



MAK Siu-ha 麥嘯霞 (1904.2.11–1941.12.17)

Director, Screenwriter

Art name Hong Ze. A native of Nanhai, born in Xiguan, Guangzhou. Mak took up teaching after graduating from the Guangzhou Military Academy in 1921. In 1928, he became a teacher at Kei Lap Primary School in Hong Kong. By the recommendation of Lo You-yung and Chan Tin-tsung, Mak was able to work for Cantonese opera troupes Tai Law Tin and Kok Sin Sing, writing operas for Ma Si-tsang and Sit Kok-sin respectively. During this period, he penned such scripts as *Scholar With Powder and Make-up On* and *The Voice Shattered the White Gate House* (both co-written with Ma Si-tsang and Lo You-yung); *The Heartbroken Xiao and His Letter* (co-written with Ma Si-tsang and Chan Tin-tsung); *Smashing the Moon of the Western Chamber*, *Charms of Niannu*, and *The Ghost Fire Roasts the Phoenix* (all co-written with Yung Yi aka Alice Yung). Apart from scriptwriting, Mak also took up the role of a librettist, producing such signature work as *A Blooming Rose*.

In 1928, Mak joined the Hong Kong Actor Training School, an affiliate of Lai Buk-hoi's Hong Kong Film Company, to nurture acting talent. In 1930, Mak starred in the silent film *The Pain of Separation* (1931) produced by Hong Kong Film. Three years later, he co-directed his debut work *Conscience* (co-directed with Chow Wing-loi), a self-written, self-starring part-talkie; and later in 1934, directed *Nightmare of Fortune* all by himself. In the ensuing years, he basically directed one to two film per year. Among his famous works are *Half-Blossomed Rose* (1935) and *The Rose Girl* (co-directed with Sit kok-sin, 1936); the main actress of the former, Wong Siu-hing, was touted as the 'half-blossomed rose' because of her performance in the film. Mak was known for his historical satires; before Nancy Chan first made a name in Shanghai by playing the title role in the Mandarin film *Hua Mu Lan* (1939), Mak wrote and directed a Cantonese film titled *The Woman General* (1939), with Chan as the heroine of the same name in 1938. In 1940, Mak wrote and directed *The Blood-stained Plum Blossom Fan*, another satire that harks back to 300 years ago to incite the counter-Japanese sentiment of the Hongkongers. Mak also dabbled in scriptwriting and took part in films directed by his peers.

In 1940, the Chinese Cultural Association organised a Guangdong cultural relics exhibition, and in its commemorative brochure *Guangdong Cultural Relics*, Mak authored an epic thesis titled 'A Brief History of Guangdong Operas', which is hailed today as a seminal piece on Cantonese opera history. On 17 December 1941, he was hit by a stray bullet and died in the Japanese-occupied Hong Kong.
