



© Gunjo-iro

## ダリー・マルサン

# Dari Marusan

### Izumi Takahashi

**Producer** Izumi Takahashi, Hiroaki Saito. **Production companies** Kazumo (Tokyo, Japan); Gunjo-iro (Tokyo, Japan). **Director** Izumi Takahashi. **Screenplay** Izumi Takahashi. **Production design** Buji. **Sound** Takeshi Kawai. **Music** Masahiro Hiramoto.

**Cast** Hiromasa Hirose (Yoshikawa), Miho Ohshita (Dari), Takashi Matsumoto (Takatsudo), Midori Shin-e (Marina), Yasuhiro Isobe (Mitsu), Hikaru Takanezawa (Machizaki), Satoshi Yabumoto (Sasaki), Keiko Sugawara ("Aide"), Akie Namiki (Meg).

DCP, colour. 103 min. Japanese.

**Premiere** 26 November 2014, Tokyo FilmEx

**World sales** ColorBird

Traditional Japanese wooden Daruma dolls have no ears. The classmates of this film's hearing impaired heroine gave her the nickname 'Dari Marusan' in reference to such dolls. While Dari has now adopted the name as her own, she hasn't got over the hurt.

Yoshikawa (played by Hiromasa Hirose, Takahashi's long-time collaborator) is a severely traumatised man who keeps his distance from other people and thinks he has severed all links to the past. When the sensitive Dari and the gruff, inconsiderate Yoshikawa meet, old wounds resurface for the both of them.

The films of Izumi Takahashi are populated by defeated people, people who are physically and psychologically maimed, who hurt one other and are even looking to be hurt themselves. But as wounded as they may be, they are also always looking for healing and for someone to make that possible. Dari works for an agency that tracks down missing pets, and is given the assignment of finding the parrot that Yoshikawa lost two years previously. She will have to figure out what her client has really lost and find her own dignity in the process.

*Christoph Terhechte*

## Innerlife and physical communication

I wanted to portray the inner workings of people in a realistic way against a decidedly fantastic setting. My intent was not to focus on deafness; rather, I wanted to use physical movement to depict communication with others.

*Izumi Takahashi*

### "Happiness is something like taking a nap"

*Dari Marusan* is your second film as a director, after *The Soup, One Morning*. In the intervening years, you worked as a screenwriter. What was your motivation to get into directing again, and why did it take ten years?

**Izumi Takahashi:** I've always had motivation when it comes to directing films and seeking that expression. But I feel there's an extreme lack of freedom in Japanese film production, and so I had to wait for the right moment to get everything I wanted. My stance in the ten-year interim was therefore to make a living by writing screenplays.

What exactly do you mean by 'an extreme lack of freedom'?

In Japan, there's been a polarisation between commercial 'products' and creator-inspired 'work'. Although they fall into the same field of filmmaking, it's very difficult to establish both at the same time. I find it no longer possible to express myself cinematically and earn money at the same time. On the other hand, there is a strange cinematic space that exists in Japan for 'self-made' films that resemble, but are in fact completely different from, the conventional 'indies' category. Neither truly work nor hobby, these films are completely self-funded by the creator and are made entirely from self-interest. The creator, in full control, operates under no creative constraints. But to make such a film, conditions pertaining to money, labour and collaboration all have to coincide. This can take time. Therefore, I earn money by writing screenplays for commercial productions while awaiting the opportune moment to shoot my movies.

One of the main characters, *Dari*, is a deaf female pet detective. How did the idea for this unique character come about?

First, I wanted physical interaction, because communicating with *Dari* requires moving your body – even if you can't do sign language – whether it's just getting up, grabbing her, getting her to face you. I wanted to embody relations through the accumulation of details like that. Also, the loss of a pet is depicted once in the world of Haruki Murakami as throwing life off-balance. I wanted to visually show the act of getting that back, recovering something lost. That's how *Dari* came about.

We are also introduced to a company boss, Mr Sasaki, who likes to break people's bones. How did come up with this cruel character?

In Japan, we talk about 'black companies'. These are companies that subject their employees to long workdays, impossible sales quotas and practices that can drive workers to their mental limits. And yet they cling to these companies because there is no safety net to catch them if they fall from there. Put another way, the desperate desire to remain in such a place to the point of physical sacrifice itself creates 'monster' superiors like Sasaki.

Several times we come across the image of a river that runs from top to bottom. What exactly do you mean by that?

Humans are creatures who feel pain. And instinctively, they feel others' pain, too. So people who have become numb to pain will then abuse those weaker than themselves. And so forth down the line until there exists a vertical process of becoming desensitised to pain, whether it runs through a family, a company or a school. *Dari Marusan* tries to depict how one can break away from that chain of violence, from the overwhelming force of top-to-bottom, from one's given environment. It's about doing something, no matter how small, that can bring back a faint smile.

What does the missing parakeet stand for?

It's a symbol of being freed from gravity. But it only appears that way, because in reality, the bird must beat its wings several hundred times a minute. You can't just simply fly.

Do the notions of freedom and happiness exist for you?

Happiness is something like taking a nap. It feels soft and good. Take one if that's what you want. Freedom is a moment where feelings are all that is traveling between people. It's forgetting about one's own physicality.

*Interview: Ansgar Vogt, January 2015*



**Izumi Takahashi** was born in 1973 in Saitama, Japan. In 2001, he formed the Gunjo-iro production company with Hiro-sue Hiromasa. In addition to working as a director, he has also written numerous screenplays.

### Films

2005: *Aru asa, soup wa / The Soup One Morning* (90 min.). 2007: *Musunde-hiraite / What the Heart Craves* (Berlinale Forum 2008, 98 min.). 2011: *Ningen konchūki* (TV-series, episodes 1.3 und 1.4). 2012: *Atashi wa sekai nankaja naikara / I Am Not the World You Want to Change* (112 min.). 2014: *Dari Marusan*.