



Li Lihua 李麗華 (1924–2017.3.19)

Actress, Executive Producer

A native of Hebei and born in Shanghai, Li's pet name was 'Xiaomi' and Her parents Li Guifang and Zhang Shaoquan were both famous Peking opera performers. At the age of 12, she learned the art with celebrated Peking opera master Zhang Eyun. At 16, she was scouted by the owner of Yi Hwa Film Company from Shanghai, Yan Chuntang, to make her screen debut in *Three Charming Smiles* (1940). The film was a box-office success and made Li a star. She went on to act in such films as *Emperor's Lover* (1940) and *Death of the Girl* (1941). Li stayed in Shanghai during the Japanese occupation. At the time, all film companies were integrated into the China United Film Holdings Company Ltd by the Japanese regime. Under which, she performed in productions such as *Fraternity*, *A Good Time at a Good Night* (both 1942), *A Brilliant Spectacle* (1943), *Remorse in Shanghai* (1944), etc. Li was condemned as a traitor after the war, but was eventually exonerated. She reconnected with the film industry and starred in Huang Zuolin's directorial debut, *Barber Takes A Wife* (1947).

In 1948, at the invitation from Li Zuyong, Li moved south to Hong Kong, where she signed on with Yung Hwa Motion Picture Industries Ltd and played in *Our Husband* and *A Fisherman's Honour* (both 1949). This marked a fresh start to her brilliant acting career. Henceforth, Li collaborated with prominent studios including Great Wall, Dragon-Horse, Hsin Hwa, Shaw & Sons, and Cathay, starring in *Awful Truth* (1950), *Flora, Should They Marry?* (both 1951), *Gold Diggers* (1952), *General Chai and Lady Balsam* (1953), *Blood Will Tell* (1955), *Madame Butterfly* (1956), etc. In the 1960s, Li joined the Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Ltd, where she played in popular works such as *Yang Kwei-fei (The Magnificent Concubine)* (1962) and *Empress Wu Tse-tien* (1963).

Li founded Lihua Film Company in 1954. She went on to shoot *The Beauty and the Dumb* (1954) and *The Great Wall* (1957), starring in both films and also serving as executive producer for the latter. In 1958, she played the heroine in the American production *China Doll* (1958). She married Yan Jun in 1959. Li quit the movie business in 1973 and immigrated to the US with her husband. She was later invited by King Hu to star in *The Fate of Lee Khan* (1973). In the following years, Li played in a small number of movies and finally bid the silver screen goodbye after filming *Dream of the Red Chamber* (1978). From 1940 to 1978, Li starred in nearly 120 films across Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. She collaborated with a vast number of directors, many of whom were shooting their directorial debuts, such as Yan Jun's *Love Eternal* (1953), Evan Yang's *The Little Girl Named Cabbage* (co-directed with Zhang Shankun, 1955) and Li Han-hsiang's *Blood in Snow* (1956). Li won the Golden Horse Award for Best Leading Actress twice, once for *Between Tears and Smiles* (1964) and the other for *Storm Over the Yangtze River* (1969). A versatile performer who brought a wide range of characters to life, Li was known as the 'Evergreen legend of Cinema'. She was given the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2015 Golden Horse Awards and the 2016 Hong Kong Film Awards respectively. She passed away in Hong Kong on 19 March 2017.
