



CHAN Pei 陳皮 (1904.3.3–1966.6.20)

Director

Born Chan Bing-fai and a native of Dongguan, Guangdong, Chan Pei was born in Guangzhou. He later migrated to Hong Kong with his family and received his secondary education at Diocesan Boys' School. His father Chan Hoi-lum was a renowned *xiaowu* (young military male) in Cantonese opera who performed under the stage name Leng Chuen. Chan was his eldest son and had played *chousheng* (male clown) under the stage name Chan Siu-Lum, alongside the two Cantonese opera veterans Sit Kok-sin and Sheung Hoi Mui. A theatre enthusiast, he was also a member of Lam Long Dramatic Association whose masterworks include *The Story of Leung Tin-loi* and *Sa Sam Siu*. In the 1920s, Chan co-founded the Mantianhong Company with friends and produced the silent film, *Romances Are Not for Me* (1925), which was never released in cinemas due to the Canton-Hong Kong Strike. In the 1930s, Chan adopted the stage name Chan Pei and became head of the Production Department of The New Moon Gramophone & Record Company. After leaving New Moon, he founded Huang Long Record Company which partnered with Pathé Records. Following the closing of his record label, Chan established the Huang Long Performing Arts Academy in Guangzhou that offered theatre and music courses taught by such luminaries as Lui Man-shing and Ho Tai-so. Chan and fellow actor Lai Siu-shan later co-founded The Public Theatre, a theatre troupe that was devoted to the promotion of the Left-Wing Drama Movement in China. In 1935, with the help of Sit Kok-sin, Chan joined the Nanyue Film Company and served as chief unit manager. In 1936, he directed *The Pain of Separation*, his first theatrically released film, starring the Cantonese opera legend Pak Kui-wing who sang the famous eponymous *nanyin* and performed in the eponymous opera. In 1937, inspired by Hollywood pictures, he made the first 'all-singing musical', *A Mysterious Night* that was wildly embraced by audiences. After the war, Chan returned to Hong Kong and directed *Love with No Result* (1947) and *I'm Crazy About You* (1947), both starring Hung Sin Nui. In 1951, he successfully persuaded Cantonese opera superstar Yam Kim-fai to make her screen debut in *The Valiant Poon On Perplexed by Love*.

In 1955, Chan directed *Moving House*, which was based on the original Cantonese opera by famed librettist Tong Tik-sang. It was a rare treat to have Tong taking on a singing and acting role. In 1960, Chan joined the Hing Fat Film Co and directed such films as *Romantic Music* (Part One and Concluding Episode, 1960) and *Witness for the Prosecution* (1961). When his health fell into decline, he shifted to the role of production manager. A prolific and innovative filmmaker, boasting over 150 titles in his filmography, Chan worked with nearly every celebrated Cantonese opera artist of his time. He was considered a pioneer in the theatre world, as well as recording and film industries. His musical knowledge and expertise allowed him to capture the exact rhythms and tempo within the *mise en scène* of the musical film genre. Together with his long-term collaborator, 'King of the Songwriters' Ng Yat-siu, Chan made many Cantonese opera and musical films such as *New Love Story of Leung Shan-pak and Chuk Ying-toi* (1951) and *Third Master Sha, the Heart Stealer* (1954). Chan retired after falling ill in 1964. On 20 June 1966, he passed away of liver cancer in Hong Kong.
