awarded a Special Jury Mention in Tribeca’s International Narrative Competition in 2020.

Michael Crommett (Cinematographer)

Michael is a New York-based DP best known for the Emmy-nominated *Humans of New York: The Series*. His work has appeared on NBC, A&E, PBS, NHK, Food Network, Discovery, HGTV, MTV, and other outlets.

Credits

NHK & NHK Enterprises present
a **Cineric Creative** production

An **Emma Ryan Yamazaki** Film

Directed and Edited by
Emma Ryan Yamazaki

Produced by
Eric Nyari

Executive Producers
Yusuke Itoh
Keiko Tsuneki
Shin Yasuda

Cinematography by
Michael Crommett

Original Score by
Jason Cummings

Sound Recording by
Ai Miyatake

Sound Design & Re-recording Mix by
Tom Paul

Title Design & Graphics by
Naoko Saito

Post-Production Supervisor
Fumiro Sato

An International Co-Production by **Cineric Creative, NHK, and NHK Enterprises**
North American Distributor – **First Run Features**
International Sales Agent – **Nikkatsu**

Special Cooperation by **The Japan High School Baseball Federation**
and **The Asahi Shimbun Company**

In Association with **Major League Baseball**