



## WONG Man-lei 黃曼梨 (1913–1998.4.8)

### Actress

A native of Zhongshan, Guangdong, Wong was born in Hong Kong with the original name Wong Man-so and was also known as Wong Lan-yan. Wong studied at Italian Convent School (now known as Sacred Heart Canossian College) and Belilios Teachers' College for Women. She had a strong passion for film and aspired to become an actress since a young age. In 1930, she wrote a cover letter to Ji'nan Film Company in Shanghai and thereby made her foray. She first appeared in silent films such as *Burns the White-bird Temple* and *24 Heroes* under the stage name Wong Man-lai. After her contract with Ji'nan expired, Wong returned to Hong Kong and joined United Photoplay Service, where she took part in *Cry of the Cuckoo in the Temple* (1932), *Midnight Thrill* (aka *Gunshot at Midnight*, 1932), *The Shining Pearl* (1933), etc. When United Photoplay Service shut down its Hong Kong branch, she joined Grandview Film Company Limited and starred in her first sound feature, *Yesterday's Song* (1935); followed by *New Youth* (1936), *Song of life* (1937), *Little Guangdong* (1940), *Poor Souls* (1940) and *The Little Tiger* (1941).

After Hong Kong fell into Japanese occupation, she fled to Macao and later settled in Guangzhouwan, where she formed a theatre troupe with other filmmakers from Hong Kong to perform and make ends meet. She later moved to Vietnam and was stranded there for three years. After the Japanese surrendered, she performed in Thailand, Malaya and Singapore to save up for her homecoming trip. Wong returned to Hong Kong by the end of 1946. Seeing the decline of Cantonese cinema, she launched the 'Cantonese Film Clean-up Movement' with some film workers and later established the South China Film Industry Workers Union, with herself on the board of directors. In 1952, Wong co-founded The Union Film Enterprise Ltd with a number of like-minded film workers and appeared in most of the company's productions, including the signature titles *A Son is Born* (1953), *In the Face of Demolition* (1953), *Parents' Hearts* (1955), *Adultery* (1958) and *The Bloody Sucker* (1962). Her other celebrated works include *The Prodigal Son* (1952), *Mutual Understanding* (1954), *Wilderness* (1956) and *The Mad Woman* (1964). She retired from the screen due to health issues after completing *Confused Love* (1967). She released her autobiography *My Acting Life* in 1952.

Wong ventured into the television industry in the 1970s and appeared in many drama series. Wong received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 14th Hong Kong Film Awards in 1995. She passed away of illness on 8 April 1998 in Hong Kong.