



Raymond TO 杜國威 (1946–)

Screenwriter, director, executive producer

Raymond To was born in Hong Kong to a family from Panyu, Guangdong. He worked as a secondary school teacher for 17 years while promoting theatre in school. In 1979, a short play he wrote was selected for a Hong Kong Repertory Theatre award. In 1992, he won a scholarship to study drama in New York for a year. Afterwards, he began writing plays full-time and joined the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre as its resident playwright, where he wrote many popular stage plays and even won Best Script at the Hong Kong Drama Awards three times.

As a child, To had already performed in multiple radio dramas and entered the film industry as a child actor, with parts in *A Posthumous Child* (Parts One and Two, 1956) and *The Affairs of Ping* (Parts One and Two, 1960-61). In the 1980s, he contributed as a screenwriter on *Shanghai Blues* (1984, co-written with Szeto Cheuk-hon and John Chan Koon-chung). Afterwards, he continued to write more screenplays, including *Peking Opera Blues* (1986), *When Fortune Smiles* (1990), *Oh! My Three Guys* (1994), *Sea Root* (1995), *Perhaps Love* (2005, co-written with Aubrey Lam Oi-wah), and so forth.

In the mid-90s, To co-founded The Spring-Time Group with Clifton Ko Chi-sum and Ko Tin-lung, which produced stage plays as well as films, such as *I Have a Date with Spring* (1994), written by To, based on his stage play of the same title. The film earned a box office of HK\$21 million and won Best Screenplay at the Hong Kong Film Awards. Subsequently, several more stage plays by him were put on the silver screen, including *One of the Lucky Ones* (1994), *The Umbrella Story* (1995), *Hu-Du-Men* (1996), *Love au Zen* (2001) and *Forever Yours* (2004), and kickstarted a wave of interest in film adaptations of stage plays. Among them, *The Mad Phoenix* (1997) helped To earn his second Best Screenplay at the Hong Kong Film Awards.

To began directing films in the 2000s, debuting with *Forever and Ever* (2001), based on his stage play of the same title, for which Sylvia Chang won Best Actress at the Hong Kong Film Awards. Other films he directed include *Miss Du Shiniang* (2003), also adapted from his stage play, as well as *May and August* (2002) and *Master Q: Incredible Pet Detective* (2003).

To often took inspiration from the Cantonese opera circle in works such as *A Sentimental Journey*, premiered in 1999, with a star-studded cast that included Connie Chan Po-chu, Patra Au Ga-man and Tse Kwan-ho. *Love in the Bamboo Grove* is a Cantonese opera by To that premiered in 2023, in his first commission by the Hong Kong Arts Festival. To also served as a visiting artist at Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts' School of Film and Television and artist-in-residence at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His contributions are well recognised by society and has earned honours such as Best Playwright at the Hong Kong Artist's Award (1989), the Bronze Bauhinia Star (1999) and Honorary University Fellowship at the University of Hong Kong (2005).
