

Departures

Written by Dave Howard



The Oscar Winner for best foreign film is a testament to life's detours and finding the art in them. It is one of those rare films that is an uplifting despite its somewhat morbid subject matter.

Daigo Kobayashi (Masahiro Motoki) has always dreamed about being a cellist. After devoting his whole life to his craft, he finally secures a job in symphony. The career is derailed when the symphony goes out of business. Devastated and lost, he convinces his wife to move back to his hometown to live in the house his mother left him.

Desperate for any job he answers a want ad for some one willing to work with departures. Excited to become a travel agent he interviews with the companies owner Sasaki (a masterful performance by Tsutomu Yamazaki) . The money is fantastic, but there was a typo in the ad. It should have read working with the "departed.": The shop specializes in ceremonial encoffination, a Japanese ritual for preparing a body for burial. Daigo decides to give it a shot while hiding it from his wife. After a series of very funny training mishaps, Daigo learns to the love this art in himself. But how will he tell his family and friends what he does for a living?

In these times, Departures will illicit deep thought for those who have lost their jobs. For the many who are looking to get their careers back on track, this film will make you wonder what kind of happiness you can find in even the least likely of places

This film has resonated with me for a week since the screening. It's one of those rare films

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where all the elements get drawn together into a stunning blend. The performances are startlingly natural and effortless. The cinematography is gripping, whether they are shooting this cellist playing against snow capped mountains or showing the beauty of a life lost too soon.

DEPARTURES is a stunning piece of work, and should be viewed in a theater rather than waiting for it on DVD. It opens in national limited release on May 29th.