



## TANG Bik-wan 鄧碧雲 (1926.9.27-1991.3.25)

### Actress, Producer

Born Tang Cheuk-fu and nicknamed 'Big Sister Bik', she was a native of Sanshui, Guangdong. At a young age, she received vocal training from singer Liu Liu-liu before moving to Hong Kong in 1937. There, she became an apprentice under the tutelage of the renowned male *huadan* Tang Chiu Lan Fong, and played *meixiang* (supporting female roles) in Chinese opera troupes, including Tai Ping Opera Troupe. Fearing of the war, she moved to Macao in 1942, and rose to stardom after performing in *The Hanging of Kwan Lai-chun*. Tang became a *zhengyin huadan* at the age of 16. Subsequently, she joined numerous Cantonese opera troupes, including the Kam Tim Fa Opera Troupe and the New China Cantonese Opera Troupe. In 1947, she formed the Bik Wan Tin Cantonese Opera Troupe. She toured with her troupe to perform in the US in 1971 and also groomed protégés including Chan Ka Ming, Cecilia Lee Fung-sing and Leung Hon-wai, contributed significantly to Cantonese opera. Her last opera performance was *Princess and the Poor Scholar*, staged in 1977. Throughout Tang's career, her versatility to perform various characters and even *sheng* roles (the male roles), gave her the moniker of the 'Versatile Opera Queen'.

Since the 1950s, she has been performing in films, with her cinematic debut in *Tsi Wan's Farewell in Storm and Fire* (1950). She had a versatile acting repertoire and starred in *The Mad Monk by the Sea* (1953 and remade as *Mad Monk* in 1958), *Lady with a Silver and Bitter Tongue* (1956), *Emperor Xiang and the Goddess* (1957), *The Secret Book (Part One, Part Two and the Concluding Episode, 1961-1962)* and *Delicious Snacks* (1965). Tang was a chameleon actress when portraying different roles. In her films, she could be graceful and charming, or she could, without holding back, give a humorous and memorable performance when playing comedic characters such as the sharp-tongued 'Iron-beaked Hen' and the unruly and immature 'Steamed Raw Cucumber' from *The Shrew* (1956), the crafty and difficult daughter-in-law 'Horizontally-striped Blade' in *Mother-in-Law* (1956) and the maid 'Ho Jie' in *A Bundle of Joys* (1965). Tang was also the founder of three film companies: Baobao Film Company, Baohua Film Company, and Kam Big Film Co., which had produced more than 40 films. In the later period, she participated in fewer films, works include *Esprit d'amour* (1983), *Mr. Possessed* (1988), and *She Shoots Straight* (1990).

Since the 1970s, Tang has ventured into the realm of television, captivating audiences with her performances in numerous celebrated television series, including Television Broadcasts Limited's *A House Is Not A Home* (1977), Rediffusion Television (RTV)'s *Chameleon* (1978), Commercial Television's *Love Affairs* (1978), and Television Division of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK)'s *Miracle of the Orient* (1984). During her late years, she showcased her talent once again with the role of a mother in the series *The Seasons* (1987), which propelled her to fame as the widely recognised 'Ma Da' (mother). She later reprised this character in the film *Mother vs Mother* (1988), which became a great hit. She passed away of illness in Hong Kong in March 1991.

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