

PAST LIVES

South Korea/USA (2023) 106 minutes

Director: Celine Song

Cast: Greta Lee (Nora)
Teo Yoo (Hae Sung)
John Magaro (Arthur)



Screening 8th January 2025 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

As a child in South Korea, Na Young crushes on another boy in her class, Hae Sung. Their relationship is just starting when her parents decide to move to Canada. The two childhood friends drift apart as their lives move on in different countries. Twelve years later, the pair reconnect over Facebook and they are soon waiting for each other's regular calls...

Reviews



Past Lives is a wistful *what-if* story about two people, the children they were and the adults they become. The movie follows them through the years and across assorted reunions, separations and continents as well as milestones momentous and ordinary. It's a tale of friendship, love, regret and what it means to truly live here and now. In a sense it is a time-travel movie, because even as the two characters keep moving forward, they remain inexorably tethered to the past, which means it's also a story about everyday life.

Manohla Dargis, The New York Times

Revisiting this film now, I think what makes it so powerful is its portrayal of Nora and Hae Sung's childhood. These scenes are not, as they might be in a different drama, a mere prologue or just glancingly important as a curtain-raiser: their inter-relationship as children is as important as their connection as adults. These are their past lives and they live on into the present.

Both Nora and Hae Sung are aware of the romantic Korean concept of *In-yun* : providence, fate and the reuniting of souls who knew each other in past lives. This airy concept has a concrete new reality in the digital 21st century. Their past lives were their childhoods, which might in other eras have been forgotten, but which now have a vivid reality in a world of instant data retrieval. For this film, it is the stuff of the most heartfelt love, the most profound self-questioning.

Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian

Film Facts

- The film was named one of the top ten films of 2023 by the *National Board of Review* and the *American Film Institute* and received multiple accolades. At the 96th Academy Awards, it was nominated for Best Original Screenplay and Best Picture.

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