



## YAM Kim-fai 任劍輝 (1913.2.4–1989.11.29)

### Actress

Born Yam Lee-chor and also named Yam Yuen-ye, Yam is a native of Nanhai County, Guangdong Province. At the age of 13, she was taught by her aunt Siu Kiu Tin and Wong Lui-hap. A fan of Kwai Ming-yeung, Yam often went to the theatre to watch and study Kwai's performances. She was known as the 'Female Kwai Ming-yeung' because of their similarity in style. In her earlier years, Yam became the principal performer (*wenwusheng*) in such all-female opera troupes as Kwan Fong Yim Ying and Kan Fa Yim Ying; they usually performed on the rooftop of the Guangzhou Sincere department store. Touted as 'Theatre Fans' Lover', Yam's interpretation of male roles became her definitive style and was highly regarded by female fans.

In 1943, Yam founded New Voice Opera Troupe and formed many other troupes with Pak Suet-sin after 1953, such as Hung Wan, Do Bou, Lei Wing Wah and Sin Fung Ming Opera Troupe. She went on to perform until she retired from the theatre stage in 1969. She performed such productions as *Goddess of the Ninth Heaven*, *Triennial Mourning on the Bridge*, *Princess Cheung Ping* and *The Purple Hairpin*.

Yam was featured in a supporting role in a pre-war film, *A Mysterious Night* (1937). She played her first title role in *The Valiant Poon On Perplexed by Love* (1951). From 1951 to 1968, she had more than 300 films to her credit, including *A King Speaks His Heart in the Cuckoo's Song* (1951), *Wife in the Morning*, *Sister-in-Law at Night* (1952), *Romance of Fuji Mountain* (1954), *The Nymph of the River Lo* (1957), *A Buddhist Recluse for 14 years* (1958), *A Poor Girl* (1959), *The Legend of Purple Hairpin* (1959), *Princess Cheung Ping* (1959), *Butterfly and Red Pear Blossom* (1959), *Lee Sam-neung* (1959), *Golden Phoenix and Dragon* (1961), *The Red Shoes* (1964), *The Great Red Robe* (1965), etc. Her last film was *Tragedy of a Poet King* (1968).

Yam later went behind the scenes due to health problems but her involvement in opera did not stop. Yam and Pak Suet-sin were dedicated in training younger actors for the Chor Fung Ming Opera Troupe, with disciples Lung Kim-sung and Mui Suet-si being the staple performers.

Starting in 1957, Yam was voted the ten most popular stars in Cantonese movies for 14 consecutive years in the poll conducted by *Overseas Chinese Daily News*. Yam passed away in 1989. In 1995, Yam was the recipient of the Cantonese Opera Film Century Award at the 14th Hong Kong Film Awards for her artistic contributions and excellence.

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