



## TONG Tik-sang 唐滌生 (1917.6.18–1959.9.15)

### Screenwriter, Director

Born in Tang Jia Wan of Zhongshan in Guangdong with the original name Tong Hong-nin, Tong studied at Prime Minister's Hometown Memorial School (now Sun Yat-sen Memorial Middle School) in 1935. He later moved to Shanghai with his family, studying at a fine arts school before entering the University of Shanghai. Tong moved to Hong Kong when Japan invaded Shanghai. Through his cousin, Tong Suet-hing, Tong joined the Kok Sin Sing Opera Troupe as a copyist, and studied libretto writing under the wing of the famed playwrights Fung Chi-fun and Mak Siu-ha. Written in 1938 for Pak Kui-wing's Hoi Chu Opera Company of Men and Women, *The Consoling Lotus of Jiangcheng* is believed to be Tong's first Cantonese work. In 1940, Tong penned his debut screenplay, *The Tolling Bell*, and also appeared in the film under the name Tong Dan.

Some of Tong's most famous libretti in the 1940s include *Gone Like a Dream* and *Hongxian Steals the Case*. He reached his peak in the 1950s producing such fine work as *White Poplar Red Tears*, *Lonely Moon on a Lonely Bed* (which was one of the definitive roles of actress Fong Yim-fun), *A Buddhist Recluse for 14 Years*, *Swallows Come Home*, *Emperor Wu and Lady Wei* and *I Cannot Love You*.

Tong also collaborated with Pak Suet-sin and Yam Kim-fai in the 1950s. Their works together are considered classics today—most of them written for the two stars' Sin Fung Ming Opera Troupe. Their most representative works include *The Peony Pavilion*, *The Purple Hairpin*, *Goddess of the Ninth Heaven*, *Triennial Mourning on the Bridge* and many more.

On the evening of 14 September 1959, while attending the premiere of his work, *The Reincarnation of Red Plum*, at the Lee Theatre, Tong suffered a cerebral haemorrhage and was rushed to hospital but was certified dead the following day.

Most of Tong's libretti were adapted for the screen but Tong also carved out a career as a screenwriter and director. His famous works include *I'm Crazy About You* (1947), *Two Opium Addicts Sweep a Long Dyke* (1948), *Lonely Moon on a Lonely Bed* (1952), *The Legend of Purple Hairpin* (1959), *Princess Cheung Ping* (1959) and *Butterfly and Red Pear Blossom* (1959); notable screenplays for modern-dress films include *Romance of Fuji Mountain* (1954) and *Sweet Dreams* (1955).

Tong also directed ten films including *The Phoenix's Escape* (1948), *The Story of Dong Xiaowan* (1950) and *Mysterious Murder* (Part 1 & 2, 1951). His last directed film was *How the Sedan Carrier Raised the Bride* (1955).

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