



LEE Hong-kum 李香琴 (1932.1.13–2021.1.4)

Actress, Producer, Director, Executive Producer

Born Lee Shui-kum with ancestral roots in Shunde, Guangdong, Lee Hong-kum moved to Macao during infancy. Fascinated with Cantonese opera since childhood, Lee was trained by the male *huadan* Siu Ang Ang and renowned performer Au Mo-fan. She later joined the Sun Moon Star Opera Troupe under *huadan* Tam Sau-zhen and performed in Guangzhou in 1948. She switched to Chan Kam-tong's Kam Tim Fa Opera Troupe the following year and gradually rose up the ranks, before joining Kwan Tak-hing's troupe as principal *huadan* to perform in southern region of Nanyang. Lee later returned to Hong Kong and played in small role in her first film, *Wong Fei-hung and the Lantern Festival Disturbance* (1956), thus taking her first step towards film stardom.

Mostly playing supporting roles for many years in the Cantonese film industry, Lee's role in *River of Mandarin Duck* (1960) laid the foundation for her subsequent successes playing villainesses. She was unforgettable as shrewish and devious concubines in palace fantasy dramas, such as *Prince Tailone* (1961) and the mean stepmother in *The Magic Cup* (1961). Her roles in modern films continued to surround the toxic female archetype who destroys couples and harms the innocent. She occasionally played decent characters, such as in *The Rainbow* (1963). Lee formed a sworn sisterhood in 1962 with *huadan* performers Yam Bing-ye, Kam Ying-lin, Hui Hing-hing, Lai Kwan-lin, Ying Lai-lei, Leung So-kam and Tam Sin-hung, together with Chu Yat-hung, establishing themselves as the 'Nine Sisters' group. They founded Heung Shing Film Co., which released *The Nine Ladies of Fragrant City* (1964). Lee started Hou Hou Film Co. in late 1966 and remained in a supporting role in its debut *The Precious Mirror* (1967), which she also produced.

Lee began a TV career in the late 1960s at Rediffusion Television (RTV), before joining Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) in 1972 and hosted *Enjoy Yourself Tonight*. Her collaboration with Tam Bing-man in the comedy skit 'Country Bumpkin' became wildly popular and kickstarted her film career. She first set up Joy Film Co. with Tam and Lydia Sum to produce *The Country Bumpkin* (1974), before starring in *The Country Bumpkin—In Style* (1974). Later she found her own Lee's Film Company to release *Countryman and the Scavenger* (1976) and *Cunning Tendency* (1978), in which Lee served as both lead actress and producer, and co-directed and acted in *You Are Wonderful* (1976) along with Lydia Sum. She also acted in *Crazy Boy and Pop-Eye* (1979) in which she served as the executive producer. She continued to act in many TV dramas such as *Hotel* (1976), playing a graceful, wealthy housewife; *Good Morning Mother-in-Law* (1983), performing the leading role with delicate nuance; and *Moonlight Resonance* (2008), in which her playful grandmother character connected deeply with the audience.

In 2007, Lee won a music award for featuring in Shirley Kwan's song. Throughout Lee's half century-plus career, she appeared in about 450 films. After the 2000s, she played a small but impressive character in *All's Well End's Well* (1992) and reprised the role multiple times in the related films, including her final work *All's Well, End's Well 2012* (2012).
