



LEE Siu-wan 李少芸 (1916–2002.7.21)

Screenwriter, Producer

Lee, with the real name Lee Bing-tat, was born into a family of scholars. A native of Xinhui, Guangdong Province, he was a famous Cantonese opera screenwriter, opera troupe administrator, film screenwriter and film production manager in Hong Kong. Before he became a full-time librettist, Lee occasionally performed in music clubs. His wife is opera veteran actress Yu Lai-zhen.

Lee's first Cantonese opera, *Return of the Swallows*, attracted the attention of the renowned actor Sit Kok-sin who lost no time in enlisting Lee to work for his Kok Sin Sing Opera Troupe. He was a prolific librettist, with such successful works like *The Tough and the Unreasonable* and *The Cuckoo's Soul in March*. Some of the most famous operas he penned include *Poor Lady Ping* (starring Ho Fei-fan), *Emperor Guang Xu's Nocturnal Sacrifice to Zhen Fei* (starring Sun Ma Si-tsang), *Red and White Peonies* (starring Hung Sin Nui), *The Crab Beauty* (starring Yu Lai-zhen), and *Wu Pan'an and His Impersonator* (starring Yam Kim-fai). Lee also founded and managed many operatic troupes, including the popular Tai Fung Wong Opera Troupe, which employed most of the renowned names of Cantonese opera, Lux Opera Troupe (which was co-founded by Yu Lai-zhen) and Chung Sun Sing Opera Troupe (co-founded by Lam Kar-sing).

Lee started writing scripts for movies in 1950. By 1970, he had written over 150 scripts, most of them were adaptations of his own opera plays; such as *The Crab Beauty* (1957) and *Tragic Love of Ping-kei* (1963). Many of his scripts touch upon the squabbles between the Eastern and Western Empress, thus paving the way for adaptations that were lifted from supernatural opera pieces, such as *The Headless Empress Bears a Son* (Part 1-3, 1957) and *Two Shade Lady* (Part 1, 2 & Concluding Episode, 1958-59).

Lee founded Youli Film Company, Dafenghuang Film Company and Lux Film Company. The inaugural production of Lux Film Company was *The Fourth Son of the Yang Family Visits His Mother* (1959). From 1959 to 1967, Lux produced close to a hundred features. Most of its productions were opera films: *Seven Phoenixes* (1961), *Uproar in the Palace* (1962), *Who Should be the Commander-in-Chief* (1967), among others. The opera films produced by Lux preserved much of the traditional art of opera performing, and many of them starred Lee's wife. The company also produced contemporary films, including *A Girl Named Leng Qiuwei* (Part 1 & 2, 1963), *My Four Children* (1964), and *All Packed in a Small House* (1965). Its last production was *Selling, Pawning and Borrowing* (1967).

Lee's last credited work was the script for the 1970 feature *The Young Girl Dares Not Venture Homeward*, which was co-written by Szeto On. Lee made an exit from the opera and film world in the 1980s and settled in Canada. He passed away in Toronto in 2002.
