

禅 "ZEN": Japanese Film & Lectures in Seattle

The inspiring true story of legendary Zen Master Dogen is brought to vivid life on the screen, more than 750 years after he lived his extraordinary life.

To cast away everything, surrendering yourself to the flow of nature and just sitting in meditation... This is the essence of Dogen's Zen Buddhism. In the 13th century, Dogen, a young Japanese monk traveled to China, determined to find his true master. There he found a monk who taught him that sitting in Zen meditation is the true and only path to enlightenment. Returning, enlightened, to Japan, Dogen risked his life to pioneer Zen Buddhism, inspiring the millions of Zen Buddhists who practice around the world today.



Making his film debut in an astonishingly authentic performance of Dogen is Nakamura Kantaro, the 19th generation Kabuki actor and son of Kabuki legend, Nakamura Kanzaburo. In Kantaro's incarnation, Dogen's calm presence exudes a commanding authority, born of his unshakable faith and dedication to his cause. Surrounded by veteran actors, Kantaro and his supporting cast bring the 13th century vividly back to life. Veteran director Takahashi Banmei has written and directed a riveting, gorgeous drama of faith and power.

Saturday, February 28, 2009 2:00~6:30 PM

2:00~2:20 Introduction

2:20~4:30 Movie

4:50~6:30 Symposium

<Free Admission>

(Door opens at 1:30 PM seating is limited to 470)

Pigott Auditorium

Seattle University

Co-sponsored by

Albers School of Business and Economics, Seattle University

Consulate-General of Japan at Seattle

Supported by

Seattle Cherry Blossom & Japanese Cultural Festival Committee

ZEN Production Committee

Thursday, February 26, 2009 6:00~9:00 PM

6:00~6:10 Introduction

6:10~8:20 Movie

8:30~9:00 Panel Discussion

<Free Admission>

(Door opens at 5:45 PM seating is limited to 470)

HUB Auditorium

University of Washington

Co-sponsored by

**Japan Studies Program, The Henry M. Jackson School of
International Studies, University of Washington**

Consulate-General of Japan at Seattle

Supporters:

**ASUW; ASUW, Asian Student Commission; Comparative Religion
Program; East Asian Center; Global Business Center (UW)**

ZEN Production Committee

The link to the Japan Colloquium web page is

<http://jsis.washington.edu/japan/colloquia.shtml>

WARNING: This movie is not rated. It contains mature scenes, parental guidance suggested.

The Story

As Dogen's mother lies dying, she asks her 8 year old son, "Why must people fight wars and suffer from illness, unable to escape the pain of death? I want you to find a way to escape all this suffering."

Sixteen years later, Dogen begins his quest for a true master in China, where he finds only monks corrupted by power. By chance he meets Ji-uen, a young monk who advises him to visit the temple at Tendo Mountain, where Dogen meets Ju-ching, his true master and soon achieves enlightenment.

After returning to Japan, Dogen settles into a temple in Kyoto and begins writing about the way of Zen he learned from his Chinese master. His austere, disciplined ways alienate many corrupt monks but also attract idealistic disciples. Among them is Ji-uen who has traveled to Japan to work with Dogen after the death of Ju-ching. Together Dogen and Ji-uen work to spread the Zen way but are soon branded heretics by the powerful Buddhist hierarchy who demand that Dogen leave Kyoto with all his disciples.





Dogen and his disciples are protected by Yoshishige, a powerful magistrate, who escorts them to Anyoin, a temple in the mountains. There, Dogen meets Orin, a woman whose life he had saved when she was a child begging for food. Now, a mother who must sell her body for food, she is transformed by Dogen's teachings and launches her own quest for spiritual enlightenment after her infant son dies.

As the number of Dogen's followers flourish, the powerful monks who drove him out of Kyoto grow resentful and set fire to his community. Once again, Yoshishige comes to Dogen's rescue and provides land deeper in the mountains where Dogen and his monks start all over again.

One day, Yoshishige calls on Dogen in distress. His master, the Shogun, is nearly out of his mind, tormented by the ghosts of the many warriors he killed in his bid for power. When Dogen arrives in the capitol the Shogun immediately taunts him with barbed questions about his Zen practice. Dogen explains that his Zen practice is "Just sitting in meditation.



We sit and sit. Seeing things as they truly are... That is enlightenment." The Shogun is provoked by Dogen's puzzlingly simple statements and eventually draws his sword, threatening to kill him for his insolence. But the Shogun is no match for the Zen master's unshakable conviction and soon he is on his knees, meditating beside Dogen.

In the dark of winter, Dogen, now in his mid-50s, prepares to die. Before he dies, he instructs each of his beloved disciples, preparing them to hand down his Zen practice through the centuries, from one master to the next.



Why Dogen Now?

Unlike the famous Buddhist monks, Kukai, Saicho, and Shinran, Zen Master Dogen intentionally removed himself from worldly concerns and conflicts, pursuing the mind, "Just sitting in meditation." And yet, in this profoundly simple approach to life, we find a fierce story of breathtaking drama.

When Dogen was fourteen, he confronted the fundamental question of why humans must practice when they are naturally imbued with Buddha. Seeking an answer to this question, he traveled to China. There, he met Ju-ching and found his answer. In his austere mountain quarters, living by his own strict rules, Dogen spent his life “Just sitting in meditation,” conveying absolute enlightenment through his disciples. His translucent life formed the foundation for his renown as a timeless Buddhist master as well as the sublimation of “daily practice” into traditional Japanese formal aesthetics.

The landscape in which Dogen’s life unfolded is the archetype of natural Japan. In the words, “Flowers in spring, cuckoos in summer, the moon in autumn and chilly snows in winter” Dogen beautifully expresses the fundamental essence of Japan. Dogen eventually reached the non-verbal realm, which cannot be expressed in words. This non-verbal realm can also be understood as a generosity of spirit. And this generosity of spirit culminates in a “loving language.” A loving language, as Dogen wrote in the Treasury of True Teachings, is born of a merciful spirit, devoid of nefarious words, a language most gentle and merciless.

The path of Dogen’s quest is never ending. Dogen’s translucent spirit is alive and well today.



- Otani Tetsuo
Author, *Life of Dogen*

Director’s Statement

When my father died, I was still a teenager. Wanting to find out what happened to people when they died, I secluded myself in Koya-san Temple, went to sit in Zen temples and attended Catholic mass. I went all over in search of an answer. I still remember the Zen Master Dogen, that I learned about then.

During my research preparing to write the screenplay, I made a conscious decision, based on my personal Buddhism, to approach this project as though Zen Master Dogen himself were exhorting me.

As we filmed, my image of Dogen’s austere purity and his single-minded dedication gradually began to merge with that of Nakamura Kantaro, the actor playing him. I hope that you will be moved as you watch Kantaro breathe new life into the spirit of Dogen.

TAKAHASHI Banmei Writer/Director

Born in the historic capitol city of Nara in 1949, Takahashi worked with Wakamatsu Koji’s Productions and made his directorial debut with “pink” films. In 1982 he directed *Tatto*, for which he was awarded the Yokohama Film Festival Director’s Prize. That same year, he joined the Directors’ Company and soon produced *Crazy Family*. Among the films he has recently directed are *A New Love in Tokyo* (’94), *Rain of Light* (’01) and *Oka wo Koete* (’08).

STAFF]

Director / Screenplay : **TAKAHASHI Banmei**

Executive Producer / Based on the book by : **OTANI Tetsuo**

Producers : **KANNO Satoshi / MATSUURA Shigeji**

Music : **UZAKI Ryudo / NAKANISHI Haseo**

Director of Photography : **MIZUGUCHI Noriyuki**

Production Design : **MARUO Tomoyuki**

Editing : **KIKUCHI Junichi**

[CAST]

NAKAMURA Kantaro as Dogen

UCHIDA Yuki as Orin

FUJIWARA Tatsuya as Hojo Tokiyori

TEI Ryushin as Ji-uen& Minamoto Kugyo

ZHENG Tianyong as Ju-ching

KORA Kengo as Shunryo

MURAKAMI Jun as Ejo

KATSUMURA Masanobu as Hatano Yoshishige

AIKAWA Sho as Orin's husband

SASANO Takashi as Kitchen Master

TAKAHASHI Keiko as Monju's mother

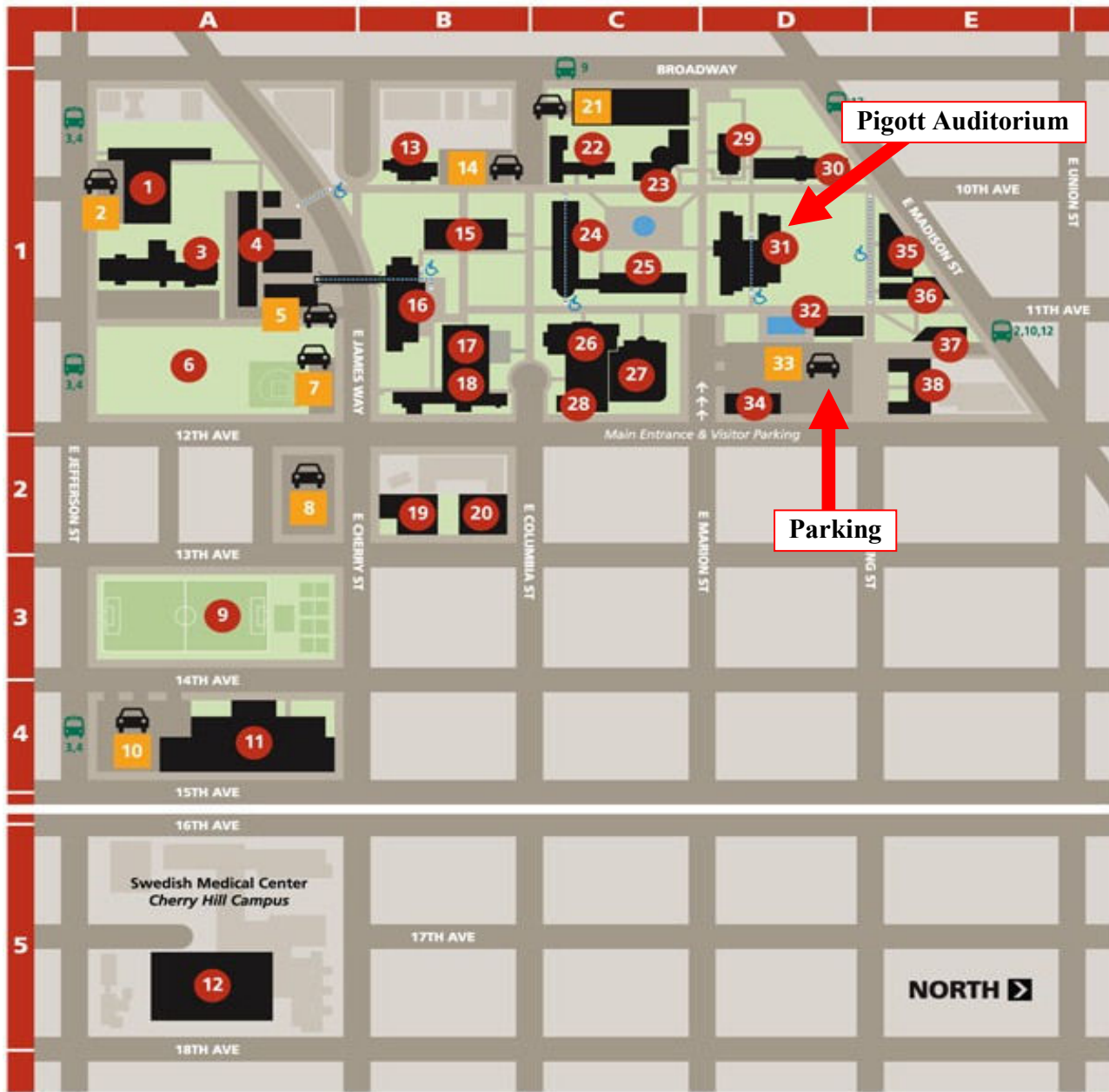
2009 / 35mm / color / VistaVision1:1.85/Dolby SR / 127min.

Production : TWINS JAPAN inc.

Distributed by Kadokawa Pictures, inc.

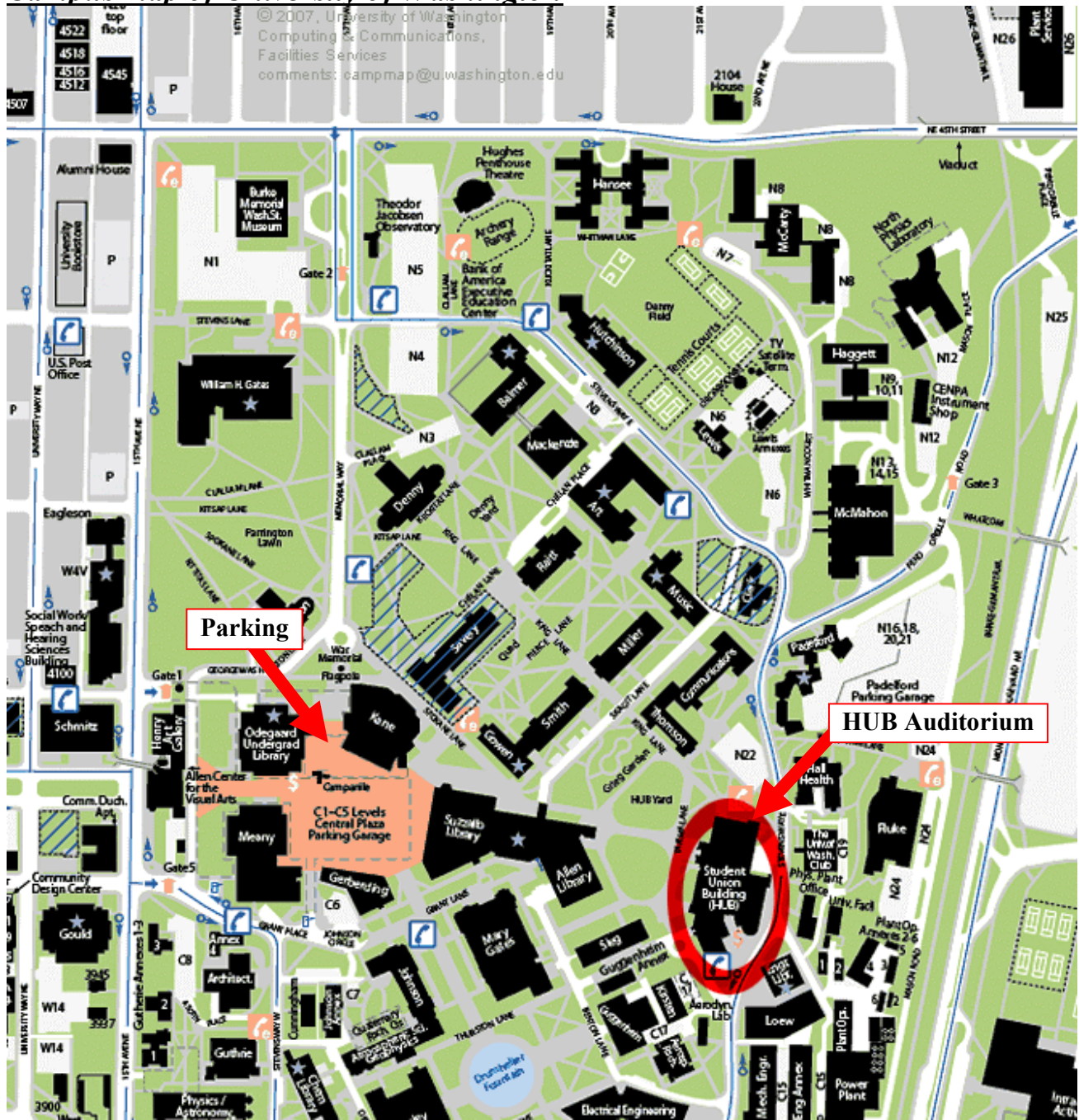
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Campus map of Seattle University



Visitor parking is available on Campus for [parking rates](http://www2.seattleu.edu/stm/Inner.aspx?id=12982) please visit:
<http://www2.seattleu.edu/stm/Inner.aspx?id=12982>

Campus map of University of Washington



Visitor parking is available at the Central Plaza Parking Garage for parking rates please visit:

http://www.washington.edu/commuterservices/parking/fees_gatehouse.php