



**SAYONARA NO ASA NI YAKUSOKU NO HANA O KAZARA (MAQUIA: WHEN THE PROMISED FLOWER BLOOMS)** is a Second Quarter 2019 LVCA dvd donation to the Hugh Stoupe Memorial Library of the Heritage United Methodist Church of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Below is Kino Ken's review of that awesome animation.

**17 of a possible 20 points**

**\*\*\*\*1/2 of a possible \*\*\*\***

**Japan 2018 color 115 minutes dubbed in English feature epic fantasy animation P. A. Works / Lantis / Hakuhodo DY Music & Pictures  
Producers: Naoko Endo, Kenji Horikawa, Hirohisa Kikuchi, Nobuhiro Kikuchi, Tomomi Kyôtani, Nobuhiro Takenaka**

**Points:**

- 2 Direction: Mari Okada\* and Tadashi Hiramatsu\***
- Vice Direction: Toshiya Shinohara**
- 0 Editing: Ayumi Takahashi**
- 2 Screenplay: Mari Okada\* English Adaptation: Christian La Monte\***
- 2 Animation Camera: Satoshi Namiki\***
- Chief Animation Direction: Yuriko Ishii**
- Additional Animation Direction: Tadashi Hiramatsu, Yuriko Ishii**

(also Senior Supervising Animator),  
Noriko Itô, Kousuke Kawazura

**Main Animation: Toshiyuki Inoue**

**Key Animation: Yuki Akiyama, Kazuko Amano, Kanako Awada,  
Hisashi Eguchi, Yôsuke Fukumoto, Asami Hayakawa,  
Akemi Hayashi, Tadashi Hiramatsu, Akitsugu Hisagi,  
Takeshi Honda, Akira Honma, Hiroyuki Horiuchi,  
Kazuki Hoshino, Yumi Ikeda, Fumei Imai, Ei Inouye,  
Toshiyuki Inouye, Yûsuke Inoue, Takahiro Ishimoto,  
Hidetsugu Ito, Noriko Itô, Asuka Kojima,  
Hidenori Matsumara, Nana Miura, Tsukasa Miyazaki,  
Yuka Miyoshi, Sayo Mizuno, Kaho Murakami,  
Aiko Natsuzumi, Miki Nishikawa, Yurie Ohigashi,  
Masahiro Satô, Izumi Seguchi, Hideki Takahashi,  
Tomomiki Takase, Mami Takino, Yûga Tokuno,  
Mari Tomida, Ryosuke Tsuchiya, Shihoki Watanabe,  
Haruka Yamakata, Takaaki Yamashita, Kôhei Yano,  
Masayuki Yoshihara**

**Original Character Design: Yuriko Ishii**

**2 Color Design: Katsue Inoue\***

**Visual Effects: Kenji Korikawa**

**Concept Design / Art Setting: Tomoaki Okada**

**2 Art Direction: Kazuki Higashiji**

**2 Music: Kenji Kawai\***

**1 Sound Direction: Kazuhiro Wakabayashi**

**Sound Effects: Shizuo Kurahashi, Sachiko Nishi**

**Sound Mixing: Oscar Garcia**

**Casting: Kevin Collins, Michael Schneider, Stephanie Sheh**

**2 Voice Acting**

**2 Creativity**

**17 total points**

**Voices Cast (English dubbed version): Xanthe Huynh (Maquia), Eddy Lee (Ariel a.k.a. Erial), Ryan Shanahan\* (Teen Ariel a.k.a. Erial), Barnaby Lafayette (j) (Ariel a.k.a. Erial as a child), Michael Schneider\* (Lang / Prince Hazel),**

**Kevin Collins\* (Crim a.k.a. Clear), Cherami Leigh\* (Leilia), Allegra Clark\* (Mido, mother of sons Lang and Deol), Lipica Shah (Racine, Iorph elder), Marc Thompson (Izor / Baiera King), Brooklyn Nelson (Older Princess Medmel, daughter of Prince Hazel and Leilia), Courtney Chu (j) (Young Princess Medmel), Daniel Edwards\* (Barou a.k.a. Barlow, traveling merchant), Spencer Rosen (j) (Young Lang, son of Mido), Catie Harvey\* (j) (Young Dita), Micah Gunsoy (j) (Young Deol, brother to Lang and son of Mido), Mike Pollock\* (Mazarte King), Ryan Bartley\* (Dita / Old Woman), Lolita Lafayette\* (Proprietress), Wayne Grayson (Hyke), Graham Halstead (Riko), Christian La Monte (Jack), Ben Phillips (Eido), H.D. Quinn\* (Darel, textile merchant), Phoebe Quinn (Millia), Annabelle Deaner (Lily, Ariel's daughter)**

**Anonymous Additional Voices: Eddy Lee, Michael Schneider, Allegra Clark, Marc Thompson, Courtney Cox, Daniel Edwards, Spencer Rosen, Mike Pollock, Ryan Bartley, Lolita Lafayette, Annabelle Deaner, Wayne Grayson, Graham Halstead, Christian La Monte, Ben Phillips, Bryce Papenbrook, Cam Clarke, Camden Carter, Derek Stephen Prince, Emily Bauer, Jamieson Price, Jason Simon, Jessica Straus, Laurie Hymes, Michael Donovan, Michael Deaner, Michael Sorich, Mona Marshall, Quinton Flynn, Samara Naeymi, Spike Spencer**

**MAQUIA: WHEN THE PROMISED FLOWER BLOOMS is one of the crown jewels among Japanese feature-length anime releases. It's quickly apparent in the narrated introduction that a writer of considerable skill is telling a timeless story, weaving together real human emotional conflicts and fantasy settings. Drawing quite randomly from the past two thousand plus years of European history and Oriental legend, Mari Okada presents a saga employing as backdrops classical Greek columns, medieval turreted castles, nineteenth century urban factories, and peasant farming huts that could have dotted tenth century British or Dutch landscapes. Such jumble of period furnishings is a direct key to MAQUIA's plot, which concerns a near-immortal who experiences first-hand the suffering, grief, jubilation, and taxing weariness of mortal life when she's kidnapped from an idyllic pastoral community and then unceremoniously dropped into the midst of a completely unfamiliar forest. Maquia, an introverted, hesitant, and clumsy teenager, has to decide whether to just surrender to what appears an inexplicably punishing fate, or alternatively to**

adapt to alien circumstances and try making the best of unpromising beginnings.

The dragon-like Renato which deposited her so ingloriously in a foreign place is suffering from a wasting red-eye disease which literally engulfs it in flames.

Coming to a cliff in her wanderings, Maquia wonders whether a suicide leap / fall would be better than aimless drifting. While pondering two equally unattractive possibilities, she hears the whine of a newborn baby. This draws her to a hut. Entering it, she discovers a dead woman clasping in her arms a living infant, apparently trying to shield it from attack. Fascinated by the survivor's helplessness, Maquia ignores counsel from a roving peddler who would rather not get involved himself and urges her to act likewise.

Instead, she begins to fondle the mortal orphan and bond with it.

Ultimately, this surrogate mother has to seek out nourishment for the babe. Maternal instincts she didn't even know existed inside her come into play, causing a prior warning from her clan elder about danger in loving humans to be disregarded for the time being.

Soon Maquia and the yet-unnamed foundling become inseparable travel partners. However, lacking money and food, the duo are dependent on the generosity of natives. One such liberal hostess, farmwife Mido, makes an unusual offer of long-term employment and shelter. The footsore lorph maiden accepts it in the best interests of "her" child. To evade potential capture by Mezarte troops intent on rounding up "immortal" lorph brides, she dyes her hair dark, making it resemble more closely the prevailing coloration of women in her new residence. Becoming a farm girl, Maquia dwells harmoniously with widow Mido's two sons, Lang and Deol. Her adoptee becomes a third child in that family. Eventually, he's the subject of taunting by neighbor girl Dita, who would like to see him break free from his self-assigned guardian's clutches.

Meanwhile, Mezarte raiders take a second lorph girl to their capital: Maquia's lovely, adventurous friend Leilia. Following them furtively is Leilia's betrothed, Krim. He learns from sympathetic Maquia of imminent plans to wed Leilia to Mezarte's Crown Prince. That Krim will not abide. Therefore, he hatches a plot to liberate his beloved by disrupting a celebratory parade in honor of the royal nuptials. His efforts come to naught, though. A very pregnant Leilia refuses to abandon regal in-laws. The lure of giving birth to a princess proves

irresistible. Krim must content himself with strategic retreat. An interspecies marriage takes place as planned.

Like many political unions, Hazel and Leilia's is a loveless one, producing a fully mortal child who possesses all the beauty of her mother, but no unusual longevity. (Plot malfunction here: How could anyone tell?) Incensed by this unanticipated outcome, the Prince rejects both mother and child, confining them to separate quarters within the capacious fortress looming over Mezarte's chief city. They are not permitted to see one another. A cheated Prince isolates himself, appearing disinterested in spending quality time with either of them.

Years pass. Ariel becomes a teenage miner when Maquia moves to the city of Dorail to evade troops dispatched in search of other lorph maidens who might more effectively pass on radical longevity genes to offspring. He is now a teenage rebel passing as Maquia's brother. Both are now approximately the same height and adolescent in appearance.

This subterfuge has the unwanted effect of inducing some of his pals to assume Maquia is fair game for amorous overtures, particularly since her current occupation as barmaid / waitress suggests she's probably not too particular about male companionship.

Feeling he's become more obstacle and burden than helper or "son," Ariel attempts to distance himself from his guardian. He gets drunk and brutish, nearly destroying their rented quarters. In that stupefied condition, the lout essentially accuses Maquia of suffocating him and annihilating his independent identity with her constant, unconditional love.

As rumors of impending war now circulate throughout the city, Ariel decides to enlist in the army. At least and at last he will be able to protect the individual who for so many years did so ungrudgingly for him. When former comrade Lang hears this, he berates the youth for a. mistreating a woman he has long cherished himself. and b. intolerable ungratefulness. Upon further consideration, though, the older man relents and accepts the rebellious youth's claim to be truly interested in protecting a kingdom where he has been raised.

To forestall any Mezarte army abduction of Maquia as potential replacement for disgraced Leilia, Krim takes her hostage himself, then begins contacting foreign states to suggest they league against the selfish kingdom which invaded his homeland. This plan, which takes years to achieve, gradually meets with approval of foreign heads of state.

During this interim period, Ariel apparently once again encounters scornful Dita. She at some moment, becomes enamored of a more confident and mature version of the lad. For they reappear together as housemates. Ultimately, Dita becomes pregnant.

Just then, long-latent conflict between sovereign powers comes to a boil. War officially develops.

Mezarte tastes defeat, its imprisoned and pining sole remaining Renato no match for allied forces led by vengeful Krim. Perhaps it is simply disinterested in the outcome.

Will Iorph lovers be finally reunited? Or will Hazel once more thwart their bliss? What will become of Maquia and Ariel? Will Dita keep or lose her child as the battle for defense of Mezarte's crowned head rages?

Viewers will need to see concluding sections of the drama to find out.

MAQUIA benefits from felicitous vocal casting. Especially memorable are the following performances: Michael Schneider, as both lovelorn Lang and arrogant, unloving Hazel; Kevin Collins, an entirely convincing frustrated Crim; Cherami Leigh, relentlessly blunt as Leilia, murderously inclined pawn victim of power politics; amiably forbearing Allegra Clark in the role of Maquia's first employer, constant supporter, and loyal benefactress Mido; Catie Harvey energetic and vociferous in voicing prickly, bullying young Dita; Mike Pollack, swaggering, yet cowardly, as Mezarte's foolish overlord; Ryan Bartley, completely immersed in her role of an old crone in Mido's neighborhood, who realizes far more than she declares; and Lilita Lafayette, quite impressive as a scathingly dismissive proprietress of what might pass for combination tavern / brothel.

Art direction here is meticulously detailed, if divorced from allegiance to any specific time period. Textures, whether diaphanous or massively solid, are painted in realistic colors and densities. They are splendidly integrated with landscapes. Interior furnishings recall Low Country Masters of chiaroscuro like Rembrandt. The manner in which sunlight shines into interiors suggests likely influence from Jan Vermeer paintings, while Hayao Miyazaki's angry ohms from NAUSICAA OF THE VALLEY OF THE WINDS are paid a backhanded tribute through inflamed eyes of a dying Renato. Similarity between Dorail's polluting smokiness and PRINCESS MONONOKE'S ironworks village represent simultaneously inventive progress and environmental devastation. What

separates Studio Ghibli epics and Okada's present drama is the latter's far greater concern with personality and emotional catharsis.

Adding enormously to realization of an impressively beautiful imaginary world is the lush score of Kenji Kawai, which balances ethereal lyricism and strident militancy, always attuned to emotional content of scenes rather than awash in novelty, eccentric rhythms, or catchy, crowd-pleasing melodies. The music sounds like it belongs to the story being told and invariably bolsters it.

Judging by comments from production staff and reviewers, editing is a major deficiency. MAQUIA ends in four different places: the death of Krim, the birth of Lily, a female empowerment flight into space, and departure of Maquia from Ariel's cottage, where her human ward has breathed his last. Adding yet another postscript after end credits only muddles resolution even more.

Which leads directly to consideration of merits and demerits of Okada's screenplay. In the manner of Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'AVVENTURA*, characters appear and disappear without due explanation. This keeps viewers attentive, but defies expectations for plot coherency. Does that matter? Not necessarily. The older film cited above provocatively deepens a sense of mystery using that approach to structure. It, too, treats time and space cavalierly. As does Kubrick's *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*. While first-run audiences carped and criticized both those productions as incoherent, rambling messes, each has subsequently been enshrined in modern Great Film lists. What this teaches is relative insignificance of plot in comparison with pervasive atmosphere, characterization, dynamic rhythm, and dramatic tension. In fact, compact telling snippets of dialogue are worth much more than contrived perfections of sequential action, something the director of this film has clearly learned well.

Skillful color grading, variability of lighting intensity, unusual amplification of sound, and extended silences also play key roles in determining how memorable a film will prove to be. With regard to sound recording, contrasts of illumination, and selection of appropriate color schemes, MAQUIA's crew has distinguished itself. The anime's masterly mix of dialogue, imagery, music, and sound effects leaves behind an aftertaste of transcendent beauty in backgrounds and iconic depictions of unstinting maternal self-sacrifice.

The Eleven Arts Anime Studio / Shout! Factory dvd release includes a twenty-five-minute documentary on the making of MAQUIA, allowing fans to savor

isolated shots of favorite moments from the film, and several North American release trailers for it.

Far too complex and challenging for teens and preteens, this Japanese animation masterwork will only be properly appreciated by their adult elders, who have a greater range of life experiences to draw upon while watching it. **MAQUIA: WHEN THE PROMISED FLOWER BLOOMS** is a demanding, must-see instant classic raising the bar for future animation storytelling even higher than its forerunner, **A SILENT VOICE**. Don't neglect it.