

Dr Katie Y F Yang

Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*

Citation

Today, Lingnan University pays tribute to a distinguished woman, whose remarkable accomplishments and significant contribution to the society can best be remembered by two names: "Dr Katie Yang" and "Madam Fong Yim Fun". Dr Katie Yang is an international philanthropist renowned for her enthusiasm in charitable work, while Madam Fong Yim Fun is a famous local Cantonese opera performer. Let us briefly describe the artistic accomplishments and social contributions of Dr Yang, a truly outstanding individual.

Madam Fong began her training in Cantonese opera in 1938 with Bai Jiechu (白潔初) at Guosheng Academy of Cantonese Opera, Kowloon (九龍國聲粵劇學院). She was promoted to the status of *fa dan*, meaning a female principal, in 1945. During her performance of An Evening Tribute to the *Tower Lui Fung* in Guangdong province, Hong Kong and Macau in 1946, she created the unique vocal art known as the "Fong style", a product of her inspiration and efforts. Madam Fong advocates the use of Chinese music in the performance of Cantonese opera. She sang frequently in low pitch to enrich the variety of vocal styles and emotion. She also stressed that the costume must be proper for the character, whereas traditionally Cantonese opera tended to overemphasize in flashy and over-the-top costumes and give less attention to the plot and the characters' personalities. In 1952, she was voted as the "Queen of Female Principals", which was one of the three top positions in Cantonese opera, by her audience in a poll conducted by radio show "Entertainment News". The well-respected "Fong style" never lost its fame and is still widely practiced today.

In addition to her own accomplishments in arts, Madam Fong is also an advocate of the idea of "theatre purification". Her efforts to persuade the theatre manager against selling food in the theatre showed her concern for the performance environment of Cantonese opera. The opera troupe Xin Yan Yang Ju Tuan, under her leadership, was also the first to publish programmes in recognition of the efforts of the playwright, the orchestra and the backstage workers. This illustrates her respect for the entire production crew.

Madam Fong starred in over 150 films, including some of the most significant pieces in the local film history, such as the popular *She Says "No" to Marriage* and *She Said "No" to Marriage but Now She Says "Yes"*. The *Mysterious Murder* series, *The Nymph of River Lo*, *Liang Zhu Hen Shi*, *Snow in June*, *Mrs. Ching*, *Lest We Forget*, and *The Sweep-stakes Girl* were highly acclaimed by today's film researchers. *Lest We Forget* (with script crafted by Tang Di-sheng) was originally written by Mr Chien Yu-wen and Mr Liang Han-cao, two famous figures in the literary scene.

Madam Fong has always preferred to perform on stage. As a highly refined form of opera and an essential element of Cantonese culture, Cantonese opera should be properly preserved. *Liang Zhu Hen Shi*, *The Legend of Madame White Snake*, *The Nymph of River Lo*, *Snow in June*, and *Lest We Forget* were some of her most favorite pieces. This explained her choice of *Liang Zhu Hen Shi* and *The Legend of Madame White Snake* for her farewell performance in 1958. Since at that time women had little opportunity of education, Madam Fong consciously elevated the status of women in *Liang Zhu Hen Shi*, hoping to encourage them to study. Today, this historically significant opera is regarded as a pioneer in the feminist movement. Madam Fong is very keen on the preservation and promotion of the art of Cantonese opera. For instance, she donated her precious Cantonese opera collection to the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, as well as contributing to the study of Cantonese opera by providing information and publication sponsorships. In fact, the permanent premises of Par Wo Association is also her donation.

Just when she reached her prime and the peak of her career, Madam Fong retired from the stage and married Doctor Raymond Yang, leaving the best sounds and images of her marvelous performance in the hearts of her audience and in her own memories. Even though she lived a happy family life, she often thought of the needs of the less fortunate.

In 1984, Dr Katie Yang and Madam Maria Lee established the Kwan Fong Charitable Foundation, which donated generously to education, youth, elderly-service and cultural institutions. Her reasons for helping others are both profound and simple. Her mother taught her to treat people with love, conquer people with morality and be responsible when she was small. Since she lived a very difficult childhood during the Second World War, she was deeply aware of the plight of the poverty-stricken. As a result, she endeavors to contribute to the society whenever she can. The mission of the Kwan Fong Charitable Foundation is to help those in need, young and old, orphans and widows, regardless of nationality or age.

In early years, Dr Yang established the Charity Fund for Urgent Needs (救急扶危慈善基金) in the Social Welfare Department to help those who require urgent assistance. In 1994, she founded the SAGE Kwan Fong Nim Chee Home for the Elderly to commemorate her mother. Meanwhile, in view of the need to better preserve Chinese culture and art, she set up the Kwan Fong Gallery of Art and Culture (群芳中國文化藝術中心) at California Lutheran University to promote oriental culture, and enable young overseas Chinese to acquire a better understanding of Chinese culture.

In 1994, her husband Doctor Yang, together with a number of professors and fellow doctors, established the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine for the betterment of Hong Kong people. Dr Katie Yang staged two fund-raising performances at the auditorium of Hong Kong Cultural Centre. The video of the performance was sold for charity purposes. Before the handover in 1997, she appeared at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre for her final performance. The fund raised at the performance was donated to the music departments of local universities. Upon learning that Dr Yang was conferred an honorary doctorate by Lingnan University, Mr Deng Yuhua (鄧汝漢), a friend of hers and a former school principal, and his wife Hu Xiujin (胡秀錦) presented her with an inscription of a couplet "Gliding swallows trumpeting your virtues; Blossoming flowers spreading your grace" which honors her accomplishments. Dr Yang's achievements in charity and art earned her a number of prestigious honors, including Doctor of Humanities, *honoris causa* awarded by California Lutheran University, Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE), Honorary Fellow of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Fellowship in the University of Hong Kong, and the Bronze Bauhinia Star awarded by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Finally, let us conclude by quoting some of Dr Yang's insights about life. She thinks that modern life is so quick-paced that it makes people greedy and shortsighted, and recommends a slower and more leisurely lifestyle. She said that young people should treasure life and not be frustrated by setbacks, as these are challenges that one must go through in life. She encouraged us to persevere in spite of difficulties, as she did and overcame many trials and tribulations in life.

Mr Chairman, during the past decades, Dr Yang has made outstanding achievements in art and significant contributions to society. She spared no efforts in charity work, education and the promotion of Chinese culture. Her accomplishments are particularly remarkable in the development and preservation of Cantonese opera, which is a key element of Cantonese culture. May I now present Dr Katie Yang to you for the award of the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences, *honoris causa*.

楊梁燕芳博士(芳艷芬)

榮譽社會科學博士

贊詞

今天嶺南大學在這裏表彰一名傑出女士，她人生的優越成就和對社會的重大貢獻，可由兩個名字涵蓋：“楊梁燕芳博士”和“芳艷芬女士”。楊梁燕芳博士是知名的慈善家，熱心公益；芳艷芬女士是家傳戶曉的香港粵劇表演藝術家。我們且從藝術成就和社會貢獻兩方面來簡述楊博士這位傑出人物。

芳艷芬女士在1938年開始學粵劇，在九龍國聲粵劇學院隨白潔初師傅學習，1945年進身正印花旦，1946年於省港澳演出《夜祭雷鋒塔》，以靈感和努力創造了「芳腔」。芳艷芬女士主張用中樂拍和粵劇演出，又採用較多低音唱法，豐富了唱腔的旋律及感情；她又強調服裝造型需切合角色身份，一改粵劇過度追求閃亮誇張，忽略劇情和角色性格之弊。1952年，芳艷芬女士在「娛樂之音」中榮獲觀眾選為粵劇界三王中的花旦王。「芳腔」名重一時，歷久不衰，現在仍有不少人研習。

除了個人的藝術成就，芳艷芬女士亦極力提倡淨化劇場的觀念，游說劇場經理禁止於劇場內販賣食物，可見她對粵劇演出環境的重視。由她領導的新艷陽劇團更率先印製場刊，以表揚劇作家、樂隊及幕後工作人員的功勞，顯示了她對群體創作人員的尊重。

芳艷芬女士曾主演電影150多部，其中不乏香港電影史上重要之作，如《唔嫁》、《唔嫁又嫁》等是很受觀眾歡迎的作品；《紅菱血》上下集、《洛神》、《梁祝恨史》、《六月雪》、《程大嫂》、《萬世流芳張玉橋》、《馬票女郎》甚受今天的電影研究者推崇，其中《萬》片(由唐滌生編劇)更是文學界簡又文與梁寒操兩位先生的原意作品。

芳艷芬女士始終比較喜歡舞臺演出，粵劇是一個優秀劇種，又是廣東文化，應好好保留。《梁祝恨史》、《白蛇傳》、《洛神》、《六月雪》、《萬世流芳張玉橋》都是她其中最喜愛的劇目，故1958年的告別演出亦選擇了《梁祝恨史》和《白蛇傳》。由於當時女性的讀書機會很少，芳艷芬女士於《梁祝恨史》中有意識地提高了女性地位，鼓勵女性求學，此劇今天被喻為帶有女性主義先鋒的時代意義。芳艷芬女士經常對粵劇的保存及推廣出力，例如捐給香港文化博物館的粵劇演出珍藏品、為粵劇研究提供資料和出版贊助等，而八和會館目前的永久會址亦為她所捐贈。

芳艷芬女士在風華正茂、事業達到頂峰時瀟灑退出舞台，與楊景煌醫生結連理，留下了最美好的聲和影在觀眾和自己記憶中。她有一個美好幸福的家庭，自己在幸福之中就想著有很多不幸的人需要幫助。

楊梁燕芳博士1984年和李曾超群女士成立「群芳慈善基金會」，對教育、青年、老人和文化等機構慷慨捐助。楊博士助人的理由深刻而簡單，楊博士的母親自幼教導她以愛對人，以德服眾，凡事要有責任感。另外，楊博士年幼時過著第二次世界大戰時非常艱苦之生活，故對貧苦大眾深有體會，稍有棉力，便希望回饋社會。「群芳慈善基金」的目標是不分國籍，扶老助幼，同情孤寡。

楊博士早年又在社會福利處設立了「救急扶危慈善基金」，幫助需要緊急援助的人士。1994年又成立了「耆康會群芳念慈護理安老院」紀念慈母。同時，她又覺得中國文化及藝術更需要保存，在加州路德大學(California Lutheran University)設立「群芳中國文化藝術中心」，旨在宣揚東方文化，更希望令海外的華僑子弟多些認識中國文化。

1994年，楊景煌醫生與一班教授和醫生朋友成立香港醫學專科學院，造福港人。楊梁燕芳博士在文化中心大劇院再次登台兩晚籌款，成績驕人，並將當時盛況拍成錄像義賣籌款。在1997回歸前最後一次在文化中心義演一晚，籌款捐助香港各大學音樂系。楊博士一位曾任校長的朋友鄧汝漢先生及其夫人胡秀綿女士，得知她獲嶺南頒授榮譽博士學位，寫下「燕翔頌德，芳艷揚芬」八字相贈。楊博士的慈善公益工作和藝術成就，令她屢獲殊榮，曾獲加州路德大學(榮譽)人文學博士銜、英女王英帝國員佐勳章(MBE)、香港演藝學院院士銜、香港大學院士銜、香港特別行政區政府銅紫荊星章等。

最後，讓我們以楊博士的一些人生體會作小小總結。楊博士覺得現代社會節奏太快，急速的社會氣氛令人變得急功近利，希望大家可以把社會步伐及生活節奏放慢一些。楊博士寄語年青人要重視生命，就算在挫折及失意中不要沮喪，這是人生的考驗。作為受過挫折的過來人，她勉勵大家在困境中不要輕言放棄。

主席先生，楊博士數十年來在藝術成就和社會貢獻這兩方面表現卓越，在扶老助弱、辦學和推廣中國文化方面不遺餘力，尤其是她對於廣東文化之一的粵劇，在發展和保存方面作了很大的貢獻。恭請主席先生頒授予楊梁燕芳博士榮譽社會科學博士學位。