



THE FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

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會協禪一第國美

Film Series

The Burmese Harp

A Film by Kon Ichikawa

Starring Rentaro Mikuni, Shôji Yasui, Jun Hamamura,

Taketoshi Naitô and Kô Nishimura

Friday, May 13, 2011 7:30 – 9:30 PM

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Based on a novel by Michio Takeyama, *The Burmese Harp* is set during the final days of World War II. The Japanese are fighting a desperate campaign against superior British forces in the Burmese jungle. Private Mizushima, previously untrained in music, has taught himself to play the Burmese harp. His company commander was a music teacher in civilian life, and has taught his soldiers to sing as a way to boost morale. Mizushima accompanies them on the harp, and also acts as a scout – dressed as an ordinary Burmese, and speaking the Burmese language, he travels ahead of the company and plays a tune for “all clear” on his harp if it is safe for them to pass. In the end, almost all of the Japanese either die or surrender to the British, but not Mizushima. Badly wounded and wrapped in bandages, he finds himself being cared for by a Buddhist monk, who tells him: “Foreign armies come and foreign armies go, but Burma is Buddha’s country.” Mizushima emerges from the war as a Buddhist monk. *The Burmese Harp* has been described as “One of Japanese cinema’s most overwhelming antiwar statements, both tender and brutal in its grappling with Japan’s wartime legacy.”

Admission is free.

