

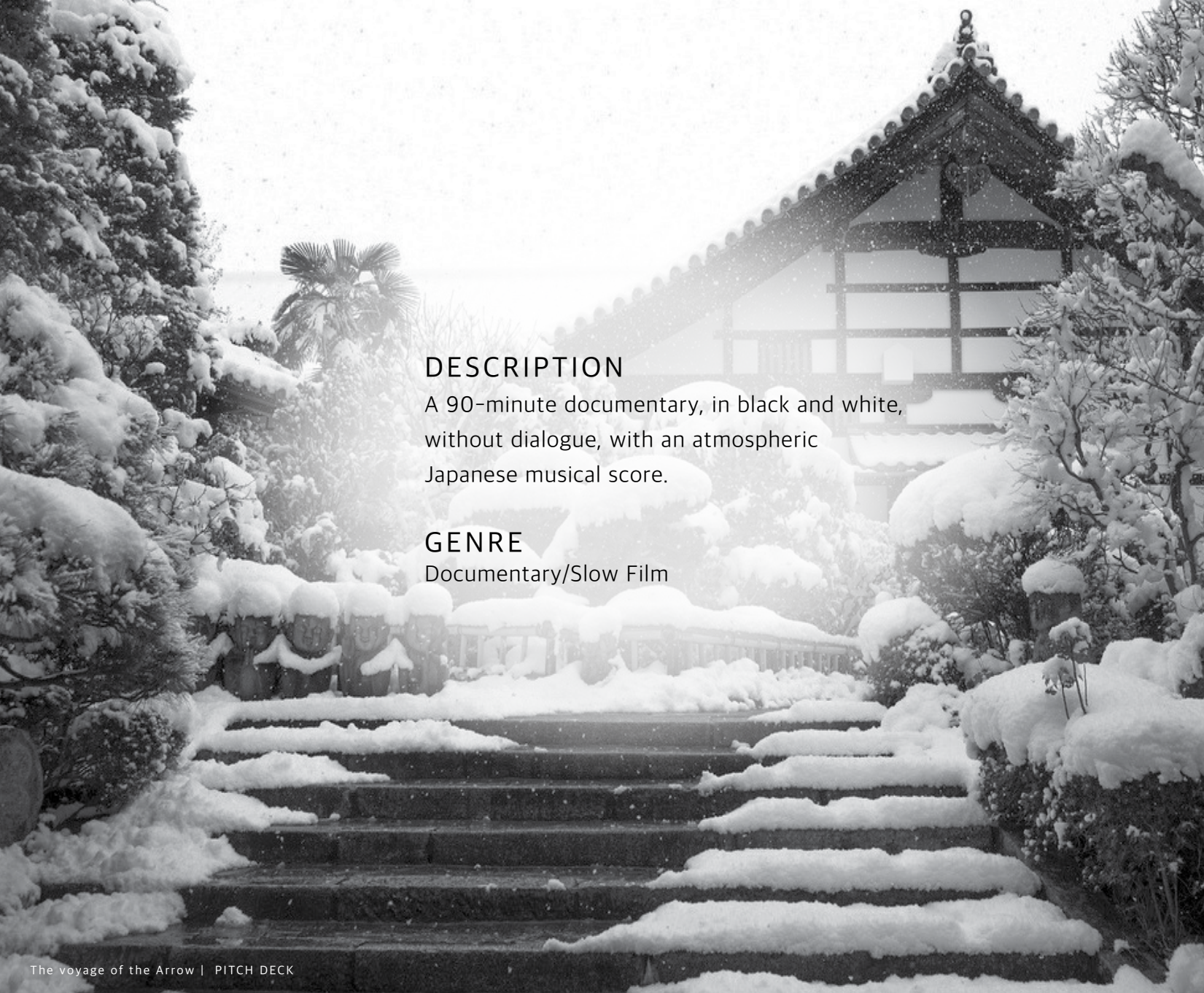
The Voyage of the Arrow

PITCH DECK



LOGLINE

We follow the growth of a shoot of bamboo in a Japanese forest, its growth and its journey to the arrow maker, the bow maker and finally to Haruto, a female student of Kyudo (archery), who shoots the arrow into the target.



DESCRIPTION

A 90-minute documentary, in black and white, without dialogue, with an atmospheric Japanese musical score.

GENRE

Documentary/Slow Film

Screenwriter:

Jan Vardøen
(Norwegian Screenwriters Guild)

Director:

Jan Vardøen NFR
https://www.imdb.com/name/nm5533747/?ref=fn_al_nm

Producer:

Christine E. Robsahm
https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0733432/?ref=nv_sr_srsrg_0

Director of Photography:

John Christian Rosenlund FNF
https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0742645/?ref=nv_sr_srsrg_3

Location:

Japan

Shoot Length:

4-6 weeks



DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT:

The Voyage of the Arrow is a 90-minute documentary, with no dialogue, shot in black and white and scored with traditional Japanese music.

We will follow a stalk of bamboo from when it emerges from the soil, is cut and is sent to the arrow maker.

The arrow maker will heat, straighten, shave and trim the bamboo until it is ready to have the feather flights (fletchings) and tip attached.

The arrow making is done entirely by hand and is a slow and ritualistic process, deeply bound to tradition.

The arrow, when finished, is sent on to the bow maker. The bow maker makes the traditional, asymmetrical Japanese bow out of bamboo strips using ancient techniques.

The making of the bow is also a slow and careful endeavour, using organic materials and hand tools.





We follow Haruto in her daily life, at home at school and in the dojo, where she trains at archery.

Finally, we join Haruto on the day when she will shoot the arrow. She dresses in the garb of the archery student, long black skirt, white tunic, dark leather breastplate.

Haruto kneels, places the arrow on the bowstring, rises. She lifts the bow above her head and draw the string tight. When she is ready, she lowers the bow to her line of sight.

She releases the arrow, and it travels the 28 meters to the target at the other end of the shrine.

The arrow hits the target. As is the custom, Haruto shows no emotion.

The End.

“The Voyage of the Arrow” is a documentary that will show in minute detail the construction of the arrow and the bow. This is slow film. Hypnotic, contemplative, meditative. There is no dialogue, but a careful and precise sound design that will underscore every cut and movement of the construction process.

On top of this will be a musical score featuring the Koto, a Japanese plucked harp played by the virtuoso Michio Yagi, and several instruments (Theremin, Jaw’s Harp, vocals) played by celebrated Japanese artist Koichi Makigami.

The musical director will be Nils Petter Molvær, the internationally renowned Norwegian trumpet player, who will also play on the score.

The intention with the music is to create a meditative background, to give the viewer the chance to relax completely and focus fully on the content of the documentary.



The choice of black and white photography is deliberate and designed to heighten the focus on simplicity and to create an atmosphere of timelessness.

Whilst on the surface, the documentary is a highly detailed study of the construction methods of the bow and arrow (and should be enjoyed as such), it is also an allegory for simplicity.

We are in an age where thoughtless and conspicuous consumption is destroying our planet and creating an existential threat to life on earth. We need to scale down our impact on our environment and one of the primary purposes of this documentary is to serve a timely reminder that we need to be aware of the way we utilise our resources and that by being mindful of the entire value of a singular, simple object, we can increase our enjoyment whilst reducing our impact.

This is the primary motif of “The Voyage of the Arrow”.



MUSICIANS



MICHIO YAGI

Michio Yagi is a Japanese virtuoso Koto player who has collaborated with a very large number of the world's leading instrumentalists.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michiyo_Yagi



KOICHI MAKIGAMI

Koichi Makagami is an internationally renowned Theremin player, multi-instrumentalist and provocateur.

<http://www.makigami.com/bio.html>



NILS PETTER MOLVÆR

Nils Petter Molvær is one of Norway's most famous exports on the jazz scene. He is a hugely talented trumpet player and will be the musical director for the film.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nils_Petter_Molvær



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As a devotee of Japanese culture over many, many years, I wish to convey some of the simplicity and complexity which accompanies what often can appear to be the plainest of tasks.

After the shock of the Covid19 pandemic has faded and as we switch our focus to tackle the universal and existential threat of global warming, I am convinced that we will enter an age where we must dramatically change our lifestyles. This will force us to focus on fewer possessions, plane rides and other symptoms of conspicuous consumption.

We will have to learn (or relearn) the ability to optimise the enjoyment of simpler pleasures.

“The Voyage of the Arrow” is my attempt to get to the heart of this way of thinking and share this knowledge.

We will follow a shoot of bamboo as it sprouts into maturity. It is then cut and sent to the arrow maker, who then trims, heats and straightens the branch. He attaches the fletchings and the tip and sends it on to the bow maker.

The bow maker fashions the traditional Japanese longbow from strips of bamboo using century old techniques. He then sends the arrow and the bow to the young woman Haruto, a student of archery.

We follow Haruto in her daily life and in her studies. We follow her training in the archery (Kyudo) dojo. We see her put on the uniform of the archer, the long black skirt, the white tunic and the three-fingered glove.

She will prepare to shoot, a time consuming and very ritualistic process. Ultimately the arrow will hit the target, but curiously, this is of lesser importance.

In the Zen way of thinking, the ultimate goal of Kyudo is to hit oneself.

The film will be shot in black and white, digitally. The camera and look will be prepared for black and white photography specifically, and not just “shot in colour - black and white filter added afterwards”. I wish to emulate the look of stills photographer Irving Penn, with his rich and saturated platinum prints, which have extreme deep blacks and contrasts, as well as a velvet-like texture. (His series of pictures of cigarette butts is a good example of this style.)

The use of black and white is deliberate, to throw the subject matter into focus and to reinforce the theme of simplicity and timelessness. I wish to film as much as possible of exterior shots in wintertime, in snow, to maximise the black and white effect.

The film will have no dialogue, but the style of filming will be self-explanatory, so that the viewer will be able to understand why the characters do what they do. My education and work as a wooden boat builder has given me the skills to understand artisanal techniques and will give me an edge in interpreting and disseminating them.

The score will be performed by two Japanese musicians and one Norwegian.

Michio Yagi is possibly Japan’s most accomplished Koto player. She will be the backbone of the score, laying down the rhythm and melody and serving as a link to tradition.

Koichi Yagi is a multi-instrumentalist, specialising particularly in the Theremin, Jaw’s harp and vocals. He will represent the ties to modernity and give us the possibility to experiment aurally.

Nils Petter Molv er is an internationally renowned trumpet player with whom I have worked successfully previously. He will provide the bridge to the “Western” sensibility in the music.



In my previous musical documentary “Descent into the Maelstrom” I deliberately omitted sound effects and ambient noises out of respect to the music of Philip Glass. In this documentary I will amplify the environment of work and archery, combined with the score, so as to create a textural wall of sound.

I will attempt to create a reflective, hypnotic, almost trance-like ambience with this documentary and I feel that the score will need to be immediately “accessible” to a Western audience unused to classical Japanese music. This is why I have chosen musicians who have collaborated previously and are conscious of the subtleties of mixing the musical styles of different cultures.

As we follow the stick of bamboo from the ground to the target, I will endeavour to endow the arrow with a personality, a kind of vegetal anthropomorphism, where the viewer will be engaged and sympathetic to its fate, almost as we do with the horse “Black Beauty”.

“The Journey of the Arrow” is a documentary that should work on several different levels: primarily as a complete and comprehensive study of the construction methods of the arrow and bow, but also as a metaphor for our need to simplify our lives and ultimately reach our target, a one-ness with ourselves and with nature.

Jan Vardøen

Oslo 03/09/2021

