



CHEN Dieyi 陳蝶衣 (1909–2007.10.14)

Screenwriter, lyricist

Chen Dieyi was born Chen Zhexun in Changzhou, Jiangsu; also named Chen Yuandong. At age 14, he moved with his family to Shanghai after his father was hired by the *Sin Wan Pao* newspaper. After a year in secondary school, he left and became a trainee at *Sin Wan Pao*, working up the ranks until he made it into the editorial department at age 22. Three years later, he founded his own *Ming Xing Daily* and began a 'queen of film' pageant in 1933, with Butterfly Wu winning the inaugural title.

Chen continued to develop a career in journalism, taking up the role of editor at *The Creation Monthly* magazine during Shanghai's so-called 'Orphan Island' wartime period. Moved by the lyrics of *The Happy Couple* (1944) film theme song, 'Bu Bian de Xin' (The Unchanging Heart), Chen took the opportunity to meet the film's director Fang Peilin and wrote the lyrics to one of the songs for the film *The Phoenix Takes Flight* (1945). He continued collaborating with Fang and took part in writing lyrics for the director's musical films, such as *Songbird Flies Over the World* (1946), *Orioles Banished from the Flowers* (1948) and *Song of a Songstress* (1948), producing songs including 'Xiang Ge Li La' (Shangri La) and 'Ai Shen de Jian' (Cupid's Arrow).

In 1952, Chen moved to Hong Kong and wrote his first screenplay for director Tu Guangqi's *General Chai and Lady Balsam* (1953). Later, he penned the screenplays to *The Dawn of China's Revolution* (1953) and *Lady Balsam's Conquest* (1955) under the pen name Di Yi, and wrote the lyrics to the songs in the films. Under another pen name, Fang Bian, he wrote the screenplay and lyrics for the musical film *Songs of the Peach Blossom River* (1956), forming a creative triumvirate with composer Yao Min and dubbing vocalist Yao Lee. The trio continued working together on multiple films, with 'Chun Feng Wen Shang Wo de Lian' (Spring Breeze Kisses on My Face) from the film *Love is Everywhere* (1956) among their most iconic.

In Chen's screenwriting career, he wrote more than 50 screenplays in a variety of genres. Apart from musicals, he also worked on thrillers such as *The Case of the Walking Corpses* (1957), *Huangmei diao* period films like *The Peddler and the Beauty* (1964) and *The Mirror and the Lichee* (1967), crime films such as *Flame in Ashes* (1958), as well as *wuxia* films like *The Swallow Thief* (1961). *Dream of the Red Chamber* (1978) was his last screenplay.

In addition to film theme songs, Chen, who was entitled 'Lyricist of the Century', also wrote lyrics for pop songs, with more than 3,000 songs to his name. He is also credited for being the creator of 'Hong Kong-style pop songs' and won a Hong Kong Chinese Gold Songs 'Golden Needle Award' as well as the Composers and Authors Society of Hong Kong (CASH) Hall of Fame Award. After leaving the film industry in the late 1970s, he returned to journalism and published *The Secret History of Hong Kong Film Industry* and other books including a memoir and a poetry collection.
