



WEI Wei 韋偉 (1922.5.17–2023.11.1)

Actress

Wei Wei was born Mau Mon-yen in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province, while her family hailed from Zhongshan, Guangdong. She relocated to Shanghai with her family when she was a child. Shortly after her high school graduation, war broke out and Wei gave up on further studies. She was inspired by anti-Japanese plays to join the world of theatre. After successfully auditioning for the Shanghai Art Troupe, co-founded by stage and screen directors Huang Zuolin and Fei Mu, she began her acting career under the stage name of Wei Wei.

After the war, Wei studied journalism but returned to the stage before graduation. She caught the eye of Wu Xingzai, the head of Wenhua Film Company, and made her big screen debut as a prostitute in *Night Inn* (directed by Huang Zuolin, 1947). She was later cast as the female lead of Fei's picture, *Spring in a Small Town* (1948), in which she delivered a brilliant performance as Zhou Yuwen, highlighting every single up and down in the character's emotional journey—a perfect complement to the film's subtle and plain style. *Spring in a Small Town* is now regarded as a classic of Chinese cinema.

Amid turbulent times, Wei travelled south with Fei to Hong Kong in 1947, during which she returned to the Mainland to star in *The Great Reunion* (1948). After settling in Hong Kong, she continued to follow Fei's footsteps and joined Dragon-Horse (Loon-Ma) Films. She then played a member of an acrobatic troupe stranded in Hong Kong in *The Show Must Go On* (1952), written and directed by Fei. With Fei's unfortunate and sudden passing in 1951, the film was completed by Zhu Shilin and Qi Wenshao. Wei was in many of Zhu's films, including *Between Fire and Water* (1955), a fine work of realism depicting the dire living conditions of its grassroots characters; and *Year In, Year Out* (1955), a story centred on family conflicts. Portraying a righteous housewife in the former film and, in stark contrast, a fierce and overbearing lady of the house in the latter—Wei demonstrated her range and versatility. In the 1950s, she mainly worked on Feng Huang Motion Picture Co.'s productions, such as *The Foolish Heart* (1956), *An Unmarried Mother* (1958), and *Alarm Conscious* (1960).

In 1963, Wei took part in the period comedy *The Reluctant Bridegroom* (1964) and *Men and Women* (1964), a fundraising production by the South China Film Industry Workers Union. She then retired from the screen until the mid-1990s, when she made cameo appearances in works like *The Age of Miracles* (1996), *Anna Magdalena* (1998), *The Truth About Jane and Sam* (1999), and *The Drunkard* (2010), as well as appearing in Jia Zhangke's documentary *I Wish I Knew* (2010). Wei also made occasional public appearances, such as 'A Tribute to Fei Mu—A Great Master of Chinese Films' co-organised by the Hong Kong Arts Centre and The Hong Kong Institute for Promotion of Chinese Culture in 1997, where she was one of the speakers at the seminar 'The Art of Fei Mu'.
