



## CHAN Chor-wai 陳楚蕙 (1943.8.5–2012.10.23)

### Actress

Born Chan Yuk-chun in Hong Kong of Puning, Guangdong ancestry, Chan's parents moved back to their hometown when she was one year old; they returned to Hong Kong after the war ended. In 1953, Chan was accepted into Xintiancai Chaozhou Opera Troupe as a trainee alongside Cheng Chor-heung. She studied with Cheung Muk-chun and specialised in playing *xiaosheng* (young civil male) roles. During her training, Chan also made a foray into the world of shadow plays. Chan made her stage debut in 1956 at the tender age of 13, performing the lead role in *The Dual Blades*. She later worked as a Chaozhou-dialect dubbing artist, most notably providing the Chaozhou-dialect singing voice for Yam Kim-fai's and Law Kim-long's characters. In 1960, Chan made her screen debut as the male lead in *The Stepmother* (1960) with Xintiancai. In the same year, she appeared in a cameo role in the Tor Ying Film Co production *A Wronged Daughter-in-Law* (1960) as the fisherman's daughter. Chan won critical acclaim for her performance in her third film *Unchanged Hearts* (1961), playing opposite the *huadan* (young female) Fong Hau-yuk. Chan was later featured in many Tor Ying's and Bian Sing Motion Picture Co's productions, often playing opposite Tsang Shan-fung, a *huadan* actress from Thailand. Notable films include *The Selfless Woman General* (1961), *Phoenix Ornament* (1961), *The Misplaced Love-Token* (1962) and *Prince Lau Chiang* (1962). She was also featured in the productions of United Motion Picture Production Co., playing opposite Fong Hau-yuk in such films as *The Red-Haired Steed* (1963) and *Perfect Lady* (1963). In 1963, Kong Ngee Co Ltd (Singapore) established Chiu Ngee Motion Picture Production Company for the sole purpose of producing Chaozhou-dialect films. Notable Chiu Ngee productions starring Chan Chor-wai and Tai Lang Film Co.'s top female star Lily Chan include: *Dream in Peony Pavilion* (1963), *Story of the Plum Blossom* (1963), *Lovers Bridged by the Wall* (1964) and *Story of the Thorn Hairpin* (1964). Chan's performance in *A Common Scholar* (1963), a Chiu Ngee production starring Chan and *huadan* actress Mei Zhen, was considered one of her masterworks. In February of 1964, Chan signed an exclusive contract with Chiu Ngee Motion Pictures and went on to make the last consignment of Chaozhou-dialect films that include *The Incorruptible Official Dong Xuan* (1966) and *The Scholar Cui Mingfeng* (Part 1 & 2, 1968). During her film career that spanned only a few years, Chan starred in over 50 Chaozhou-dialect films.

In 1966, Chan went on tour in Thailand for the first time as a featured player with Xintiancai, captivating theatre and movie fans alike. In the few years that followed, her tour across Southeast Asia enjoyed great popularity, earning her the name 'King of *Xiaosheng*'. Chan retired from acting in the 1970s to care for her family but was lured out of retirement in 1980. In 1990, she founded Hong Kong Chor Hwee Teochew Opera Troupe. Active both at home and overseas, the theatre troupe often performed in collaboration with Chaozhou opera troupes from the Mainland. Still passionate about theatre and acting in her golden years, Chan's final singing performance was in September of 2012 at the 4th Teochew Opera Festival in Shantou, Guangdong. She passed away of illness on 23 October the same year.

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