

# All 'Hayao' Miyazaki, king of animation

*The retiring director's legacy leaves a lasting impression on students*

BY RHONDA MAK AND ROBERT SULGIT



Shuyi Qi | El Estoque Photo Illustration

Even if you've never heard of Japanese animator, director, manga artist, producer and screenwriter Hayao Miyazaki before, it would be hard not to recognize his work. Students all over campus don Miyazaki merchandise, be it No Face — one of the main characters in his film "Spirited Away"— keychains or Totoro crewnecks.

Students were shocked when they heard that Miyazaki announced that he would be retiring after his next and final film, "The Wind Rises," to be released to the United States in February 2014. Miyazaki chose to retire because of old age and stress.

He founded Studio Ghibli, which produced all of his popular films like "My Neighbor Totoro," "Howl's Moving Castle" and "Spirited Away," which won an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature in 2003. Despite mentioning retirement several times in the past, Miyazaki is "quite serious" this time around, as he said in a news conference in Tokyo on Sept. 6. Regardless, he has left an imprint on all of his admirers — including those at MVHS.

Senior Blake Nishimoto, though a long-time fan of Miyazaki's, was one of many students surprised by his announcement. However, he feels that his retirement is well deserved.

"I grew up watching films like 'Spirited Away' and 'Kiki's Delivery Service,'" Nishi-

moto said. "I have always liked his films, but I can see why he is retiring now; he is getting old."

Nishimoto spoke fondly of Studio Ghibli's partnership with Disney, in the 2008 film "Ponyo."

"I think that 'Ponyo' was a great idea for Miyazaki," Nishimoto said. "I mean, everyone in Japan loves his films, so it made a lot of sense to bring his style and storytelling to a more American audience."

Before "Ponyo," however, Miyazaki had

ton, who shows Studio Ghibli's "Grave of the Fireflies" to his art students yearly. "Lots of white American kids watch anime and read manga because of him."

Miyazaki's popularity made him one of the few filmmakers who was able to sell his movies based on his name, a symbol of his success. His name became a brand.

"Just like how some people say, 'Oh, it's a Disney movie, I have to watch it,' we say, 'Oh, it's a Miyazaki movie, I have to watch it,'" junior Phoebe Lim said.

His work is characterized by a whimsical style, predominantly hand drawn, though there are computer-generated elements in his animations.

"I feel like his colors are really well blended and earthy," junior Julia Yu said. "There's a very distinct way he draws. It's very free and open."

Nishimoto's favorite aspect of Miyazaki's films is the worlds that each story takes

place in.

"The worlds themselves are in some ways the most important to the story, the way he combines everyday characters with these elaborate creatures and fantastic situations, the myths that Miyazaki create are better than the films themselves," Nishimoto said.

Many students watched Miyazaki's films as children, and his work was just as integral to their childhoods as Walt Disney's was for others. While Miyazaki films are usually as-

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long since been bringing his work around the world, even the United States. Before Miyazaki became prominent, American audiences were already watching anime such as "Kimba the White Lion" and reading manga such as "Akira" in the 1980s. A combination of a growing Asian population in America and the revival of animation in film paved the road to success for Miyazaki.

"He rode the wave and hit a chord," said art teacher and yearbook adviser Jay Shel-

sociated with childhood for many students, it's not uncommon for students to revisit his films and find new meaning in his work.

"I like how he portrays Sophie [from 'Howl's Moving Castle']," junior Annie Wang said. "Even though she was turned into an old lady, she broke the spell by finding her inner beauty. I think that's really nice because we all need that in society right now."

Miyazaki is also credited with making films that evoke an intense emotional response from viewers.

"Every single one of his movies can make you go through the whole human range of emotions," Wang said. "There will be parts when you're laughing to death, and there will be parts when you're bawling your eyes out and parts when you're saying, 'Whoa, that's really deep.'"

Another defining quality of Miyazaki's work is the music he integrates into his films.

In several of his films, Miyazaki has had composer Joe Hisaishi write the score for many of his films, namely "Spirited Away" and "Howl's Moving Castle," which have been well received by fans all around.

"I think his music helps bring the movie to life," Lim said. "The movie wouldn't be able to accomplish that without the music."

According to many students, Miyazaki's work will be sorely missed and when he steps down, he will leave behind a legacy that has impacted generations. His playful, magical style is unlike any other.

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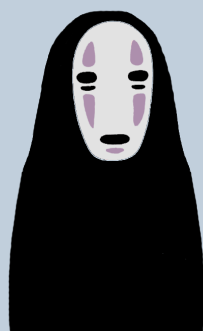
## MIYAZAKI MEANINGS



### 'TOTORO' (1988)

*Prevalent themes: death*

In "My Neighbor Totoro," Totoro is interpreted as the god of death, in that only people who are dead or near death can see him and interact with him. Also, it is rumored that both of the main characters are dead, one drowned and the other murdered. The eerie incorporation of death can be disturbing because the film was marketed to young children.



### 'SPIRITED AWAY' (2001)

*Prevalent themes: greed, gluttony, coming of age, and generational conflict*

"Spirited Away" follows the story of Chihiro Ogino as she journeys into a spirit world to lift her parents from a curse that turned them into pigs. The use of the massive pigs represents the family's greed to traverse into another world as an escape from their own. Miyazaki uses the bathhouse in which the story takes place as a microcosm of diverse characters and lifestyles to blend the story with its many messages.



### 'HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE' (2004)

*Prevalent themes: anti-war*

"Howl's Moving Castle" is a metaphor for Miyazaki's anti-war feelings directed at the War in Iraq that was on-going at the time of the film's release. The characters' open dislike of the war, as well as the depiction of the destructive quality of war in many scenes made Miyazaki's opinion of the war clear. Miyazaki's intent was to silently protest the war while making a visual representation of Japan's stance on the Iraqi conflict.

Kathleen Yuan | El Estoque Photo Illustration

## MIYAZAKI BY THE NUMBERS

WOULD YOU WATCH A MOVIE JUST BECAUSE MIYAZAKI MADE IT?

25%  
YES

GROWING UP, DID YOU WATCH MIYAZAKI'S MOVIES?

28%  
YES, SOMETIMES

13%  
YES, RELIGIOUSLY

59%  
NO

This data was gathered from an online survey of 349 respondents.