



HO Fei-fan 何非凡 (1919.2.1–1980.10.28)

Actor

Born Ho Ho-nin and alias He Hong-kei, Ho was a native of Dongguan, Guangdong Province. He nurtured an early interest and talent in Cantonese opera. At the age of 15, he learned Cantonese opera from mentor and opera actor Lee Kiu-tin. He was later student of *chousheng* Chan Sing-cheung and opera star Sek Yin-tsi. His professional career began in earnest when he was 16, performing under the stage name of Ho Siu-lin, for several troupes including Fung Kau Wong. He played both *lache* (miscellaneous characters) parts and *xiaosheng* (young male) lead roles. His career was further enhanced when he debuted as *wenwusheng* (civil and military male role) under the banner of Wenyi Troupe. He started starring in such Cantonese operas as *Red Flowers Blooming at the Gate of Victory* and *A Sorrowful Song in a Dark Prison Cell*.

In 1947, Ho founded Fei Fan Heung Opera Troupe, where he played opposite famous *dan* Cho Chau-wan in the Cantonese opera version of the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, re-titled as *The Romantic Monk*. The play broke the all-time box-office records for Cantonese opera and was sold-out for 367 performances. It cemented his status as an A-list opera star and since then he was touted as the 'Romantic Monk'. He went on to star in many famous operas, including *A Sweet Girl's Fancies* (playing opposite Hung Sin Nui), *The Love Song in the Scripture* (playing opposite Fong Yim-fun), *The Mad Monk by the Sea* (playing opposite Tang Bik-wan), *Tragic Love of Ping-kei* (playing opposite Yu Lai-zhen) and *Two Immortals at the Pavilion of the Moon* (playing opposite Ng Lai-kwan).

Adept at civil roles, Ho was not only a charming leading man, but also a genuine singing talent. He created his own singing vocal style, known as the 'Fan Vocal Style'; he also recorded numerous best-selling albums, including *The Romantic Monk*, *The Mad Monk by the Sea* and *The White Rabbit Reunion*.

In 1950, Ho made his directorial debut with *Monk in Love*. From 1950 to 1963, he appeared in over 100 films, the bulk of which were adaptations of his stage operas, including *The Mad Monk by the Sea* (B & W in 1953; Col. in 1958), *The Impatient Bride* (1954), *Two Immortals at the Pavilion of the Moon* (1958), and *Tragic Love of Ping-kei* (1963). He founded Yuzhou Film Company in 1956 and released its inaugural production *Love Vs Love* that same year. The studio had produced some very popular films such as *The Romantic Monk* (1956) and *A Murder Case* (1961).

Between 1961 and 1965, Ho had been five times the chairman of the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong, making substantial contributions including setting up free schools. In 1980, he passed away in Hong Kong and was buried in Macao.
