

Wudang

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

I/20



From Sifu Paul

Happy New Year to everyone! The Winter Solstice brings new light; the Solar New Year begins a new 12-month cycle as well as a new decade. The Lunar Chinese New Year arrives January 25. This is the Year of the Rat and is the start of a new 12-year cycle in the Chinese calendar. Beginnings are always ripe with possibility. May the year ahead be all that you can imagine.

Welcoming New Tutors

Twin Cities T'ai Chi is fortunate to have a diverse, dedicated, and experienced group of instructors. Their collective experience in T'ai Chi Ch'uan totals more than 165 years. With the start of the New Year, we welcome three new tutors to our impressive staff: Ruthann Godollei, Ralph Jerndal, and Stephen May. The following is a brief introduction to each of them and their T'ai Chi history.

—Paul

Ruthann Godollei

Ruthann first studied T'ai Chi during college with Daniel Lee in 1976–77. An accomplished martial artist, Master Lee founded the Daniel Lee T'ai Chi Academy, which he directed for 40 years.



Ruthann then moved to Indiana and spent another four years studying with Laura Stone, a student of William C.C. Chen. She also met Master Chen on his visits to the school.



In college, Ruthann was a varsity athlete in field events such as discus. The hard training and all-out expenditure of energy needed balance, and she found that “T'ai Chi gave me energy, engaged my mind and body, and was artistic, poetic and athletic.”

She moved to Minnesota and suspended studying T'ai Chi until she found Twin Cities T'ai Chi 14 years ago. She's been at the studio ever since.

On the primary benefit of her T'ai Chi practice, Ruthann states, “It has been crucial to recovering from a major illness and to keeping me healthy. It is great for handling stress and continues to stimulate my need to learn new things. I have benefitted from excellent teachers throughout my practice and

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The Year of the Rat begins on Jan 25.

believe I've become a better art teacher from work in T'ai Chi—the idea that it improves your energy, flexibility, and balance not just physically but mentally and in temperament.”

Ralph Jerndal

Ralph started at the studio 17 years ago and has studied and practiced all aspects of the T'ai Chi system and most of the other styles and practices offered here. Ralph has also served on the studio's board of directors.

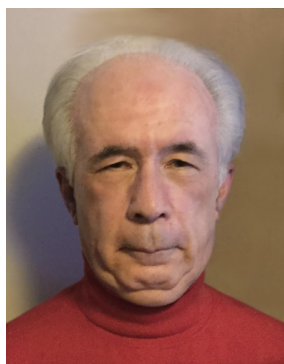


“Studying a martial art was something on my list that I never seemed to have the time to attend to until my health crisis at the time changed my perspective on life and time, as those events do, so after some searching, I decided to start at the studio.

“Early on, I was convinced of the authenticity of the T'ai Chi taught and that it was being taught authentically, and so I have not looked back. For me it is about ‘doing,’ and it has been and remains a window of exploration for me—‘know thyself.’ Pausing for a moment to look back, I find that I have been transformed in the process—a work in progress still, but my T'ai Chi practice continues to both humble and delight me.”

Stephen May

Stephen had for decades embraced the philosophical aspects of Daoism and sought to expand that interest into related practices, including the physical aspects such as T'ai Chi and diet.



He learned both the Yang Long Form and the official 24 Form from videos but was looking for a more complete understanding of T'ai Chi. He began studying at the studio in 2009.

His initial interest was in Solo Form practice, but eventually he moved into partner work and weapons forms, which he has found to be “very valuable enrichments.”

Reflecting on the title of Master Liang's book, *T'ai Chi Ch'uan for Health and Self-Defense*, Stephen states, “Both of those areas have implications beyond the obvious. Health can mean more than a period in which I exercise myself, like a routine at the gym. It can also refer to developing an awareness of how not to do things in potentially harmful ways, like a gentler way to start that snowblower.

“Likewise, I am not likely ever to be in a situation where I have to block a punch or subdue a physical attacker, but I have learned how better to defend myself and others against institutionalized abuse, such as assumptions in the workplace that promote a status quo manner of business that is actually at odds with claimed beliefs. Both aspects have led to a greater sense of well-being and self-respect.”

Welcome, tutors! We look forward to you sharing your knowledge and skills with our membership.

With gratitude to our team of amazing T'ai Chi tutors:

LaVonne Bunt, Lynn Dennis, Tim Dennis, Dan Frederick, Tom Hautman, Linda Her-
manson, Kim Husband, Christopher Knutson.

Graduation News

Congratulations! The following members have completed learning the T'ai Chi Solo Form: Elinor Hsu, Teresa LePiane, Marriane Schwalen, Francisco Tosca.

Contact Us

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

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Welcome to our
newest tutors:
Ruthann, Ralph, and
Stephen

Question of the Month

Question: I have recently completed learning the T'ai Chi Solo Form. What should I do now?

Answer: The first order of business would be to congratulate yourself on successfully learning the Solo Form. This is an accomplishment that requires perseverance, concentration, consistency, and time. Well done.

First Add, Then Subtract

When learning anything new, the first phase is a process of addition—acquiring. In T'ai Chi, we learn the basics of a posture: footwork, mechanics, shapes and measurements (see *Wudang*, May issue 2018; “Learning and Mastering the Solo Form”) until it can be performed with some continuity and flow. Then it's on to the next posture and the next one after that until the first section is learned, then the second and third.

Once it's learned, remembering the sequence of the form is most important and a marker of the end of the first phase of study. When a student can perform the whole form on their own without stopping, they have “graduated” from this first phase of learning. At the studio, we acknowledge the member's accomplishment by listing them in “Graduation News” in an issue of *Wudang*.

Grandmaster Wai-lun Choi spoke English as a second language. He had a process of learning new words: upon hearing a word he didn't know, he would find out its meaning, and if the word seemed relevant and worth learning, he would write it on Post-it notes and display it in places where he would see it and remember the word and its definition.

One such word was “refine.” A student of his used the word, and he asked its meaning; the student cleverly gave an analogy of the process of making steel from iron ore in which the ore is melted and impurities removed, turning it into metallic iron, which is further refined into spring steel, a type of steel that is both strong and flexible and has been used in the making of swords and other martial arts



weapons for centuries. Master Choi understood the meaning of the word and its relevance to martial arts immediately and would often be heard saying, “Your form is okay, but you need to refine it.”

Refining a form is a process of elimination and reduction, eliminating excess and deficiency from a movement and utilizing the Chinese concept of *Sung*—to loosen, release mental and physical tensions, relax deeply. Refine the footwork and stances (see *Wudang*, February 2019, “The Stances of the T'ai Chi Solo Form and Their Function”) so they support the body and smoothly link the postures together; correct basic movement mechanics, shapes and measurements of the arms; unify the movements so all the parts are integrated and harmonious. The breath becomes slow and continuous and centered in the lower abdomen; the mind is tranquil, and the Qi is stimulated and oxygenates the blood.

These things take time and practice. Attend classes, see and do the form with more advanced practitioners, and develop a personal practice at home.

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Master Choi's
favorite word:
refine

T'ai Chi Beyond the Solo Form

Master T.T. Liang identified four facets to the practice of T'ai Chi: health, self-defense, mental development, and meditation. These can be thought of in a linear progression but can also be imagined as spokes on a wheel or rays of the sun, with the Solo Form in the central position.

Correct practice makes inroads into all the categories flowing out from the Solo Form, whether a person actively pursues all of these branches of T'ai Chi or not. If a person practices the form regularly, the health benefits begin to emerge: better balance, flexibility, reduced stress, greater mental clarity, and other aspects of health that are currently being reported by science and medicine.



The T'ai Chi 43 Postures Form was designed to be practiced softly with a partner, like a two-person Solo Form illuminating the martial meaning of the movements. Pushing Hands takes this a step further, and weapons practice extends intention and energy beyond the hands into the weapon and also develops the upper body. These practices are available avenues of study once the Solo Form is learned.

The mental development comes from concentration, memory work, understanding the principles, examining the historical writings known as the T'ai Chi Classics, and exploring the philosophical roots of T'ai Chi in Daoism. The meditative aspect is cultivated

Fans and Shirts for Sale

The studio has a limited number of T'ai Chi Fans for sale before the upcoming Fan Class. Bamboo fans in a variety of colors are \$18.

Our studio shirt sale ends Jan. 31
Buy one shirt and get a second shirt at 50% off.

through the slow and relaxed practice of the form, the Qigong offered in the form classes, and the Neigong and meditation practices taught in Healing Tao courses.

Make a realistic assessment of where you are right now and whether your practice habits are putting you on the path toward realizing your goals. Consult with a tutor for guidance; use the sign-off sheets—even if you have finished the form sequence. Take a private class with Sifu Paul to get detailed and specific corrections, and be more concerned with your current direction than with your current results, e.g., *I'm on the path toward... perfecting my stances, moving more from the waist, making the form sequence smooth, etc.*

Even if you're moving more slowly than you'd like, relax. In the practice of T'ai Chi Ch'uan, moving slower than you'd like is a recipe for success.

*“Thousands of candles can be lit from
a single candle,
and the life of the candle will not be
shortened.*

*Happiness never decreases by being
shared.”*

~ The Buddha

Upcoming Classes and Schedule Changes

Diverse and exciting classes are being offered this winter.

***Please note: The start dates for the T'ai Chi Fan class and the 43 Postures Symmetry 5 classes have changed. Please check the class listings for the new start dates.**

Monday Night Weapons Class, Feb. 3, 7:30–8:30: We will begin to learn the T'ai Chi Fan Form. The practice of T'ai Chi Fan develops grace and beauty in your empty-hand forms. In their utilitarian form, besides being used to cool oneself and provide shade, fans were made of fine paper and silks and were decorated as works of art.

Chinese fans also have a history as martial weapons. Fighting fans had ribs made of sharpened steel and were used for blocking, joint locking, point striking, and stabbing in the closed position and slicing, slapping, and distracting in the open position. Because of its disguised nature as a weapon, the fan was favored by women and gentleman-scholar/martial artists in China and was adopted by internal schools because it utilized “softness to overcome hardness” principles.

The class is open to anyone who has finished the Solo Form. This is a great form for those who are not particularly interested in the weapons training aspect of T'ai Chi. Principles of movement as extensions of the Solo Form will be emphasized.

T'ai Chi 43 Postures Form, Tuesday, Feb. 4, 6:00–7:25 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 8, at 11:30 a.m.–12:25 p.m.: We will learn Symmetry 5, which covers the postures Turn and Chop, Parry and Punch, Step Forward Ward Off Right, Cloud Hands, High Pat on Horse, Separate Foot, Kick With Heel, Punch Downward. Come and learn Symmetry 1 if you've finished the Solo Form.

The Healing Tao Wednesday at 7:30–8:45

The Healing Tao Inner Smile, Jan. 8–Mar. 11, 7:30–8:45 p.m., \$144 (free to members): The Inner Smile is a seated meditation

practice that is the foundation practice of the Healing Tao system. We will learn to move neutral energy (yuan Qi) through five natural pathways in the body with a focus on developing a deep sense of unconditional self-acceptance. We will learn one pathway per week, adding a new path to the one from the previous week, until we can meditate through all pathways in one meditation session. Inner Smiling is a simple and practical way to connect to what the Chinese call “ling,” or our inner heart essence, helping us to be more accepting and spontaneous in expressing our unique and natural soul pattern.

This is a beginner-friendly class, so if you haven't meditated before, there will be plenty of helpful guidelines and assistance in helping you build your practice in a natural and gradual manner.



Eclectis: Boxing Fundamentals Saturday 9:30–10:25 a.m.: Learn the fundamentals of boxing and acquire the five elements of martial arts—speed, timing, accuracy, power, and foundation—through carefully selected drills and practices. These activities are great for reflexes, conditioning, and understanding the core principles of martial arts. This class teaches how to strike and throw combinations of punches with proper body mechanics, flow,

and rhythm to maximize leverage and conserve energy and also how to train with a partner using safety-training gear: focus mitts, punch balls, and foam sticks. It's also a lot of fun. This class develops an understanding of the striking aspects of T'ai Chi. Beginners are welcome.

12 Animals Class Saturday 10:30–11:25 a.m.: The 12 Animals is the foundation practice for the Liu Ho Pa Fa system. We will continue learning the Mandarin, a mythological animal that develops coiling energy and lateral striking movement. Beginners are welcome. Check with Sifu Paul if you're interested in joining the class.

The Liu Ho Pa Fa Main Form will be taught **Thursday evenings beginning Jan. 9, at 7:30–8:30 p.m.** for those who have completed one or more cycles of the 12 Animals forms. This is what the Animals Forms have prepared you for. This is the original form of the Liu Ho Pa Fa System as created by Li Dong Feng. It is a deep and intricate journey through the six harmonies and eight methods, with many techniques, fighting strategies, and beautiful movement sequences. The form is in two sections; each section is subdivided into three smaller sections. We will begin learning Section 1A, which contains the first 10 postures. Talk to Sifu Paul if you are interested in joining the class.



< Hua Shan (Flower Mountain), the birthplace of Liu Ho Pa Fa. Photo by Paul Abdella