

# 暗戀桃花源

**Àn liàn táo huā yuán** (Secret Love: The Peach Blossom Land) 1993 Taiwan

Directed by Stan Lai (Lai Shengchuan), starring Lin Ching Hsia, Jin Shijie and Li Liqun, this film is a cinematic remake of Lai's avant-garde play "The Peach Blossom Land". It was highly acclaimed and awarded at the Tokyo Film Festival in 1993.

In 1998 the play was performed by the Chinese Students Association (consisting mostly of Taiwan, Malaysian and Indonesian students) at the University of Melbourne in both Chinese and English versions under the title "Two Stages" (directed by Jin Yi).

In the film two separate plays are being rehearsed at the same time in the same theater and the actors and directors have to fight for the stage. The first is the story of two lovers, Yun Zhifan and Jiang Bin, who are together in Shanghai at the end of the Second World War (1945), but become separated during the Chinese Civil War. Both go to Taiwan separately, but each believes the other remained on the mainland and is hence incommunicado.

The second is an unconventional stage adaptation of the Jin-era poet Tao Qian's (aka Tao Yuanming 372-427) story **Taohuayuan ji** (Record/tale of the Peach Blossom Spring) about a Never-Never Land discovered by a fisherman who boats his way up to the source of a certain stream. In the original story, the Peach Blossom Land is full of happy people who have escaped from war and chaos and remain blissfully ignorant of the year or dynastic changes back in China. The postmodern stage version is far less perfect, with nagging questions of identity loss, amnesia, dishonesty and adultery constantly rearing their ugly heads. The tension is at points relieved by a sense of the absurd, reinforced by the use of slapstick comedy.

Shot entirely in a studio, the film relies on extensive dialogue.

(See the following article from the book **Transnational Chinese Cinemas** for more details).

Questions for discussion:

1. What do you learn about the Chinese Civil War from this film?
2. How is the Chinese diaspora reflected in the film?
3. What aspects of the film are "postmodern"?