

# Crossroads of Youth

## Introduction to Korean Cultural History

### 청춘의 십자로,

The film is about a brother and sister who leave their hometown for Seoul and encounter modern life. We see upper-class Seoul of the 1930s through their eyes. It also showcases the comeback role of Shin Il-seon as the sister; Shin was the star of what is perhaps the most renowned film of Korea's silent era, 1926's *Arirang*.

#### Synopsis

Young-bok heads to Seoul to make something of himself, leaving his elderly mother and younger sister Young-ok back in his hometown. He marries Bong-sun and lives with her family. He works hard for seven years, but ends up losing his wife to Cho Myung-ku. At the same time Kye-soon is an unfortunate girl living in Seoul with her ill father and young brother. Back in the countryside, Young-ok decides to come to Seoul to find her brother after their mother dies; in order to support herself as she searches for him, she gets a job as a waitress at a cafe. She ends up meeting Kye-chul, who lures and assaults her. Kye-soon also meets Kye-chul, who ends up compromising her. After hearing about Kye-soon's plight, Young-bok runs to Kye-chul's house, where he finds Young-ok. After hearing her story, he bitterly laments the situation and attacks Kye-chul.

#### The Early Age of Korean Cinema

Silent films in Korea were shown with *byeonsa* accompaniment. A *byeonsa* (similar to a Japanese *benshi*) is a live narrator who accompanies a film, not only telling the story but giving voice to various characters in the production. As a result, the film is not just a movie but a full experience, with *byeonsa*, actor/singers, and musicians bringing the action on the screen to life.

*Crossroads of Youth*, Korea's oldest existing film, has been beautifully restored with new musical accompaniment. During the age of silent films, Korean movies were presented combined with other entertainments, including performances by singers and narration. Covering the gamut from sole narration to band performances, magic shows, and even hypnosis displays, these entertainments made theaters exciting places. During once such entertainment, Na-Woon Kyu, one of the stars from the legendary movie *Arirang*, surprised the audience by tearing the screen and stepping through the rip at the end of the film. Clearly, going to the movies was a magical experience for audiences in the silent era.

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### Main Cast

#### Kim Tae-yong, director

Kim Tae-yong studied filmmaking at the Korean Academy of Film Arts. His credits include co-directing (with Min-Gyoo Dong) two short films, *Pale Blue Point* and *Seventeen*; his first feature film, *Memento Mori*, which was highly praised by audiences and critics; his second feature, *On The Road, Two*; and his third feature, *Family Ties*, which also has been critically acclaimed at numerous international film festivals.

#### Cho Hee-bong, byeonsa

Cho Hee-bong has a masters degree from Seo Kang University. His numerous credits include *Once Upon a Time* and *My Wife is a Gangster 3*.

#### Im Moon-hee, female singer

Im Moon-Hee was born in 1980 and studied at Soo Won Science University. She is a singer and actress who performs primarily in musical theater; her major work includes the Korean productions of *Sweeney Todd*, *the Demon Barber of Fleet Street* and *Subway Line 1*.

#### Park Chun-hwi, music director

Park Chunhwi is a music director whose major work includes the Korean productions of *Sweeney Todd*, *the Demon Barber of Fleet Street* and *Pillow Man*.

### Goal

To introduce the oldest existing Korean film, and the only existing Korean film from the silent era, to America, and to engage audiences interested in Korean culture, silent film, film history, and unique events. To our knowledge, there has never been a public *byeonsa* performance in the United States; we would like to invite audiences to experience the special evening that such a performance would create.

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