



Joseph KOO 顧嘉輝 (1931.2.25–2023.1.3)

Composer, Musician, Executive Producer

Born in Guangzhou, a native of Suzhou, Jiangsu, Joseph Koo moved to Hong Kong with his family in 1948. Inspired by his sister, the singer Carrie Ku Mei, he became interested in music. In his early days, Koo organised an orchestra which performances were broadcast by Rediffusion Television (RTV). He was also responsible for the music in *Memories of Love* (1958) by Motion Picture & General Investment Co. Ltd. (MP & GI). In 1960, he received a scholarship to study at Berklee College of Music in the US, and his trip was financially covered by Run Run Shaw. After returning to Hong Kong in 1961, he composed 'Dreams' which was selected as an insert-song for *Love Without End* (1961) after an open call for song submissions and started his career in film music.

Koo continued to work as a freelance film composer for Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Ltd and produced many outstanding works. He won Best Music with *The Dancing Millionairess* (1964) in the 11th Film Festival in Asia and Best Music (Non-musical) with *Till the End of Time* (1966) at the 5th Golden Horse Awards in Taiwan. He also worked on the music in films including *The Crimson Palm* (1964), *The Lark* (1965) and *Song of Tomorrow* (1967). Koo had also written music for films for other companies including *Escorts over Tiger Hills* (1969), *Fist of Fury* (1972) and *The Fate of Lee Khan* (1973). He took the initiative to compose and invest in *Outside the Window* (1973) directed by Song Chun-so and Yok Teng-heung, and took on the rare role as the film's executive producer, a post he repeated for *News Hen* (1974) also by the two directors.

In the early 1970s, Koo joined Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) as the conductor of its orchestra and composed theme songs for its drama series including *The Fatal Irony* (1974). He subsequently composed theme songs for TVB programmes including *Hotel* (1976), *A House Is Not a Home* (1977), *The Bund* (1980) and the RTHK programme *Below the Lion Rock*. Koo ushered in a new era of Cantonese pop music by composing works with a contemporary sensibility. In 1981, Koo went back to the US briefly to study music again. In the 1970s and 80s, Koo worked in both film and television. His outstanding film music includes *The Butterfly Murders* (1979), *The Drummer* (1983) and *A Better Tomorrow* (1986). Koo won Best Original Film Score at the 10th Hong Kong Film Awards for *A Terra-Cotta Warrior* (1990) (with James Wong and Romeo Diaz).

Having written original music, composing, and arranging scores for over 200 films, Koo created countless classics. Throughout the years, he had been highly recognised and received numerous awards including the Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 1982, the Bronze Bauhinia Star and the Gold Bauhinia Star from the Hong Kong Government in 1998 and 2015 respectively. In addition to the many honorary awards from tertiary institutions, Koo was recognised with countless awards and honours from the arts sector including the CASH Hall of Fame Award from CASH in 1997 and the Life Achievement Award from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council in 2011. Joseph Koo died of illness in Canada on 3 January 2023.
