



SIT Kok-sin 薛覺先 (1904.4.7–1956.10.31)

Actor, Director

Born Sit Tsok-mui and alias Ping-hoi, Sit was a native of Shunde, Guangdong Province. He arrived in Hong Kong at the age of six and later studied at St. Paul's College.

Sit began to train as an opera actor at the age of 18 under the tutelage of Sun Siu Wah and was assigned to play the *lache* (miscellaneous roles) in the Wan Kau Lok Opera Troupe. His performance impressed the renowned actor Chu Chi-pak and became a *chou* player (male clown) for the Yan Sou Lin Opera Troupe in the following year. His role in *The Three Noblemen* made him a star performer. At 20, he led the Lei Yuen Lok Opera Troupe with Chan Fei-ning, performing numerous signature plays. In 1929, he founded Kok Sin Sing Opera Troupe. He consolidated his reputation in numerous plays thereafter, including *The White Gold Dragon*, *Romance of Jade Hall*, *Queen of the Stage* and *Why Don't You Return?*

Sit was adept at playing both lead roles (sometimes as male *huadan*) and a range of character parts. His versatility was such that he was known as the '*wanneng taidou*' (meaning the 'all-purpose hired hand'). Quite apart from his performing abilities, Sit floored his admirers with his singing technique, founding a style known as the 'Sit Vocal Style', in the world of Cantonese opera. He gradually became known as a reformist of his art, introducing certain aspects of the Northern School of opera performing into Cantonese opera and bringing in Western instrumental accompaniment. He came to inspire a new generation of opera artists—many of whom were his students, including Lam Kar-sing and Pak Suet-sin.

Sit's film career started as early as 1926 when he founded the Feifei Film Company in Shanghai, and using the name of Cheung Fei, directed and played the lead in *The Shameless Girl*. In 1933, he starred in *The White Gold Dragon*, the first Cantonese film ever produced by Shanghai's Unique Film Productions. Between 1926 and 1953, he appeared in around 40 features, including film adaptations of his stage master works such as *The Rose Girl* (1936), *Marriage Made in Heaven* (1939) and *Why Don't You Return?* (1940). Other popular films include *Return of the Swallows* (1948) and *The Impeachment of Yim Sung* (1952). His last film was *Love Affairs of the Opera Master* (1953).

In the early 1950s, Sit joined the Tai Fung Wong and Chun Sin Mei Opera Troupes. He also partnered with famous opera actresses, Fong Yim-fun and Hung Sing Nui, to perform in several signature plays. On 30 October 1956, he suffered a brain hemorrhage during the performance of *A Scholar Becomes Rich* in Guangzhou. However, he insisted on finishing the performance before going to the hospital and he passed away on the next day.
