



阮眉

Yuen May

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眉間錦繡，曲裡乾坤：阮眉百壽曲藝人生 ——黃昏之年，譜出彩虹

序言：長河迴響，暮色如虹

若將人生比作長河，阮眉的這條河，在理應匯入靜謐大海的黃昏時刻，卻在異國的落日餘暉中，折射出一道絢爛奪目的彩虹。常人視暮年為餘生，她卻將這建築成“文化新舞台”。這位跨越世紀的藝壇長青樹，從香江到加拿大多倫多，當她在楓葉之國安頓下來時，年逾古稀的她拿起那支與血脈相連的纖筆，勾勒出嶺南風情的萬種姿彩。這不僅是一個藝術家的執着，更是一場關於文化種子的遷徙。在她的筆下，粵劇不再是舊夢，而是在異域土壤裡開出的、帶有福音清香與理想純真的新花園。

新界花香，梨園啟蒙

1926年，一陣花香拉開了阮眉人生的序幕。原名王婉美的她，出生在一個香港新界元朗花農的小康之家。那是一戰菸硝已散，二戰陰霾未至之間的一個相對和平的年代，花農家庭的芬芳與美感氛圍，潛移默化地塑造了她最初的人生。

兒時的阮眉，是隨父母穿梭在石塘咀太平戲院、上環高陞戲院的小戲迷。那時戲院裡，台上是“花旦王”千里駒、名伶陳非儂與白駒榮，操着粵劇始源的桂林官話，用古雅辭藻，吟嘆着千年古老愛情故事；在戲台下觀眾席間，却穿插着此起彼伏的“加應子...陳皮梅...”的小販吆賣聲。阮眉痴迷地盯着台上的紮腳、身段與做手。那些優雅華麗的唱詞，如同一顆顆種

子，落入她幼小的心田，等待開花的一天。

1941年，香港淪陷。戰亂摧毀了寧靜，卻激發出她的俠骨。為了躲避日軍，少女阮眉不得不女扮男裝。令人動容的是，即便生活艱辛，父親仍堅持在花檔義賣勞軍。這種“位卑未敢忘憂國”的家教，成了她日後詞作中“硬氣”的來源。在三年零八個月的黑暗歲月裡，警報聲拉響時，屋子裡關燈，她便藉着手電筒的微光閱讀《聊齋誌異》、《西遊記》、《封神榜》、外國名著中譯本，及巴金、朱自清、冰心、張恨水等近代名家的作品。鄰里的學者見她好學，資質卓越，親授她詩詞歌賦。這份亂世中的“偷學”，對文學的熱愛和汲取，為她日後驚艷詞壇的文筆打下了最堅實的古文根基。

五十之年，再譜新章

十九歲步入社會，阮眉曾是洋行的接線生，也曾是一針一線的裁縫。1967年，她自立門戶創辦“彩虹裁剪學校”，授藝育人十一載，學生盈門，生意興隆。然而，1976年的香港股災讓無數工廠倒閉，生源頓時缺絀，學校遂停辦了，她也在結婚生子，上班持家中度過壯年的日子。

五十歲，對許多人來說是退休的預告，對阮眉而言，卻是命運再譜新章的伏筆。在太極班上，她偶遇一位退休校長，兩人重拾詩詞情懷，共研粵樂。1975年，在校長的引薦下，阮眉為名伶南紅在麗的電視之台慶歌填詞。自此，王婉美隱去，流行時代曲界的填詞人“阮眉”誕生。

她為麗的電視多次填詞，與南紅成為好友，把上海白光，

周璇唱之歌填入粵語歌詞，供南紅到南洋登台獻唱。她在流行樂壇嶄露頭角，大華、麗風等唱片公司邀請阮眉填詞，關菊英、尹光、甄秀儀、麗莎、及台灣大紅之尤雅等歌星爭相演唱。作品《話俾家鄉知》傳頌一時，道盡無數遊子心聲。阮眉獲得多張填詞人金唱片獎，填詞功力備受業界肯定。

粵劇綻放，港穗先鋒

但阮眉心中，根脈仍在粵曲。1979年，在南紅的鼓勵下，她師從伴奏領隊泰斗馮華，正式跨入粵曲創作與平喉演唱。她首次創作，寫南唐李後主心跡之《揮淚哭南唐》一經面世，便因意境深遠、格律穩健而流暢，得到重量級名伶與導師梁漢威賞識，梁漢威不僅親自演唱《揮淚哭南唐》，更悉心向她傳授粵劇、粵曲之知識要領、編劇秘訣，並請阮眉把上海越劇《李仙刺目》改編為粵劇。前輩殿堂粵劇大師芳艷芬，麥炳榮，鳳凰女等亦唱過阮眉的作品。

1980年，隨着紅A塑料容器公司開拓內地市場，阮眉受邀創作《唐宮恨史》，促成了香港文千歲與廣州盧秋萍兩位紅伶，首次穗港跨地合作，其主題曲《七月七日長生殿》至今仍是曲迷心中的永恆經典。

隨後，她應新加坡《敦煌劇團》團長胡桂馨要求，量身打造長劇《香妃》。這部戲在1990年新加坡藝術節上作為香港代表作大放異彩，那段時期，阮眉與敦煌劇團構成了跨越地域的合作，成就了傳世佳作。

1994及2003年，阮眉憑《魂夢繞山河》及《七月七日長

生殿》，兩度榮獲香港作曲家及作詞家協會CASH頒發《金帆獎》，是對她藝術成就的崇高敬禮。這兩首歌不僅在粵港澳及海外深受喜愛，也確立了其在當代粵劇經典中的地位。

楓葉之下，天韻傳承

1996年，古稀之年的阮眉移民加拿大多倫多。面對文化隔閡，她並未沉寂，仍然埋首奮筆，更在文化領域，致力開拓與傳承，用一支纖筆與實際行動，譜寫了嶺南文化遷徙與再生的壯麗史詩。

- 福音粵曲：藉着信仰的感召，她成立“天韻福音曲藝社”，將基督故事融入古老曲調，創作了如《耶穌傳》等罕見的福音粵曲。

- 學術與比賽：90高齡後，她不惜辛勞，與多倫多愛健戲劇會設立粵曲講座，梳理粵曲源流；舉辦多倫多本地粵曲比賽，親自主講粵曲文化系列講座，推動加、港、穗三地歌唱比賽，為文化傳承，發揮餘暉力量，俯身躬耕，不遺餘力。

2024年，獲得加拿大 CYC Network 頒授加拿大傑出婦女獎；加中商貿文化創新交流協會頒授終身成就獎。這不僅是對她個人的褒獎，更是對中華文化在異域生根發芽的最高敬意。

期頤回眸，知足感恩

2026年，阮眉老師迎來了她的百歲華誕。如今的她，依然神清氣朗，雙眸清明，思維非常敏捷，演唱時中氣鏗鏘，仍

在填寫新曲詞，讓人難以相信她已屆百歲。回首這一世紀的波瀾壯闊，她淡淡一笑：“人的一生往往出乎意料，慶幸一生充實。” 她曾是小康之家的嬌嬌女，是裁剪學校的老師，是詞壇的才女，更是跨越國界的文化使者。

她的長壽秘訣：“保持樂觀，莫強出頭，不爭，不要求過高。” 在她看來，曾經吃過的苦、受過的難，都化作了筆下動人的曲調。她不怨天尤人，只是安靜地守着那一方硯台，在每一個黃昏時刻，為這世間多添一道彩虹。

結語：永不落幕的錦繡

當大幕落下，琴聲漸遠，阮眉的名字已鑄刻在粵劇的歷史長廊中。她用一百年的時光証明：年齡從不是創造力的終點，地域也從不是文化的隔閡。她以筆為犁，在歲月的廢墟上耕耘出一片花海。凡有粵曲處，應記阮眉名。



1991 Singapore



1991 Singapore



2003 CASH Award



2006 Carefirst Fundraising



2014 Carefirst Fundraising



2025 萬民唱聚好聲音— 粵曲慈善
演唱會



2025 阮眉九九迎百暨加·穗·港
名家粵曲粵劇獻知音



Seas Fundraising



RTHK



1995 judge



2009 competition



2019 competition



2023 Competition



With Nan Hung



With Leung Hon Wai



With Man Chin Sui



With Wan Kwong



With Lee Po Ying



With Singapore Lisa



2025 99 Show



99 birthday



2025 show

Grace in Her Bearing, World Within Her Song: The Artistic Life of Yuen May at One Hundred

Prologue:

If life is like a river, then Yuen May's river, just as it seemed destined to flow quietly into the sea at dusk, instead caught the light of a sunset and broke into a brilliant rainbow in a foreign land.

Where others see old age as life's closing chapter, she transformed it into a new cultural stage.

A towering figure in the performing arts whose career spans a century, Yuen May journeyed from Hong Kong to Toronto, Canada. After settling in the land of maple leaves in her seventies, she once again took up the pen so deeply bound to her spirit and heritage, using it to paint the many shades of Lingnan culture. This was more than artistic perseverance; it was the migration of cultural roots.

Through her work, Cantonese opera was no longer a fading memory of the past, but a living garden blooming anew on foreign soil — infused with both the fragrance of faith and the dreams of childhood.

Blossoms in the New Territories, First Dreams of the Opera Stage

In 1926, amid the fragrance of flowers, Yuen May's story began.

Born Wong Yuen-may into a modestly prosperous family of flower growers in Yuen Long, Hong Kong's New Territories, she came into the world during a brief calm between two wars — after the smoke of the First World War had cleared, yet before the shadow of the Second had descended. The beauty and refinement surrounding her childhood quietly shaped her earliest sense of aesthetics.

As a little girl, she followed her parents to theaters such as Tai Ping Theatre in Shek Tong Tsui and Ko Shing Theatre in Sheung Wan, becoming an enthralled young opera fan. Onstage were legendary performers like Chin Lei-kui, Chan Fei-nung, and Pak Kui-wing,

singing in the original Guilin Mandarin dialect once used in early Cantonese opera, recounting timeless love stories in elegant, classical language.

Offstage, the cries of street vendors selling preserved plums and snacks rose and fell through the audience.

Young Yuen May watched in fascination — the stylized movements of the bound feet, the graceful hand gestures, the rhythm of performance. The ornate lyrics and melodies planted seeds deep within her heart, waiting for the day they would bloom.

Then came 1941, and the fall of Hong Kong.

War shattered the peace of her youth, yet awakened a quiet courage within her. To avoid Japanese soldiers, the teenage Yuen May disguised herself as a boy. Even in those difficult years, her father insisted on donating proceeds from the family flower stall to support wartime relief efforts.

That spirit — “never forgetting one’s country despite humble circumstances” — later became the backbone of strength found in her writing.

During the dark years of occupation, whenever air-raid sirens sounded and the lights were extinguished, she read by flashlight: *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, *Journey to the West*, *Investiture of the Gods*, translations of foreign literature, and works by modern writers such as Ba Jin, Zhu Ziqing, Bing Xin, and Zhang Henshui.

Recognizing her talent and hunger for learning, a local scholar personally taught her classical poetry and prose.

This “stolen education” amid the chaos of war became the literary foundation for the remarkable lyricist she would one day become.

At Fifty, Life Begins a New Movement

At nineteen, Yuen May entered the workforce. She worked as a telephone operator for a foreign trading company and later as a

seamstress.

In 1967, she founded the Rainbow Tailoring School, where she taught dressmaking for eleven successful years. But after Hong Kong's 1976 stock market crash forced many factories to shut down, student enrollment dwindled and the school eventually closed. She then devoted herself to family life while balancing work and motherhood.

For many people, fifty signals the approach of retirement. For Yuen May, it marked the overture to an entirely new chapter.

At a tai chi class, she met a retired school principal who shared her love of poetry and Cantonese music. Together, they rekindled their literary passions.

In 1975, through this connection, she was invited to write lyrics for famed actress Nam Hung for a television anniversary program on Rediffusion Television. From that moment on, "Wong Yuen-may" quietly stepped aside, and the lyricist "Yuen May" was born.

She went on to write extensively for television and popular music. Close friends with Nam Hung, she adapted songs originally performed by Shanghai singers such as Bai Guang and Zhou Xuan into Cantonese versions for overseas performances in Southeast Asia.

Soon, record labels sought her out, and singers including Susanna Kwan, Wan Kwong, Jenny Tseng, Lisa Wong, and Taiwanese star Yu Ya performed her lyrics.

Her song Tell My Hometown deeply resonated with overseas Chinese communities, expressing the longing and homesickness shared by countless emigrants.

Over the years, she received multiple Gold Record awards for lyric writing, earning widespread recognition within the music industry.

Cantonese Opera in Full Bloom: A Pioneer Across Hong Kong and Guangzhou

Yet Yuen May's artistic roots always remained in Cantonese opera.

In 1979, encouraged by Nam Hung, she studied under the renowned music master Fung Wah and formally entered the world of Cantonese opera composition and ‘pinghou’ (natural voice) performance.

Her debut works, *Tears for the Southern Tang*, immediately drew attention for their poetic depth, refined structure, and emotional resonance.

The distinguished opera master Leung Hon-wai not only performed her works personally, but also mentored her in the art of Cantonese opera, scriptwriting, and stagecraft. He later invited her to adapt the Shanghai Yue opera *Li Xian Pierces His Eyes* into a Cantonese opera production.

Veteran legends such as Fong Yim-fun, Mak Bing-wing, and Fung Wong-nui also performed her compositions.

In 1980, as *Red A Plastics* expanded into mainland China, Yuen May was commissioned to write *Sorrows of the Tang Palace*. The production became a landmark collaboration between Hong Kong opera star Man Chin-sui and Guangzhou performer Lo Chau-ping — one of the earliest major cross-border Cantonese opera productions between Hong Kong and Guangzhou.

Its theme song, *The Palace of Eternal Life on the Seventh Night of the Seventh Moon*, remains beloved by opera enthusiasts to this day.

Later, at the invitation of Hu Guixin, director of Singapore’s Dunhuang Theatre Company, she wrote the full-length opera *The Fragrant Concubine*. The production became one of Hong Kong’s featured works at the 1990 Singapore Arts Festival.

Together, Yuen May and the Dunhuang Theatre Company formed a remarkable artistic partnership that transcended borders and left behind enduring classics.

In 1994 and again in 2003, Yuen May received the CASH Golden Sail Award from the Composers and Authors Society of Hong Kong for *Dreams of Rivers and Mountains* and *The Palace of Eternal Life on the Seventh Night of the Seventh Moon*.

These honors cemented her place among the defining voices of contemporary Cantonese opera.

Carrying Tradition Forward Under the Maple Tree

In 1996, at the age of seventy, Yuen May immigrated to Toronto. Faced with a new culture and unfamiliar surroundings, she did not retreat into silence. Instead, she continued writing tirelessly while dedicating herself to preserving and reimagining Cantonese cultural traditions abroad.

Gospel Cantonese Opera

Inspired by her Christian faith, she founded the Heavenly Melody Gospel Opera Society, blending biblical stories with traditional Cantonese opera music. Works such as *The Life of Jesus* became rare and innovative examples of gospel Cantonese opera.

Academic and Community Work

Even after turning ninety, she remained extraordinarily active. She collaborated with a local Cantonese opera organization on lectures exploring the history and evolution of Cantonese opera, organized local Cantonese opera competitions in Toronto, and hosted educational lecture series.

Throughout her later years, she devoted herself wholeheartedly to cultural preservation and transmission.

In 2024, she received the Canadian Outstanding Women Award from CYC Network Canada, as well as a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Canada-China Trade and Cultural Exchange Association.

These honors recognized not only her personal achievements, but also the flourishing of Chinese culture far from its homeland.

Looking Back at One Hundred: Gratitude and Contentment

In 2026, Master Yuen May celebrates her hundredth birthday. Even now, she remains remarkably vibrant — bright-eyed, mentally

sharp, and full of energy. She is still writing new lyrics. When she sings, her voice still carries strength and resonance that make it hard to believe she has reached a century of age.

Reflecting on the extraordinary sweep of her life, she smiles gently: “Life often unfolds in unexpected ways. I’m simply grateful it has been a full one.”

Over the course of a century, she has been many things: a cherished daughter, a tailoring school teacher, an acclaimed lyricist, and ultimately, a cultural bridge spanning continents.

Her secret to longevity?

“Stay optimistic. Don’t force yourself to stand out. Don’t compete. Don’t ask for too much.”

To her, the hardships she endured simply became melodies in her songs. Without bitterness or complaint, she has quietly remained at her writing desk, adding one more rainbow to the world with every passing dusk.

Epilogue:

A Tapestry That Never Fades

As the curtain slowly falls and the music drifts into the distance, the name Yuen May has already been etched into the history of Cantonese opera.

Across an entire century, she has shown that age is never the end of creativity, and distance is never a barrier to culture. With her pen as a plow, she cultivated a field of blossoms from the soil of time itself. Wherever Cantonese opera is sung, the name Yuen May should be remembered.