



CHEUNG Muk-chun 張木津 (Year of birth unknown–1995)

Music, Composer

A native of Chaoyang, Guangdong, Cheung Muk-chun was the leader of Xintiancai Chaozhou Opera Troupe. Cheung's association with Xintiancai could be traced back to his father Zhang Xieduan, who founded the Xintiancai Shadow Play Troupe in late Qing dynasty. The youngest in the family, Cheung and his fourth elder brother, Cheung Muk-sang (also known as Cheung Tai-kwan) began training in the troupe at a young age. The two later took over the troupe as adults. In 1945, the two brothers moved to Hong Kong with their families and the troupe in tow. In the early 1950s, the troupe shifted from a shadow play troupe to a Chaozhou opera troupe, renaming itself Xintiancai Chaozhou Opera Troupe and naming Cheung Muk-chun its leader. Xintiancai began to recruit a cohort of new members, including Fong Hau-yuk, Chan Chor-wai and Cheng Chor-heung, who eventually became prominent actors. In the 1950s, Cheung often secured film work for the troupe, dubbing Cantonese musical scenes into Chaozhou-dialect. When Chaozhou-dialect films became popular in 1960, Gao Ge's Chaolian Film Company recruited Xintiancai to star in its first Chaozhou-dialect film, *The Stepmother* (1960). In that same year, the troupe appeared in Tor Ying Film Co's *A Wronged Daughter-in-Law* (1960).

After appearing in Bian Sing Motion Picture Co's *Unchanged Hearts* in 1961, Xintiancai became a regular for the company. The troupe was also regularly featured in films by Chaolian Film Company and United Motion Picture Production Co. Under Cheung's leadership, Xintiancai appeared in Chaozhou-dialect films such as *The Misplaced Love-Token* (1962), *Unworldly Event* (1962), *Dream in Peony Pavilion* (1963), *Four Appeals* (1964), *Pleading the Case for Sister-in-Law* (1965), *Love of Red Leaf* (1966) and *No Greater Love* (1968). Cheung was also a skilled drummer, thanks to his extensive experience with Chaozhou music and his time as a student of Chinese opera composer Lin Rulie. This musical background gave him the foundation to serve as the music supervisor starting with Xintiancai's first film. He also composed the music for most of the troupe's films. Aside from being an expert of traditional Chaozhou music, Cheung also adapted Cantonese opera into Chaozhou-dialect films. Cheung also served as producer on *The Red-Haired Steed* (1963) and *The Execution* (1967). Xintiancai was one of the two important pillars of Chaozhou opera films, and Cheung was its heart and soul. Responsible for the music of several dozen Chaozhou-dialect films, he made a significant contribution to Chaozhou-dialect cinema.

In the 1960s, Cheung led Xintiancai to perform in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia, etc. In his later years, Cheung was the Honourary Chairman of the Hong Kong Chor Hwee Teochew Opera Troupe, composing music for their productions and serving as its artistic consultant. He passed away in 1995.