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Japanese Pop Culture/ Japn 308

“Swing Girls” movie Analysis

The roles of the women seem that they are clearly the protagonist and catalyst of this film. They are the catalyst for starting the chain reaction of events to occur such as volunteering for to take the school lunches for the brass band and falling asleep on the train to fail to give them the lunches on time to not have been spoiled as well. These girls are also the protagonist as they are the ones who are followed for the whole plot and bring meaning to the movie's title, swing girls. However, I notice that although 13 girls are mentioned from the beginning, it really relies heavily on the four main girls who stick together with the piano playing boy to continue their new found ambition of playing in a big band together. The other 9 girls join in again after hearing the other five play live and realize they could do that as well. It goes off well stating how certain roles by these girls are depicted in different ways. Tomoko, the lead girl mostly out of the others, is shown to have grown dramatically in this movie. Although her role, with other girls, does start off by showing laziness and lack of dedication to anything, she grows in this film as her love for playing Tenor Sax grows. She, as the other girls, shows that although they have a clumsy side, they still try their best in the end and do not give up on their goal to perform. This lead to a wonderful 15-minute concert where the five main characters this movie focused on where able to display how much they grew from the beginning to the end. It does go from certain points showing side interests to the girls that could have discouraged them to give up in many times but they stuck it out till the end. This shows that their role in this film, although in a comedic way, is powerful to send a message to relate to anyone who watches this film. Even though they didn't have to play anymore, they continued to persuade their new found dream together and showed that anyone can do what they want to do if they set their mind to it. This roles stand out to help the movie watcher feel closer to the actors than in a regular film setting.

There were a couple of socio-cultural values to this Japanese movie that are not the same as here in the US. The first big one is how this chain of events occurred because the school band didn't have their bento boxes to eat for lunch. This in itself is interesting as I've played in a band before and never once had lunch provided to me by the school or anyone else. It depended on me buying food for myself before or after the performance, not during a break in the middle of it

either. This in itself was very interesting Japanese socio-cultural value to have the band well taken care of because they are essential to help the team win. Another big socio-cultural value in this movie is how telling bad news is not an easy thing for Japanese to do. It is hard for anyone to do, but I've noticed that Japanese tend to have the cultural norm of *tatemae* and *honne*, which in terms leads to handling difficult situations such as holding back news of not being accepted for the jazz festival to play yet the girls went anyway since Tomoko did not say anything. Having knowledge of Japanese culture has made me realize differences between the US in situations such as this one. The US is more open and up front about bad news, while the Japanese tend to hold back to the last minute. This has been found usually true when inviting people to a party. Usually, if truthfully, a westerner cannot make it, they say it upfront, whereas Japanese will usually always say yes, then not show up to try to be polite by saying that they are going although they do not in the end.

Overall, I felt that this film was amazing. Every detail and aspect was done to always have the movie watcher engaged into the story. It was wonderful to emphasize many characters, instead of just one since it relates to a bigger audience that way. Whether people could feel related to Tomoko, or backup girls, or the teacher who was able to live out his dream as well, the movie was well done to ensure everyone could feel a part of it. As it was released as a comedy film, I did see and share with my classmates quite a lot of laughs for scenes in this movie, whether regarding funny scenes in general or Japanese culture ones that might have only been understandable to ones studying the culture.