

= Wu Zuguang =

Wu Zuguang (Chinese : 吴祖光 ; Wade ? Giles : Wu Tsu @-@ kuang ; 21 April 1917 ? 9 April 2003) was a Chinese playwright , film director and social critic who has been called a " legendary figure in Chinese art and literary circles " . He authored more than 40 plays and film scripts , including the patriotic drama City of Phoenix , one of the most influential plays during the Second Sino @-@ Japanese War , and Return on a Snowy Night , which is generally considered his masterpiece . He directed The Soul of the Nation , Hong Kong 's first colour film , based on his own historical drama Song of Righteousness .

He was also well known as an outspoken critic of China 's cultural policies , both of the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Communist governments , and was repeatedly persecuted as a result . He fled to Hong Kong in 1945 to avoid being captured by KMT agents , and returned to Beijing after the foundation of the People 's Republic China in 1949 . He was denounced as a " rightist " during the Anti @-@ Rightist Movement and performed hard labour in the " Great Northern Wilderness " for three years , and was again persecuted during the Cultural Revolution . His wife , the celebrated pingju actress Xin Fengxia , refused to divorce him and became disabled after undergoing beatings and penal labour . Despite these ordeals , Wu continued to criticize government censorship and to call for political freedom , and was widely admired for his moral conviction .

= = Early life = =

Wu was born on 21 April 1917 to a prominent scholar @-@ official family in Beijing , with ancestral roots in Changzhou , Jiangsu Province . His grandfather Wu Zhiying (???) was a muliao of the Qing dynasty reformer Zhang Zhidong and participated in the Xinhai Revolution . His father Wu Ying (??) was a founder and curator of the Beijing Palace Museum . His mother Zhou Qinqi (???) gave birth to 15 children , 11 of whom (four sons and seven daughters) survived to adulthood . She gave birth to Wu Zuguang , her first child , in the mansion of Wu Ying 's uncle Zhuang Yunkuan , a minister of the Republic of China government .

In 1935 , Wu entered Sino @-@ French University in Beijing . The next year , a relative who was running a drama school in Nanjing persuaded him to move there and teach at his school . There he met several people who would become prominent dramatists , including Cao Yu and Chen Zhice .

= = Wartime career = =

At the outset of the Second Sino @-@ Japanese War in 1937 , Wu wrote the patriotic war play City of Phoenix (???) , which made him well @-@ known in China at age 20 . It was one of the most performed dramas during the eight @-@ year war . He later wrote several critically acclaimed plays , including Return on a Snowy Night , which is generally considered his masterpiece . His works are strongly influenced by the May Fourth New Culture Movement .

As eastern China fell to the Japanese , he moved to the wartime capital Chongqing , where he worked as an editor for the Xinmin Wanbao newspaper . In 1945 , he published Mao Zedong 's now famous poem " Snow : to the Tune of Garden in Full Spring " , which infuriated the Kuomintang government . He escaped to British Hong Kong to avoid being captured by KMT agents , and made a living writing screenplays and making films . He directed The Soul of the Nation (??) , Hong Kong 's first colour film , based on his historical drama , Song of Righteousness , about the Song dynasty patriot Wen Tianxiang . He also made Return on a Snowy Night into a film , as well as two others . In 1946 , Wu married the actress Lü En (??) in Shanghai .

= = Early People 's Republic = =

After the Communist Party of China won the Civil War and established the People 's Republic of China in 1949 , Wu returned to Beijing . Like many intellectuals at the time , he held high hopes for the new People 's Republic which finally restored peace in a united China after decades of war and

division . He wanted to return to writing plays , but was assigned by the government to direct Song of the Red Flag , a film about women textile workers . As he had no experience with factory life , it took him a year to finish the film , which he considered a " worthless failure . " He and Lü En divorced amicably in 1950 , due to differences in personality and interests .

In 1951 , his friend Lao She introduced him to the famous pingju opera performer Xin Fengxia , who had acted in one of Wu 's plays and admired his talent . They married that year , despite the fact that they were from differing socioeconomic backgrounds ; she had no formal education and was nearly illiterate , while he was from a prominent family of scholars . Wu helped her to study reading , writing , and calligraphy .

During this period he made the Peking opera film Goddess of the Luo River (??) and Mei Lanfang and His Stage Art , a documentary about Mei Lanfang . He also wrote the Peking operas Three Beatings of Tao Sanchun (?????) and San Guan Yan (???) .

= = Persecution = =

During Mao Zedong 's Anti @-@ Rightist Movement , Wu was denounced as a " rightist " in 1957 and sent to the Great Northern Wilderness in Heilongjiang to be " reformed through labour . " His crime was to criticize the Communist Party 's control of the theatre and to argue that the neihang (experts) should have a greater role in such matters . He was called an enemy of the Party , even by his renowned colleague Tian Han . Tian later referenced Wu 's work approvingly , which is seen by some as an implicit apology , and was himself persecuted to death . Xin Fengxia was pressured to divorce him , but refused . Citing a legendary love story from one of her operas , she said " Wang Baochuan waited 18 years for Xue Pinggui , and I will wait 28 years for Wu Zuguang . " As a result , she was herself labeled a rightist and went through struggle sessions .

Wu returned to Beijing after three years of hard labour , but six years later , China fell into the even greater turmoil of the Cultural Revolution , which began in 1966 . Xin Fengxia and Wu Zuguang were both denounced at the beginning of the period . She became disabled below her left knee after a severe beating . Their friend Lao She drowned himself after being similarly tortured . During the tumultuous decade Wu and Xin both served years of forced labour . In December 1975 , she became paralyzed after suffering a stroke , and Wu took care of her for the rest of her life .

= = Post @-@ Cultural Revolution = =

After the end of the Cultural Revolution , Wu was politically rehabilitated in 1980 and inducted into the Communist Party , an event he described as " neither an occasion for laughter or tears " , and his publication ban was lifted after two decades . His play Itinerant Players (???) , based on Xin Fengxia 's experiences , was performed that year . In 1983 , Wu traveled to the University of Iowa in the U.S. to attend the International Writing Program .

Wu was in general loyal to Deng Xiaoping 's government , but continued to be an outspoken critic . In 1983 , he dismissed Deng 's Anti @-@ Spiritual Pollution Campaign as futile . In September 1986 , he read an essay at a meeting of the China Writers Association entitled " Against Those Who Wield the Scissors ? a Plea for an End to Censorship " . It was enthusiastically received by the audience , but only a censored version was published , minus 1 @,@ 000 characters deemed " acrimonious " . After the December 1986 student demonstrations , he was pressured to leave the Communist Party in 1987 . Retired Politburo member Hu Qiaomu came to his home in person to demand his resignation from the Party . He obliged , as he did not think he was " the sort of person who should be in the Party . " In spring 1989 , Wu signed a petition calling for greater political freedom . Following the army crackdown of the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 , Wu called for a reassessment of the incident , but was forbidden to speak at a CPPCC meeting .

Xin Fengxia died on 12 April 1998 , during a trip to Changzhou , Wu 's ancestral hometown . He was devastated by the loss and his health quickly deteriorated . He suffered three strokes in the next few years , and died on 9 April 2003 .

= = Children = =

Wu Zuguang and Xin Fengxia had three children . Their son Wu Huan is also a writer , painter , and calligrapher . After the deaths of Wu Zuguang , he organized the exhibition " A Hundred Years of the Wu Family " at the Poly Art Museum in Beijing . It was also held in France , Hong Kong , and Taiwan .