



## LEE Sun-fung 李晨風 (1909.6.1–1985.5.21)

### Director

A native of Xinhui, Guangdong, Lee was born in Guangzhou with the original name Lee Ping-kuen. He had the nickname 'Uncle Cha'. Orphaned at an early age, Lee was raised by his grandmother and aunt. He studied at the Guangdong Province First Middle School. In 1928, he enrolled in the Theatre College affiliated with the Lingnan University in Guangzhou. Lee later formed a theatre troupe with his uncle Lee Fa, Lo Duen, Tam Sun-fung (the three later became film directors) and several classmates to stage *wenming xi* (civilised plays). In 1929, He transferred to the Drama School affiliated with the Guangdong Drama Research Centre, headed by Ouyang Yuqian, and started acting in dramas with his classmates Lo Duen and Ng Wui. In 1933, Lee moved to Hong Kong, where he became a teacher and remained active in amateur theatre. In 1935, he entered the film industry and worked as a contributing actor. He soon began to write screenplays, and his first work was *The Bomber Wen Shengcai* (co-written with Lo Duen and Poon Tsi-tam, 1937).

During Japanese occupation, he fled to Guangzhouwan with his wife Lee Yuet-ching, four sons and a daughter, before moving to Vietnam with Ng Cho-fan and Tse Yik-chi where they eked out a living by performing dramas, taking them to places such as Vietnam, Thailand, Malaya and Singapore. After the war, he returned to Hong Kong and directed *It Will Pay Off* (1949). Appalled by the decline in quality of post-war Cantonese films, he established The Union Film Enterprise Ltd in 1952 with a group of committed filmmakers, while serving as head of directing and screenwriting. He also directed titles such as *Spring* (1953), *Anna* (1955) and *Human Relationships* (1959) for The Union Film. *Spring*, which he directed and adapted from the eponymous novel by Ba Jin, won him the 1949-1955 Films of Excellence Award presented by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China. Lee later assisted Ng Cho-fan in setting up Hwa Lien Film Co, where he wrote and directed the company's inaugural production *It Was a Cold Winter Night* (1955). His other prominent works in the 1950s include *Sunrise* (1953), *The Good Earth* (1954), *The Lone Swan* (1955) and *A Tale of Laughter and Tears* (1957).

His repertoire from the 1960s consisted mainly of period titles, in Mandarin or in Cantonese, made for companies such as Feng Huang and Sun Luen, most of which were penned by his son Lee Sil-hong, including *For Life or for Death* (1961), *So Siu Siu* (1962), *The Scholar and the Woman Ghost* (1962) and *Liu Hai Meets Fairies* (1962). The last film starring Yam Kim-fai and Pak Suet-sin, *The Tragedy of a Poet King* (1968) was directed and penned by Lee and his son respectively. In the 1960s, he directed several Chaozhou opera films including *Prince Lau Chiang* (1962), *The Story of Chun Xiang* (1962) and *Mermaid Story* (1965), etc. The father-and-son team once established Modern Film Company with Chow Chung in the 1970s and produced three films, including *The Loner* (1972) directed by Lee himself. Lee retired after shooting *The Devil Husband* (1978). He passed away of illness in Hong Kong on 21 May 1985.