

Sharaku (Tentative Title)

PARK Tae-choon



Genre: Epic, Mystery, Fantasy
Format: 35mm
Estimated Running Time: 120 min.

Budget:
US\$8,000,000
(HK\$62,400,000)

Producers:
KIM Seung-bum
ISEKI Satoru
KIM Dong-gu

Writing Credit:
PARK Tae-choon (screenplay)

Production Company:
STUDIO2.0

HAF Goals:
Pre-sales, Funds

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INTRODUCTION

Across the continents - from the West to the East, the film takes an epic journey to uncover the biggest mystery in art history - "Sharaku" who impressed the Impressionists: Degas, Manet, Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec, but had no trace of background history nor hint of his real identity. Numerous theories were developed and countless books were written trying to answer one of the biggest enigmas in art history. A recently developed theory is that Kim Hong-do, the greatest Korean painter of the Chosun Dynasty, is the true identity of Sharaku. But why did Kim Hong-do become Sharaku in Japan?

SYNOPSIS

In mid-19th century, Bertrand, a young art dealer, was searching for new artists when he discovered an astonishing woodblock painting by a painter named Sharaku being used as wrapping paper for a Japanese ceramic piece.

Japanese Ukiyo-e (Japanese woodblock printing) was taking Europe by storm. One artist, the mysterious Sharaku, created some 150 woodblock prints within only ten months and then suddenly disappeared. Many in the art world wanted to know more about him, Bertrand amongst them, and so he traveled to Edo, determined to find this Sharaku. However, he arrived to find that the artist had been long forgotten.

"How could such a great artist be forgotten?"

Bertrand hears that Toyokuni, the head of the greatest art house in Japan, knows more about the disappearance of Sharaku and so he decides to pay him a visit. When Bertrand shows him the well-traveled piece by Sharaku, Toyokuni's eyes well up and he begins to tell his story for the first time.

Edo, Japan 1794. Toyokuni is reveling in the best years of his life as his wealth and artistic reputation continue to grow, but one day he saves a man from drowning, not knowing that his life is about to take a turn for the worse. The unidentified man looks suspicious and his secret painting circulates in the art shops on the backstreets of Nihombashi. The man picks out a name to call himself "Toshusai Sharaku - the painter who hails from the East" and almost immediately, his work gains more fame and fanfare than Toyokuni, a master himself.

Suspicious, Toyokuni begins to investigate Sharaku's mysterious background. He notices unusual circumstances surrounding Sharaku, who uses a paint brush with foreign decorations and spies on Kajima, the former prime minister who schemes to wage a war against Chosun, Korea.

While awe-inspired by Sharaku's brilliance, Toyokuni's burning envy and jealousy towards his artistic mastery leads him to keep a keen eye on Sharaku and Sharaku's secret is in danger of being revealed.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Today, Toshusai Sharaku is considered one of the most outstanding portraitists of all time, on an equal standing with Rembrandt and Velasquez. World-renowned Sharaku kept his identity a secret and eventually disappeared into the mists of history after finishing his last piece in February, 1795. The very moment I found Utagawa Toyokuni, who led Ukiyo-e as a head master at the same time as Sharaku, their artistic rivalry evoked the idea of an Asian version of *Amadeus* to me.

The tragic destiny of these artistic geniuses, one who had to become a spy because of his talent in drawing and the other who struggled between jealousy of this rival artist who inspired his own work, captured me. And through their story, I unspool the story of desire, jealousy and love of nothing but a weak human being.

DIRECTOR

Park Tae-choon graduated from the Department of Drama and Film, Dongguk University, in 1998 where he made several impressive shorts. His film *Face* won Best Film of the Year at the KBS Film Awards in 1996. In 1998, he entered the Eastman Kodak Filming Workshop and produced *Soy Sauce*, a short film that was selected for the 45th San Francisco International Film Festival, the Pusan Short Film Festival and the London Indie Forum.

Park is also a playwright and has written many screenplays including *Rimjung 36 Ho* (in pre-production), *Quiz* (in pre-production), *Mother Will Not Die* (2007) and *Bomb Warning* (in pre-production). He also served as assistant director for *Musa: the Warrior* (2001), directed by Kim Sung-su, and he has served as assistant director for many of Director Kim's commercials and music videos.

PRODUCERS

Kim Seung-bum graduated from the Department of Politics and International Studies, Yonsei University. He worked as a research student at the Department of International Politics, Waseda University and graduated with an MBA from the Graduate School of Business Administration, Keio University. He was head of project financing at Korea Image Investment & Development Co., Ltd. and made the Korean Film Renaissance possible in the 1990's. After his success in film financing, he established one of the largest film companies in Korea, Tube Entertainment, which was later renamed STUDIO 2.0.

At Tube Entertainment, Kim participated in investing and distributing numerous Korean as well as foreign blockbusters, such as *Nightmare* (2000), *2009: Lost Memories* (2002), *The Way Home* (2002), *Tube* (2003), *A Family* (2005) and *Highway Star* (2007).

Iseki Satoru is one of the few Asian producers whose films have gone far beyond the borders of his home country. He has been working with well-established and maverick directors from various countries. In 2001, he established Hark and Company and collaborated with Asian directors Tsui Hark and Jacob Cheung and producers Nansun Shi and Bill Kong for the purpose of producing, planning, financing and distributing films internationally. In 2006, Iseki established Tara Contents where he is actively involved in joint productions, developing and financing. His recent works as producer or executive producer include *Battle of Wits* (2006), *Control* (2007) and *New Castle* (2008).

Kim Dong-gu was the CEO of Lunchbox Pictures in 2003. In 2004, he became the Production Manager of Lee Kim Production.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Tube Entertainment was established in 1999. It invested in and distributed a wide array of excellent Korean and foreign films including *Nightmare* (2000), *Failan* (2001), *2009: Lost Memories* (2002), *The Way Home* (2002), *Tube* (2003), *A Family* (2005), *Love Letter* (2005), *The Children of Heaven* (1997), *Tomb Raider I & II* (2001 & 2003), *Van Helsing* (2004) and *Million Dollar Baby* (2004). In April 2006, it was announced that Tube Entertainment would become a listed company on the stock market and take part in the entertainment business under Mediacorp, a company that also specializes in publishing and digital content, and it was renamed STUDIO 2.0.