

Café Movers at the Hacienda

By Sophie Braccini



Taking a coffee break at Moraga's Hacienda de las Flores on a cold morning.

Every weekday from 9 to 11:30 a.m. the Hacienda de las Flores in Moraga is welcoming anyone in need of a cup of coffee and cookies. Next to the large Fireside room a petite buffet table is set up by Parks and Recreation Assistant Kim Burrowes; the supplies are paid for by the Moraga Movers, a group of active seniors.

"We were discussing ways of getting more people to come and appreciate the beautiful Hacienda de las Flores as a community and gathering place," said Movers' President Bob Foxall, "and the Parks and Recreation Director suggested this open and

free coffee."

One recent morning,, a conversation group of gentlemen who've been meeting every Thursday morning for the last 10 years to debate all topics of life was seeking refuge from the cold morning in the Fireside room. Lounging on the leather sofas or peering through the windows at the majestic and frozen grounds, they were enjoying the warm building and each other's company.

Groups, walkers, moms on their way to the park with their kids, or anyone who just wants to sit and enjoy the venue—are all welcome. "This is open to

everyone of any age, and we do not discriminate against the people of Lafayette and Orinda," added Foxall with a smile. "It will go on as long as we have people coming."

The Hacienda de las Flores is a Spanish-style historic estate and former mansion of the Rheem family who built it in 1929; it is now a town property operating as a community center and is located at 2100 Donald Drive, off Moraga Road.

Photo Sophie Braccini

"Chronicle of My Mother" in Orinda

By Sophie Braccini



Photo provided

A man believes he was abandoned by his mother; this belief has made him the man he is today – a self-centered successful writer, full of resentment. His mother, in her late 70s, suffers from dementia. As her brain deteriorates, glimpses of the past emerge that give the writer a completely different perspective of what happened in his youth.

Set in post-war Japan, from 1959 to 1973, director Masato Harada's film, "Chronicle of My Mother," is a slow and beautiful voyage into the past. The characters evolve as truth is slowly revealed in a society where emotions are understated and traditions still hold significance.

There are many interesting facets addressed in this movie: how the family takes charge of an elderly parent that's struggling with dementia; how the father who is raising three daughters learns to let them go and find their own way; and how long hidden pain can release its grip once truth is discovered.

The movie is based on the 1975 autobiographical novel by Yasushi Inoue with the same title. It is set in the Izu peninsula, southwest of Tokyo and in Tokyo. The cinematography is particularly beautiful. The scenes shot in Izu are set in an atmosphere of serene beauty. The actors all play with restraint,

letting the emotions rise to the surface without ostentation. Harada constructed his film to give the spectator just enough to feel real emotions. Sometimes without a word being said – a glance, a tear – one understands the internal shift that's happened in the heart of the character.

Kirin Kiki who plays the mother is extremely touching; her performance is unsettling in its truthfulness. Director Harada sensitively explores family relationships – the tension, the love, and the need to sacrifice for one another. The father's favorite sentence, "Love is to serve, to serve is to love," does not always connect with the younger generation. As the main character evolves, he becomes a better father, brother, husband and son.

The poetry carried within the movie will touch all viewers. There is no violence, no obscenity, just the slow unfolding of life and how secrets hidden and unearthed change people. It is an optimistic movie, one of compassion, narrated with subtlety.

"Chronicle of My Mother" was the winner of the Special Jury Grand Prix at the 2011 Montreal World Film Festival. It will play at the Orinda Theatre for one week, beginning Feb. 22. For more information, visit www.lamorindatheatre.com.

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