



PAK Suet-sin 白雪仙 (b. 1928.5.19)

Actress

Born in Guangzhou with the real name Chan Shuk-leung, Pak was a native of Shunde, Guangdong. After obtaining secondary education in Hong Kong, she became immersed in the world of Cantonese opera, probably under the influence of Pak Kui-wing, her famous opera star father. At the age of 12, she trained under Sit Kok-sin and performed with the Kok Sin Sing Opera Troupe, using her now famous stage name, Pak Suet-sin. She later received vocal training under the tutelage of musician Sin Kon-chi. During the Japanese Occupation, she managed to eke out a living performing for various troupes.

Pak became the leading player (specialising in the *huadan* roles) for the Kam Tim Fa Opera Troupe at the age of 16. Following this stint, she joined the New Voice Opera Troupe and began a long association with fellow actress Yam Kim-fai (who specialised in male roles). Under the New Voice Opera Troupe's banner, she performed such famous repertoire as *Better Go Home* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*, etc.; she later enrolled in various different troupes, including Kam Tim Fa, Tai Fung Wong and Golden Phoenix. In 1953, she became part of the Hung Wan, Do Bou and Lee Wing Wah Opera Troupe as *huadan*. In 1956, she formed the Sin Fung Ming Opera Troupe in partnership with Yam Kim-fai, performing such famous operas as *The Peony Pavilion*, *Princess Cheung Ping*, *The Purple Hairpin*, *The Reincarnation of Red Plum*, and *The Romance of the White Snake*.

Pak first appeared on the silver screen in 1947 in *Wife in the Morning*, *Sister-in-Law at Night*. Between 1947 and 1968, she played the lead in well over 120 titles. Among them are film adaptations of her famous opera roles in *Red and White Peonies* (1952), *Romance of Mount Fuji* (1954), *The Purple Hairpin* (1959) and *Tragedy of the Emperor's Daughter* (1959).

In 1961, Pak founded Sin Fung Ming Motion Picture Production Co. She retired after producing *Tragedy of a Poet King* (1968) for her own company. In 1963, Pak and Yam Kim-fai formed Chor Fung Ming Opera Troupe. Both were dedicated to supporting and training emerging talent under the troupe's banner. As of today, young apprentices like Lung Kim Sung and Mui Suet-si are still active in the Cantonese opera scene.

A serious and innovative performer, Pak's contribution to the art of Cantonese opera remains profound. In remembrance of Yam Kim-fai who passed away on 29 November 1989, Pak established the Yam-Pak Charitable Foundation. In 1990, *Tragedy of a Poet King* was re-released in 1990 for charity fundraising. Pak was conferred Honorary Fellow by the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts in 1996; Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hong Kong Film Awards; Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa* by the University of Hong Kong in 2004; the 2007 Hong Kong Arts Development Awards—Honorary Award by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council; and the Gold Bauhinia Star by the Hong Kong SAR Government in 2013.
