

# MARY AND THE WITCH'S FLOWER

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

## Message from the Director

After Studio Ghibli closed its production department, I left the studio with some of the production team. It was a sad, disappointing moment as a person who loved Ghibli, because after finishing *When Marnie Was There*, I found myself with one thought: "As long as there is the opportunity, I want to keep making feature animation."

But nothing was certain anymore. Having only worked inside Ghibli's protected environment, would I be able to start again from scratch and find a way to create an entire feature? With no staff or even a production studio, will I be able to raise funding for production? But despite all my insecurities, I had to continue animating, because I knew it was my job to do so.

Supporters of Ghibli productions and top talent from the Japanese animation industry gathered to work on this new film. We set up a new production company called Studio Ponoc. I spent nearly twenty years at Studio Ghibli, working with directors Isao Takahata and Hayao Miyazaki. The skills and mindset that I acquired while at Ghibli are my treasures. Now, with these treasures close to my heart, I have dedicated all I can to creating this new film with my crew here with me.

We are striving to make *Mary and The Witch's Flower* an experience filled with excitement and wonder that will entertain the audience. I also feel it's a story about children who must live in the times ahead. It's a story about living in a world where the magic of the twentieth century has lost its power. I hope you look forward to our film's release.

April 13, 2017

Hiromasa Yonebayashi

**This summer, Mary will find... surprises and joy... mistakes and destiny... and, a bit of courage.**

**The witch is back.**

**I am a witch, just for tonight.**

## Introduction

Hiromasa Yonebayashi, director of *Arrietty* and *When Marnie Was There*, now brings to life a dazzling work of animated entertainment, offering everything he has learned during nearly twenty years at Studio Ghibli!

Hiromasa Yonebayashi is a highly acclaimed director of animation, not only in Japan, but worldwide. His *Arrietty* (2010) was the top box-office-winning Japanese movie in the year of its release, and *When Marnie Was There* (2014) was nominated as Best Animation Feature at the 88th Academy Awards. His much-awaited first directorial work after his departure from Studio Ghibli is his animated feature *Mary and The Witch's Flower*.

The film's story is based on a children's novel *The Little Broomstick*, written in 1971 by the English author Mary Stewart, long before *Kiki's Delivery Service* and the *Harry Potter* series. For his newest film he explored the world of "witches", the same subject matter that his master of animation, director Hayao Miyazaki, chose previously.

It all started when producer Yoshiaki Nishimura was charmed by one bit of dialogue that he read in the original story: "And it wouldn't be right to use the spellbook to unlock the front door, either. I'll do it the way it's used to, even if it does take longer..."

While this story is about witches, unlike the usual literatures about magic, its lead character Mary decides to proceed without relying on the magical powers at her disposal. This reflects director Yonebayashi's decision to continue filmmaking as an individual animator, even after losing the magnificent Ghibli magic.

The strengths of director Hiromasa Yonebayashi's films are the beautiful, elaborate background artwork and overwhelming animation. This summer, he will be trying his luck with his film *Mary and The Witch's Flower*, putting in all of the animation know-how and creative spirit he acquired during his nearly twenty years at Studio Ghibli. *Mary and The Witch's Flower* will be this summer's major animated production that will entertain and move the hearts of all generations.

## **The rise of a new witch!**

**A “human being, Mary”, with no magical powers, will show us what she is capable of with just a “bit of courage.”**

Our protagonist is a freckled, redhead girl named Mary. She’s cheerful and lively, young and innocent, but her clumsy ways make her unhappy with daily life. Finding the forbidden “Witch’s Flower,” Mary is swooped up into an amazing, grand adventure.

Mary transforms into a witch using the magical properties of the Witch’s Flower and finds herself praised as a girl with extraordinary powers. But these powers are just temporary. To keep a promise, Mary departs on a journey to find the truth, but this is precisely when she loses all her witch’s powers.

Director Yonebayashi has been portraying the message of “taking up courage to live” through his films’ protagonists. With *Arrietty*, it was a girl who sets out on a voyage to the unknown, though she is at the mercy of fate. With *When Marnie Was There*, it was a young heroine facing solitude who takes her next steps. With his newest film, he shows the courage that exists beyond magic through his new heroine Mary.

Set in a magical world, Mary goes through many fun and scary adventures filled with heart-beating excitement, thrills and suspense, flying the skies and travelling beyond the clouds. After these dazzling adventures, Mary finds herself without any magical powers, only a simple broom and a single promise she made. This is when Mary discovers the true strength within her.

## **Loss and recovery, then hope.**

**Film’s theme song “RAIN” by SEKAI NO OWARI and the mysterious sounds of the hammered dulcimer.**

The film’s theme song is performed by the talented music group, SEKAI NO OWARI. The song, which opens with the words “We know that magic will not last forever...,” all began from an encounter at the end of 2016, and was delivered after a great deal of discussion between the four SEKAI NO OWARI members, director Yonebayashi and producer Nishimura. This outstanding song instantly feels familiar, as if it has always been there, close by, yet evokes a strong life force of its own. The song is about life and growth through the motif of “rain,” written from SEKAI NO OWARI’s very unique point of view. With lyrics that can be sung by all generations, children and adults alike, this theme song matches perfectly the film *Mary and The Witch’s Flower*.

Unusual harmony with one musical instrument is heard throughout the film. It is the sound of the stringed percussion instrument called the hammered dulcimer.

In search of an uncommon musical instrument that could set the tone for the entire film, producer Nishimura consulted animation director Isao Takahata, who has an in-depth knowledge of this subject matter. Learning from Takahata about the hammered dulcimer, Nishimura decided to make it the central instrument for the film *Mary and The Witch’s Flower*. Heard both in the film’s background score by Takatsugu Muramatsu and in the theme song by SEKAI NO OWARI, the timbre of the hammered dulcimer symbolizes the “surprise” and “joy”, “mistakes” and “destiny”, and “a bit of courage” all depicted in the film. Prepare to be enchanted by the mystic performance by Joshua Messick, the world’s greatest hammered dulcimer player, who flew to Japan for the film score recording.

**The hand-rendered background art lauded by the world will not be lost.**

**Background art studio Dehogallery, with Kazuo Oga and Yoji Takeshige**

Just as Studio Ponoc was founded, a new background art studio was also born, called Dehogallery, Inc. Working with Kazuo Oga and Yoji Takeshige as advisors, who served as art directors on previous Studio Ghibli masterpieces, Dehogallery, Inc. was formed with eleven artists who have worked as background artists and art directors for feature-length animation, including for Studio Ghibli. Concerned that Studio Ghibli's internationally praised art of hand-painted backgrounds may have been lost when Studio Ghibli closed its production department, DWANGO's Nobuo Kawakami, Khara's Hideaki Anno, and Studio Ponoc's Yoshiaki Nishimura co-founded Dehogallery in 2015.

Art director Tomotaka Kubo and his group of artists, who represent Japan's world-class craftsmanship in background art, painted the light and shadows of *Mary and The Witch's Flower's* real and fantasy worlds.

**The newborn Studio Ponoc starts!**

Graduates of Studio Ghibli, along with new talent from animation and other fields, have gathered to work on director Yonebayashi's newest work.

To continue the Ghibli spirit at the new-born Studio Ponoc, talented artists and creators who worked on past Studio Ghibli productions have come together to work on director Yonebayashi and producer Nishimura's newest work.

Nishimura, who heads Studio Ponoc, teamed up with director Yonebayashi as his producer again following *When Marnie Was There*.

The screenplay is by Riko Sakaguchi and director Hiromasa Yonebayashi. Sakaguchi also penned *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya*. The film's score is performed by Takatsugu Muramatsu, his second time working on a Yonebayashi film after *When Marnie Was There*.

For the animation, Japan's best animators gathered, centering around supervising animator Takeshi Inamura, Ei Inoue, and Akihiko Yamashita, all of whom participated in many Ghibli productions. Color styling was done by Fumiko Numahata, a protégé of "Ghibli's color artisan", the late Michiyo Yasuda. Visual direction was by Atsushi Okui, who has worked on all of Studio Ghibli's Hayao Miyazaki films and all of Studio Ghibli recent films.

Production design was done by Tomoya Imai, who previously worked in production design for music videos from renowned artists, including Madonna. Susumu Fukushi, responsible for all of the *Evangelion: The New Theatrical Edition* films, is the director of cinematography, presenting a visual evolution of "Ghibli" and "Evangelion".

This film's production has also brought together other Studio Ghibli graduates, who have learned from directors Isao Takahata and Hayao Miyazaki, alongside other creative talent. Under Studio Ponoc's production banner they have come together, ready and determined to create their very best feature-length animation.

## Story

**This summer, Mary will find... surprises and joy... mistakes and destiny... and a bit of courage.**

Mary has moved to Redmanor Village. In a nearby forest she finds a mysterious flower called the "Fly-by-Night" that only blooms once in seven years. It is also called the forbidden "Witch's Flower".

Acquiring magical powers that last only for one night, Mary is permitted entry into Endor College, the magical world's finest educational institution, towering above a sea of clouds.

However, one lie by Mary causes a serious incident to fall on somebody she cares about.

The headmistress of Endor College, Madam Mumblechook, seeks the Witch's Flower.

Endor College's scientist of magic, Doctor Dee, conducts strange experiments.

Mary encounters a mysterious red-headed witch and a boy called Peter.

Mary finds a way to escape the land of witches, and that is precisely when Mary loses all her magical powers...

The truth about the "Witch's Flower" is gradually revealed.

Mary is left with just one simple broom and a single promise she has made.

In a world surging with magic, what is the glimmer of hope that Mary, a powerless human girl, finds beyond the darkness?

This summer, Mary finds...

surprises and joy... mistakes and destiny... and a bit of courage.

An entirely new witch's movie that will move the hearts of every generation.

## **Characters**

### **Mary**

An innocent-hearted, curious girl with red hair.

### **Peter**

A boy Mary meets in the village of Redmanor

### **Madam Mumblechook**

Headmistress of Endor College, the magical world's finest educational institution.

### **Doctor Dee**

A scientist of magic at Endor College.

### **The red-headed witch**

A mysterious witch who knows the secret of the Witch's Flower.

### **Flanagan**

The caretaker of the Endor College's broomstable.

### **Zebedee**

The Redmanor gardener.

### **Banks**

The housekeeper of Redmanor.

### **Charlotte**

The owner of Redmanor and Mary's great-aunt.

### **Tib (black) and Gib (gray)**

The cats of the village of Redmanor.

Tib becomes Mary's companion.

### **The "Fly-by-Night"**

Stolen in the past from the witch's land, a mysterious flower that blooms only once in seven years. It is called the forbidden "Witch's Flower".

## Staff Profiles

### ◆ **Mary Stewart (1916 – May 9, 2014), British novelist and author of “The Little Broomstick”, the 1971 novel on which the film is based.**

After working as a primary school teacher, Stewart joined the literary world when she published her first novel in 1954, *Madam, Will You Talk?* She is known for her works in the romantic mystery/suspense and historical fiction genres. Her work is highly regarded around the world. *The Moon-Spinners* was produced into a film by Disney in 1964. Many of her titles have been translated into Japanese, such as *This Rough Magic* (*Kono ararashii majutsu*, Chikuma Shobo - Sekai no Roman Bunko, 1969), *A Walk in Wolf Wood* (*Ookamimori no noroi*, Yugakusha, 1983), and *The Little Broomstick* (*Meari to majo no hana*, Kadokawa, 2017; translation by Toshiya Echizen and Yuki Nakata).

### ◆ **Riko Sakaguchi, Screenwriter**

From Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture. A graduate of Waseda University and former employee of NHK Enterprises, Sakaguchi now does freelance writing as a novelist and award-winning screenwriter for movies, television, and theater. Her TV and movie credits include: *O-shasha no shan!* (2008 NHK drama; winner of the Television and Radio Writers' Association of Japan's Television Drama Award), *Furoide! Kanki no uta de sayonara wo* (2009; winner of WOWOW Scenario Writer's Award), *Kaze ni kike* (2010; winner of the Motion Picture Producers of Japan's 36th Kido Award), *Watashi ga renai dekinai riyu* (2011 Fuji TV drama; co-written with Takako Yamazaki), *Mukoda Kuniko inosento: Ai to iu ji* (Episode 4 of a 2012 WOWOW miniseries), *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* (2013 Studio Ghibli movie, directed by Isao Takahata), *Ito no mori no ie* (2015 Fukuoka NHK drama; winner of NHK's Housou Bunka Kikin Award).

### ◆ **Hiromasa Yonebayashi (1973- ), Screenwriter and Director**

From Nonoichi, Ishikawa Prefecture. While attending Kanazawa College of Art, he worked part-time drawing portraits and making animation for commercials. He joined Studio Ghibli in 1996 and worked as an in-between animator on *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and *My Neighbors the Yamadas* (1999). He then became key animator and worked on *Spirited Away* (2001), *Ghiblies, Episode 2* (2002), *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), and *Ponyo* (2008), and was Assistant Supervising Animator for *Tales from Earthsea* (2006). Yonebayashi has also worked on short films and exhibits for the Ghibli Museum in Mitaka, Tokyo, including as Directing Animator for *Mei and the Baby Cat Bus* (2002) and Supervising Animator for *Imaginary Flying Machines* (2002). He created the storyboards and animation for the museum's permanent exhibit *Films Go Round* showpiece called *Shinka Ron (Theory of Evolution; 2008)*. *Arrietty* (2010), his directorial debut, was the top Japanese film of that year, with 7.65 million tickets sold and earning ¥9.25 billion. This was followed by *When Marnie Was There* (2014), an Academy Award-nominated film. *Mary and The Witch's Flower* (2017) is the third film in his directorial repertoire.

### ◆ **Takatsugu Muramatsu (1978 - ), Composer**

From Hamamatsu, Shizuoka Prefecture. A graduate of Kunitachi College of Music. While still in high school, he made his musical debut with his piano solo album *The Window* (1996). During his college years he worked on music for various movies and TV shows such as *Inugami* (2001) and *Totsunyuu Seyo! Asamasansou jiken (The Choice of Hercules, 2002)*, and became the youngest composer ever to provide music for a NHK TV series (*Tenka* (2004)). Muramatsu has composed for over 50 films, TV shows, and stage productions. His main representative works are: *Orionza kara no shoutaijou* (2007),

*Yuunagi no machi sakura no kuni* (2007), *Climber's High* (2008), *Oo oku* (2010), *Antokinoinochi* (2011), *Oo oku Eien* (2012), *Itai Asu e no toukakan* (2013), *64 roku yon* (Parts 1 and 2; 2016), *Guddo mouningu shou* (2016). He also has provided a wide range of music, from classical pieces to pop songs, to well-known musicians both in Japan and overseas.

Muramatsu composed the music for the studio Ghibli production by Hiromasa Yonebayashi *When Marnie Was There* (2014), and was awarded for Best Music award at the 40th Japan Academy Film Awards for *64 roku yon* (Parts 1).

#### ◆ **Yoshiaki Nishimura (1977 - ), Producer**

From Ota Ward, Tokyo. Joined Studio Ghibli in 2002, after having studied abroad in the U.S. He did advertising-related work for the "Let's Eat at Home" series of TV commercials for House Foods, directed by Hayao Miyazaki, and was in charge of advertising for the Studio Ghibli films *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), *Tales from Earthsea* (2006), and *Ponyo* (2008). Nishimura was the advertising producer for the DVD home video release of *Le roi et l'oiseau* (2006), a Studio Ghibli-distributed French animation title, and the Ghibli Museum Library collection film, *Cheburashka* (2008).

*The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* (2013, directed by Isao Takahata) was his first feature-length film as a producer. After over 8 years in production, the film earned a nomination for Best Animated Feature at the 87th Academy Awards. *When Marnie Was There* (2014, directed by Hiromasa Yonebayashi), Nishimura's second feature film as producer, was also nominated for Best Animated Feature at the 88th Academy Awards. Nishimura is the Founder and President of Studio Ponoc, and its first Producer.

#### ◆ **Studio Ponoc**

After leaving Studio Ghibli at the end of 2014, Yoshiaki Nishimura established his own animation studio on April 15, 2015. The origin of the studio's name, ponoć, comes from an expression in Croatian meaning "midnight" and "the beginning of a new day". The current film *Mary and The Witch's Flower* is Studio Ponoc's first feature animation, and involved a large number of creators and staff from Nishimura's days at Studio Ghibli.

#### ● **Takeshi Inamura, Supervising Animator**

While at Shin-Ei Animation, Inamura was an in-between animator and in-between checker. After joining Studio Ghibli in 1991 he was a key animator and supervising animator for several productions. Notable works as a key animator include *My Neighbors the Yamadas* (1999), *Spirited Away* (2001), *The Cat Returns* (2002), *Arrietty* (2006), and *The Wind Rises* (2013). He worked on *Ponyo* (2008) and *When Marnie Was There* (2014) as the assistant supervising animator, and was the supervising animator for *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), *Tales from Earthsea* (2006), and *From Up on Poppy Hill* (2011). He was also an animator for two Ghibli Museum short films, *The Whale Hunt* (2001) and *Treasure Hunting* (2011). Examples of films he has worked on after leaving Studio Ghibli include *The Boy and the Beast* (2015) and *Your Name* (2016).

#### ● **Ei Inoue, Assistant Supervising Animator**

Inoue has been working in animation as a freelancer since the 1980s. For television anime, Inoue was the supervising animator on works such as *Tico of the Seven Seas* (1994), *Romeo's Blue Skies* (1995), and *Coil, a Circle of Children* (2007). For feature animation, he did key animation for *Evangelion 3.0: You Can (Not) Redo* (2012) and *Miss Hokusai* (2015), and *The Beast and the Boy* (2015). He was assistant supervising animator for *Jin-Roh* (2000), *Paprika* (2006), and *Letter to Momo*

(2012). He was the supervising animator for *Doraemon the Movie: Nobita and the Last Haven Animal Adventure* (2012) and *Your Name* (2016). For Studio Ghibli works, he has worked on *From Up on Poppy Hill* (2011) and *When Marnie Was There* (2014) as key animator, on *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* (2013) as animator, and for *The Cat Returns* (2002) he was the supervising animator.

### ● **Akihiko Yamashita, Assistant Supervising Animator**

Started his career as a freelance animator in the 1980s. For the original video animation (so-called “OVA”) title *Giant Robo: The Night the Earth Stood Still* (1992 - 1998), Yamashita did character design, storyboarding and was the supervising animator. His first participation in Studio Ghibli film was as key animator for *Spirited Away* (2001). He also was a key animator for *The Wind Rises* (2013), and was the supervising animator for other works such as *Howl’s Moving Castle* (2004), *Arrietty* (2010), and *From Up on Poppy Hill* (2011). For *Ponyo* (2008) and *When Marnie Was There* (2014), he was an assistant supervising animator. His directorial debut was the Ghibli Museum short film *A Sumo Wrestler’s Tail* (2010). In recent years, he has been doing directional work for the TV anime series, including *Mysterious Joker*.

### ● **Kumiko Otani, In-between animation checker**

Since starting her career freelancing in animation, Otani has taken part in many productions, original video animation (“OVA”) and feature animation, as an in-between animator and checker. Major works include *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Kiki’s Delivery Service* (1989), and *Junkers Come Here* (1995).

### ● **Fumiko Numahata, Color Stylist**

Joined Studio Ghibli in 1995 and worked under Ghibli’s legendary color stylist Michiyo Yasuda, learning the craft of color design for animation. Numahata was in charge of color keying for *Tales from Earthsea* (2006), only to leave the studio the following year. She was color stylist for other studios’ productions such as the movie *Fullmetal Alchemist: The Sacred Star of Milos* (2011) and the TV anime series *Seraph of the End* (2015). She has maintained her ties with Ghibli, doing the color keying for *The Wind Rises* (2013) and color styling for the Ghibli Museum’s short film currently in production (*Boro the Caterpillar*) directed by Hayao Miyazaki.

### ● **Tomotaka Kubo, Art Director**

Kubo started out at Kobayashi Production, and is currently affiliated with Dehogallery. He has created background art for various movies and TV series, including *From Up on Poppy Hill* (2011), *Rainbow Fireflies* (TV series, 2012), *Magic Tree House* (2012), *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* (2013), *When Marnie Was There* (2014), *Ronja, the Robber’s Daughter* (TV series, 2014), and *In the Corner of the World* (2016). For Studio Khara and Dwango’s short animation film series “Japan Anima(tor)’s Exhibition”, he did art direction on works such as *Nishiogikubo eki toho nijuppun 2LDK shikirei*, *nikagetsu petto fuka* and *Hammerhead. Mary and The Witch’s Flower* is his first art director work for feature animation.

### ● **Dehogallery, Inc.**

In 2015, Dwango’s Nobuo Kawakami, Khara’s Hideaki Anno, and Studio Ponoc’s Yoshiaki Nishimura established a company specializing in background art production. The company welcomed two renowned art directors of Studio Ghibli fame, Kazuo Oga and Yoji Takeshige, as advisors, and eleven artists with feature animation background experience, including for Studio Ghibli films. They aim to

convey each movie's complete world view with their comprehensive designs. Dehogallery was named by Kazuo Oga.

## **"A to Z" Glossary of Keywords**

### **A Japanese [Animation]'s 100th Anniversary**

The year 2017 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japanese animation. Several new animated feature releases made major headlines the previous year. Reaching its 100th anniversary, Japanese animation now stands at the beginning of a new century. The studio's name Ponoc derives from the Croatian word *ponoć* that means "midnight", signifying the start of a new day.

### **B Beauty of [Background Art]**

When Nishimura attended the Academy Awards as producer of *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* directed by Isao Takahata, the attendees from around the world praised how beautiful Ghibli films were. This experience prompted the founding of the background art studio Dehogallery. For *Mary and The Witch's Flower*, the background art's look was designed not to be overly detailed, but rather maintaining balance and harmony with the film's animated characters.

### **C [Characters]**

Noticing some resemblance between the characters and the voice cast, one might imagine that the characters Mary and others were drawn with the voice actors already in mind. However, this was not so.

### **D Attention to [Detail]**

Director Yonebayashi's forte is in animating dynamic action, but as can be seen in his films, he is also very attentive to fine details. Examples of this are the doll house in *Arrietty*, as well as the background artwork and prop design for *When Marnie Was There*, in which he successfully expressed the inner emotions of the main heroine Anna visually through the background artwork.

*Mary and The Witch's Flower* is not set in a specific country or region, but background artists were sent to Shropshire, England on a location hunting trip, which inspired the multiple-layered clouds overlooking the local landscape, the vegetation, the decorations for the brick-built Redmanor and the local townscape for this film.

### **E Mary's [Eating] Scenes**

We see many, appetizing food and eating scenes in this film, such as the sandwich Miss Banks makes for Mary, the dinner at Redmanor with Great-Aunt Charlotte and Miss Banks, and the roasted pork being prepared by a pig in Endor College's cafeteria.

### **F [Flanagan]'s Secret**

During the voice-over session for Flanagan, the actor asked, "my character is the only non-human in the film... what kind of animal is he?" This question brought much speculation, such as "mouse" or "raccoon" or "raccoon dog". Director Yonebayashi responded that it may be close to a mouse, but it is none of the animals. Perhaps this was because the character Flanagan was modeled after the landlord and owner of the building that houses the new Studio Ponoc.

## **G Studio [Ghibli]**

The previous workplace of director Yonebayashi and producer Nishimura. After leaving Studio Ghibli, where they found their first jobs, the two took a bold new step in their careers and founded Studio Ponoc. They are not the only individuals at Studio Ponoc who continue Ghibli's animation knowhow and spirit. Many of the production crew and people taking part in the making of *Mary and The Witch's Flower* have been part of past Ghibli films.

## **H [Houses] in Yonebayashi Films**

The Redmanor, Mary's new residence, and several houses and architectural structures appear in *Mary and The Witch's Flower*. In director Yonebayashi's previous two films, the audience was treated to a semi-European-style Japanese house, a doll house, and The Marsh House with its distinctive blue windows. Each were drawn with enough detail for the audience to imagine the houses' layout. The same level of detail has also been given in the Redmanor's living room and dining room, the headmistress's office at Endor College, and the thatched-roof houses of *Mary and The Witch's Flower* – details that draw viewers to watch the film again and again.

## **I [Illustration]**

Mary draws a picture of her "new family" in the end of the film. Production manager Chihiro Okada drew this happy family crayon sketch. She also did the illustrations for producer Nishimura's blog about producing, written during the production of director Isao Takahata's *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya*.

## **J Three Years on the [Job]**

For approximately three years since film project's initial conception in 2014, director Yonebayashi tirelessly worked morning to night. It may be a kind of luxury to immerse oneself totally, working on one film for three years, but Yonebayashi's job of directing and hand-animating a feature-length film was a long battle requiring Olympian physical strength and willpower.

## **K Just Want the [Kids] to Have Fun**

The aim from the start of the *Mary and The Witch's Flower* project. "I get very nervous when I see kids sitting in the front row when I'm on stage at cinemas to greet the audience and promote my films. I can't help wondering if the kids are really enjoying the movie," says director Yonebayashi. *Mary and The Witch's Flower* is a fantasy adventure with a spunky girl heroine. The film is both a fun and sometimes scary experience with the emotionally rich Mary. "I wanted this film to be a great adventure in the skies, where kids can enjoy the voyage together with Mary."

## **L [Light]**

The film's story takes place within the short timeframe of a day and a half, with the passage of time expressed using light. Keep an eye on various depictions of light and how it changes scene-to-scene, such as the western sun shining on the evening garden and shed, moonlight illuminating a sea of clouds, the lighting of Redmanor, and the glow of a morning sky welcoming the start of a new day.

## **M [Magic] Letters**

Magic lettering is seen in parts of the film, such as in the *Master Spells* book, and the entrance to the strong room of Endor College. If you take a close look, you will find some familiar letters hidden in

them. The film's assistant art director, Satoko Nakamura, designed, painted and drew these magic letters.

### **N [Nickname]**

In the early script stage, the nickname Peter gave to Mary was "little red-headed raccoon dog." However, upon learning that raccoon dogs do not inhabit Europe, it was changed to the more familiar "monkey" and Mary's nickname became "little red-haired monkey." Also, *Mary and The Witch's Flower* depicts a very great variety of animals – more than usually seen in animated films.

### **O Kazuo [Oga]**

Mary's forest was created by background artist Kazuo Oga, who is also the creator of "Totoro's forest" and "Mononoke's forest". The world's top artist of forests and nature, Oga painted a mesmerizingly beautiful "Mary's forest". Oga is also the advisor for background art studio Dehogallery, and has developed a strong bond of trust with producer Nishimura beginning with *The Tale of The Princess Kaguya*.

### **P [Pictures] Digitally Drawn for the Storyboard**

The storyboards for *Mary and The Witch's Flower* were drawn by director Yonebayashi, but it was done so for the very first time on an electronic device, an iPad.

There are 1282 scenes in this film.

A storyboard is made up of a series of layout drawings for every scene, allowing the reader to see the entire flow of the film. Director Yonebayashi's direction is also added here, making the storyboard an essential part of the creative filmmaking process.

### **Q [Quick Action Recorder]**

The Quick Action Recorder (QAR) is a device in which photographed drawings are input and played back to check animated movements. Director Yonebayashi was constantly checking key animation and in-between drawings on the QAR. He was so completely focused and serious when at the QAR that he barely responded even when spoken to while working there.

### **R [Red and Pink Costumes]**

The colors for the heroine are pink and red. Ghibli's late color stylist Michiyo Yasuda's color palettes were reflected in the costume color choices for *Mary and The Witch's Flower*. Mary changes costumes during the film, but they are all pink and red, such as her deep pink-colored knit sweater, her pink hoodie, and her red coat jacket. The film is set in the late summer season, but when the crew went to England for location hunting during the same season, they found it was a bit chilly, thus the characters are all wearing long sleeves in the film.

### **S [SEKAI NO OWARI]**

The film's theme song was created by the Japanese music group SEKAI NO OWARI. The group visited Studio Ponoc and also communicated with director Yonebayashi and producer Nishimura through written letters. Through this collaborative effort, and the building of mutual understanding and respect for each other of the creative process of making one song and one film, the film's theme song was completed. The animation-style drawing of the four group members used for the CD single's cover artwork was specially created by director Yonebayashi.

## **T** Enjoy Mary's World Even More at [The Art of *Mary and The Witch's Flower* Exhibit]

This exhibit has been curated to commemorate the film's release, compiling rare production-related materials that upheld director Yonebayashi's compelling, animated storytelling and the beautifully elaborate background artistry for *Mary and The Witch's Flower*. The full scope of the film's production spanning three years is presented. There is also fun interactive activities, photo spots, and a section abundantly stocked with movie merchandise. The exhibit opened in Tokyo and tours nationwide.

## **U** Three Stories from the [U.K.]

All of the animated features directed by Yonebayashi (*Arrietty*, *When Marnie Was There*, and *Mary and The Witch's Flower*) are based on stories from England. *Mary and The Witch's Flower* is based on a children's novel titled *The Little Broomstick*. The author Mary Stewart is well known for her romantic mysteries and historical fictions, and *The Little Broomstick* is the first work she wrote for children.

## **V** [Voice] Acting is the Act of Giving Life to Moving Pictures

Giving a voice to the characters is also part of animation, the "act of breathing in life."

For *Mary and The Witch's Flower*, a stellar group of Japan's movie actors participated as the voice cast, lead by Hana Sugisaki as Mary. Through the cast members' voices, character drawings came to life as film characters. When a voice performance that is invested with emotion is added to the animated facial expressions and movements, the moving pictures come alive. Director Yonebayashi's animation is about portraying human life.

## **W** Animated [Water] Effects

As exemplified with Madam Mumblechook's grand appearance from a fountain, the dynamic use of animated water effect can be seen in the film. Bodies of water such as lakes and rivers were also seen in Yonebayashi's previous two films, and animation of water is always used in his works. For director Hayao Miyazaki's *Ponyo*, Yonebayashi animated the water scene where Ponyo speedily rises up from the bottom of the ocean. Animated water effects became Yonebayashi's forte even before becoming a director.

## **X** Secret Supporters [X]

In the very early stages when the film project was put into motion and a studio was yet to be set up, for many days director Yonebayashi and producer Nishimura would get together at a coffee shop and spend hours there after ordering just a cup of coffee, working out details for their project. It is quite a miracle that the film was realized, but this was only possible thanks to the existence of many unnamed individuals who each agreed to help and support their cause and the film project.

## **Y** Hiromasa [Yonebayashi]

*Mary and The Witch's Flower* is Yonebayashi's third animated feature as director. With his directoral debut with *Arrietty* at age 36, he became Studio Ghibli's youngest director. As of June 2017, Yonebayashi is now 43, the same age at which his mentor Hayao Miyazaki helmed *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. Yonebayashi's nickname is Maro.

## **Z** [Zebedee's Garden]

The gardener Zebedee is a man of few words, totally committed to the craft of his occupation, but Mary opens her heart to him immediately. He is one of the protectors of the Redmanor. He has remained faithful to Mary's Great-Aunt Charlotte and looked after her beautiful garden for many years. The English landscape garden of Redmanor was created through studies of art, literature, and philosophy. There was even a little episode that when the niece of *The Little Broomstick's* author took a look at the background art and exclaimed in amazement, "It looks exactly like my garden!".

## **Technical Details**

Aspect Ratio: 1.85:1

Runtime: Approx. 103 minutes

In Color

Sound Mix: 5.1 Surround Sound