

Wudang

Twin Cities T'ai Chi

03 \ 24

TEACHING THE ART, SCIENCE, AND SPIRIT OF T'AI CHI

From Sifu Paul

Greetings, everyone,

As we move gently toward springtime, it seems we have slipped past anything resembling a typical Minnesota winter. Here comes the sun. There's been a lot of activity at the studio this winter, with our new year potluck celebration, new courses and classes, and many new members coming to the studio. The upcoming spring quarter promises to be just as busy. I look forward to more T'ai Chi time together in the studio and, as the weather warms, taking our practice outside.

Excellence Among Us

by Stephen May

Cheng Man-Ch'ing is known internationally as a martial artist. He was a student of Yang Ch'eng-Fu and teacher of, among many others, T. T. Liang. But he is also known as the Master of Five Excellences. The title reflects his vision of a well-rounded person as someone proficient in calligraphy, painting, poetry, T'ai Chi, and medicine. This was his own list—Confucius's list of six arts to be mastered by the well-rounded scholar included rites, music, archery, chariotry, calligraphy, and mathematics.

So, what do the two lists have in common? Each area of each list represents a particular gong fu. Westerners often think that term refers to some sort of fighting skills, but it actually refers to almost any skill that is the result of patient and diligent practice. Thus, the Chinese will talk about the gong fu of a computer programmer, a chef, or a dancer.

Cheng Man-Ch'ing and Confucius had their lists of excellences, each with its own rationale.



In reality, excellence is found all around us. To help recognize those excellences, we are dedicating a portion of our bulletin board in the Community Room to "Excellence in Our Community." With this, we want to recognize the diversity of achievements among our members. If you have recently been awarded a prize or degree, if you have recently had something published, if you have some upcoming performance or exhibit, or have some other similar accomplishment, please share it with Sifu Paul. We would like to let everyone know about the wealth of masteries to be found in our midst.

Excellence in Our T'ai Chi Community

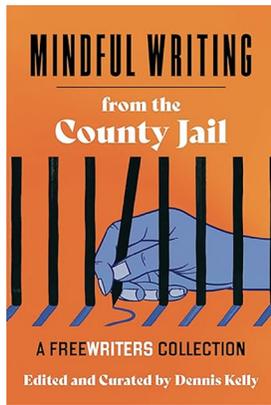
Featured Member: Dennis Kelly

Dennis is a writer who writes both as a novelist—his two published novels are Blizard Ball and A Comedian Walks into a Funeral Home—and a mindful writing teacher.

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In search of excellence:
Let Sifu Paul know
about accomplishments
you'd like to share!

“As a mindful writing teacher, my focus is to foster creativity, healing, and resilience. Embedded in the mindful writing teaching is my advanced practice of insight meditation and T’ai Chi, for a balanced blend of mind and body awareness,” Dennis says.



Dennis’s latest book, *Mindful Writing From the County Jail*, focuses on his work with people who are incarcerated in Minnesota county jails. He introduces them to the practice of freewriting, in which a theme, called a prompt, is introduced. The participants have 5 minutes to write freely whatever comes to mind. The sessions are strictly timed, and everyone writes the same prompt. Some examples are: home, family, where I’m from, who I am, jail, freedom, 10 years ago, 10 years from now, etc.

The collections of writings and artwork that come out of these sessions are powerful, emotionally charged, and quite amazing. Congratulations, Dennis.

Upcoming Classes and Changes to the Schedule

T’ai Chi in the Park Moves to Thursday

Practicing T’ai Chi out in nature is a deep and enjoyable experience. Every May 1 through mid-October, we move an evening class to Hampden Park near the studio to enjoy our practice outdoors. For the past two years, Wednesday evening was the day we were in the park. Due to the popularity of the Wednesday-evening Beginning Solo Form class, this year, we will move the park class to Thursday evenings. The Thursday Zoom class will not be offered during the park season. It will resume in the fall.

Beginning May 1 at Hampden Park, 993 Hampden Avenue W., St. Paul, MN 55114.

Solo Form: 6:00–7:15; **Weapons Review:** 7:15–7:45; **12 Animals Review:** 7:45–8:15.

If you are still learning the Solo Form, come at 5:30 for some corrections and instruction in the form, then stay for the warm-ups, Qigong, and Solo Form practice.

Beginning Weapons

The Thursday-evening Beginning Weapons Class will move to Wednesday evening at 7:30 beginning May 1 when the park class begins.

We will begin learning the T’ai Chi Knife/Dao. The T’ai Chi Knife, or single-edged broadsword/saber, has a single-edged blade, and the dull edge is safe to be pushed with the free hand. This pushing action is accompanied by dynamic footwork, making the Dao or knife perfect for complementing the Solo Form, developing the lower and upper body, and engaging in partner practice.

The Yang-Style Dao (broadsword/saber) Form will be taught. If you have finished learning the Solo Form and can perform it on your own, you may come to this class and learn the T’ai Chi Knife.

Qigong and Meditation

Monday evening, 7:30–8:30

Beginning Monday, April 1, we will begin learning the 8 Extraordinary Vessels Qigong.

Qi means energy, vitality, or life force. Gong means working with, developing, or cultivating.

Contact Us

For timely updates, follow Twin Cities T’ai Chi Ch’uan on Facebook.

Email: mail@tctaichi.org

Website: tctaichi.org

Phone: 651.767.0267.

All articles and other content created by Paul Abdella unless otherwise noted.

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T’ai Chi in the Park starts on May 1.

Hampden Park, 993 Hampden Avenue W. St. Paul, MN 55114

Qigong can mean: working with energy, developing vitality, or cultivating life force. This happens with movement, breath, stimulations like sound or vibration, intention and concentration, and more. The Qigong practitioner uses these tools to affect the body's energy system.

There are 20 major pathways in the body, according to Chinese medical theory.

Twelve of these relate to specific internal organs or functions and are the pathways that acupuncturists use to stimulate a healing response in the body. The remaining eight pathways are known as the Extraordinary Vessels (or channels). This rare and powerful Qigong opens these channels in the body so that they can influence all the pathways in our energy system. Once learned, this is an enjoyable and flowing set that can be done anytime and is a great complement to your T'ai Chi practice.



Graduation News

Congratulations to the following members for their dedication to learning the complete Yang Style Solo Form:

Linda Halcon
Vibs Petersen
Stephanie Ritchie
Karl Schaefer
Milo Tacheny
Scott Williams
Karen Zeleznak

Current Class Schedule

Monday

T'ai Chi Solo Form:
6:00–7:15 p.m. (also Zoom)

Qigong and Meditation:
7:30–8:30 p.m.

Tuesday

T'ai Chi Symmetries Level 1:
6:00–7:15 p.m.;

Symmetry 3 and 4: 7:15–8:30 p.m.
Level 2 begins learning Symmetry 7
and the Linking Form.

Wednesday

Beginning Solo Form
Fundamentals: 12:30–1:45 p.m.

Beginning Solo Form:
6:00–7:30 p.m.

Thursday

Solo Form Refinements:
6:00–7:30 p.m. (also Zoom)

T'ai Chi Weapons: 7:30–8:30 p.m.:
T'ai Chi Cane Form

Saturday

Beginning Solo Form: Sections 2
and 3: 10:15 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

Common Warm-Up & Qigong:
11:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.

Beginning Solo Form Section 1:
11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

Solo Form: 12:30–1:45 a.m.
(also Zoom)

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Congratulations on
completing the Solo
Form!



A Bow to the Past and Present

The rules of etiquette and ritual throughout history are as interesting as the cultures that produced them. The manner in which people greeted each other was an integral part of their civil customs. In contemporary society in the West, casual verbal greetings and introductions are the norm, and a simple handshake serves as a tactile and more formal greeting.

At the studio, where we practice the centuries-old art of T'ai Chi, a small bit of China's past as a culture of courtesy and ritual begins and ends each Solo Form practice with a simple bow and a fist-and-palm salute. There have been several inquiries from members as to the symbolism and meaning of the practice, so a brief history and explanation is offered here.

Closing the hand into a fist and covering it with the other to greet or farewell another person, in either a casual or a formal setting, is called a fist-and-palm salute. The history of the gesture goes back millennia in China. In more feudal times, when people met a stranger,

they would raise their hands in this manner and draw them inward toward themselves as if to say, "Relax. I'm not here to fight and not holding a weapon."

Over time, the gesture took on a more benevolent meaning, as in showing gratitude and respect from a distance or simply saying hello. A variation evolved in the martial arts called the hold fist salute, in which the top hand is open and set on top of a closed fist as if to say "we will practice martial arts together but not really fight."

The act of bowing to another is practiced in many cultures. In China, this could get quite detailed and symbolic, with a high bow reserved for formal events and honoring parents and ancestors, a middle bow for friends and family of a similar age, and a low bow reserved for elders and those with high social status. Where one looked and the position of the hands added further detail and meaning.

At the studio, we bow to each other as a gesture of mutual respect and gratitude in the sharing of our T'ai Chi practice and time together. The fist-and-palm salute simply closes the practice. Participating in these gestures of respect and gratitude is optional, but doing so adds a small bow to the past and to each other.

Farewell to a Friend

Georgia Schlegle 1956–2024



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Our classmate Tom Hautman's wife, Georgia, a longtime friend of our studio, passed away in early March. With her passing, the world has lost a great laugh and a bright light.

Year of the Dragon Potluck

On February 10, more than 50 people came and enjoyed our Year of the Dragon Potluck. The food was abundant and delicious, conversations and connections were flowing, and a good time was had by all.

Special thanks to Libby Frost, who coordinated the event, and to Todd Nesser for his poster and support materials. Thanks to the set-up and clean-up crews and to all of you who came, brought food, and made the event a memorable one.



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The hostess with the mostest! Thank you to potluck organizer Libby Frost for a fantastic event!

