

# Wudang

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

Twin Cities T'ai Chi



12/18



## From Sifu Paul

Greetings, everyone,

As 2018 comes to an end, we usher in the dark winter sun and the season of the water element: winter. It's a time to gather in and dream of the new year and the emerging light. In this issue: a brief recap of an amazing year at the studio, an exploration into the practice of Qigong, upcoming classes, and more. Best wishes to all for the new year.

## The Year in Review

2018 was a full and busy year at the studio building new membership, solidifying our T'ai Chi community, and bringing T'ai Chi into new venues and environments. Here are some highlights:

- Kim Husband, assisted by Dan Frederick, taught and demonstrated T'ai Chi at White Tiger Martial Arts Academy and a variety of conventions, including Mars Con, CONvergence, 2D con, and DeCONges-tant, with more to come in 2019.
- We installed three sublime archival posters representing T'ai Chi and our studio designed by Todd Nesser.
- The studio upgraded its practice hall with new ceiling fans, dimmable LED lighting, and full-spectrum colored lights that create the perfect environment for T'ai Chi and Qigong practice. Thank you, Fran.
- We held a successful fundraiser and matching-grant campaign that raised \$10,000 for studio operations, continuing education, studio upgrades, and more. Thank you to our anonymous donors and all who contributed to the fundraiser.



- Sifu Paul continued his studies in Healing Tao Qigong and meditation this year in Asheville, North Carolina. He has now completed teaching a full cycle of the Healing Tao fundamentals at the studio and continues to teach the complete Yang-style T'ai Chi system, Liu Ho Pa Fa, and Eclectsis.
- We mourned the loss of some friends of the studio: Sifu Doug Anderson, Loc Truong, and Rudi Sundberg.
- Finally, the studio commemorated its 25th anniversary with a celebration, demonstration, banquet, and slide show in October. It was a fun and well-attended event that brought to a close an exciting year for all of us.

We are looking forward to deepening our commitment to our mission and expanding our membership in the coming year.

## Holiday Closures

We will be closed from December 24 through January 1 and will be open for classes in the new year on January 2. Happy holidays to everyone.

## Question of the Month: What Is Qigong?

### What Is Its History?

The practice known as Qigong developed over many centuries in China. As its people struggled with the elements of nature, they developed practices that were used for healing, strengthening, and preventing illness. Three general categories of Qigong developed over time that share common principles: medical, martial, and spiritual Qigong.

Qigong was closely aligned with Daoism, China's indigenous philosophy that taught that humanity is inseparable from nature and that there is an everlasting, omnipresent, conscious energy behind nature called Dao that extends beyond time and space and that humanity is intrinsically connected to it. Daoists developed ways to live in harmony with the cycles and rhythms of nature and to cultivate oneself by harnessing nature's power and the inherent energy in the body for health and spiritual development.

Qigong utilizes various practice methods developed by the Daoists, Chinese medical practitioners, and martial artists that include slow and gentle movements, deep breathing, visualization, self-massage, the use of sound, and the mental circulation of qi to achieve an intended effect on the body, mind, and spirit.

### What's in a Name?

Although the practice of Qigong is ancient in China, the name Qigong is not. Its use dates back to 1948, when, on the cusp of the takeover by the Chinese Communist Party, there were large numbers of sick and wounded soldiers in the party's military. Unable to provide adequate medical treatment for them, party officials heard that a master healer had cured a young party cadre named Liu Guizhen of a number of illnesses. He had been sick and weakened for years from gastric ulcers, insomnia, and a neurological disorder. The young man had returned home to his native village, where he met an old Daoist named



Liu Duzhou who taught him "nei yang gong," or Inner Cultivation Skill. After 102 days of practice, the ulcer was cured and the other ailments greatly improved. Liu Guizhen became a disciple of the Daoist and learned the complete nei yang gong method.

News of his recovery spread to party officials, and he was appointed as a medical research leader to conduct experiments on the practice. He assembled a team of local hospital officials to investigate clinical applications of the method. The first order of business was to separate the method from its philosophical and spiritual origins. Techniques within the practice were renamed to describe their literal function, and so was the general name applied to the methods.

## Contact Us

For timely updates, follow Twin Cities T'ai Chi Ch'uan on [Facebook](#).

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Several names were discussed until the group finally settled on Qigong Liaofa, or Life Force Skill Therapy. The name has remained and is popularly known worldwide simply as Qigong (pronounced chee gong).

### What Is Qi?

To the Chinese, qi is the primal energy matrix that underlies all existence. Qi is everywhere in the universe, from subatomic particles to solar systems, galaxies, and the dark matter of space. It is not a mechanical energy so much as it is an intelligence that manifests and differentiates into specialized functions and forms in the universe and in the body. Qi flows throughout the human body and is the activating force for all activities. It is classified according to its source; there is innate qi, which comes from our parents, and acquired qi derived from food, water, and air.

In Chinese medicine, qi is further classified into different categories according to its function in different areas of the body. The general term for all types of qi, whatever its source or function, is called vital qi. Our ability to ward off disease and maintain our health depends on the flow and abundance of vital qi in the body. In Qigong practice, intention directs the movement of qi, which in turn directs the flow of blood in the body. The practice of Qigong is designed to stimulate, balance, strengthen, and build vital qi.

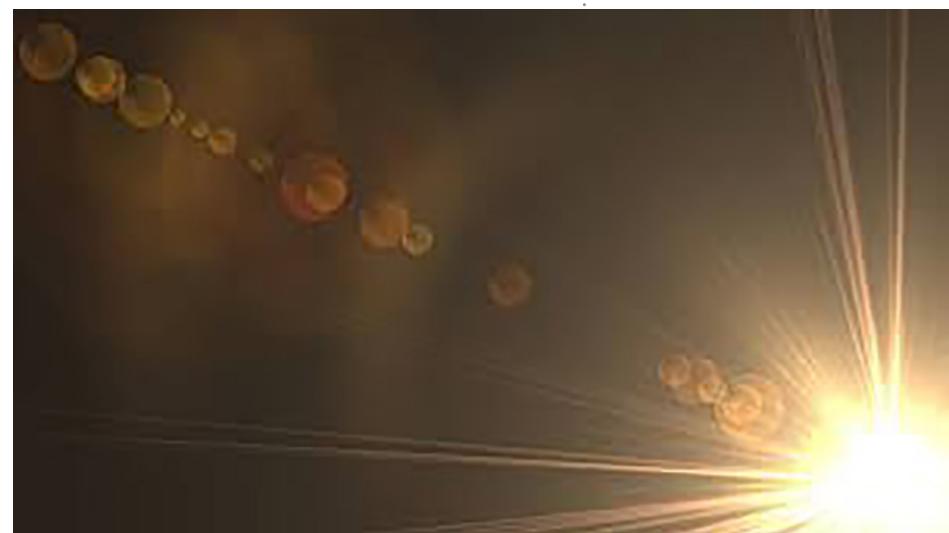
### Where Is Qi?

In Chinese medicine Qi flows in the body in specific pathways that were discovered and recorded over time and accurately charted by an acupuncturist, Dr. Wang Wei (987–1067 C.E.). There are pathways that connect to the internal organs and extend to the limbs, where they have accessible points on the surface of the body. These are called channels. The channels are also called meridians. There are 12 channels in the body. The points on the surface can be stimulated through acupuncture, massage, moxibustion (the application of heat), and Qigong.

Pathways that connect to the channels that have no direct connection to the organs and

without accessible acupuncture points on the surface are called vessels. There are eight vessels in the body. The vessels can act like a reservoir of qi and supplement the channels when they are deficient.

The Qigong practice called the microcosmic orbit specifically circulates qi in two important vessels located along the front of the torso (the conception vessel) and along the spine (the governing vessel). These are the only two vessels that have acupuncture points on the surface. Additional pathways of qi flow connect to the channels and the conception and governing vessels called branches and even smaller netlike energy pathways called collaterals that link together the entire body, making it an integrated wholistic system of energy. The practice of Qigong through intention, practice, and skill directs the function and movement of qi throughout the body and stimulates the body's natural tendency toward homeostasis.



### The Power of Three

From the point of view of Chinese medicine and the cosmology of Daoism, human beings are composed of three fundamental frequencies of life force known as the three treasures. The three treasures are: *jing* (*essence of life*), *qi* (*energy*), and *shen* (*spirit*). They are often compared to the three states of water: solid, liquid, and gas.

**Jing** is the origin of the body and is transformed into all substances and functions. Jing

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**The Orbit Begins**

**The Microcosmic Orbit meditation and qigong course begins on Wednesday, Dec. 5, at 7:30 to 8:45 p.m. Come and explore this ancient and powerful practice.**



becomes the material aspect of the human body—our flesh and bones.

Like qi, jing is produced from two sources: innate jing that we inherit from our parents and acquired jing derived from food and water and converted by the stomach and spleen. Innate jing exists when we are born and includes the reproductive essence or original substance needed for the construction and development of the human body. Innate and acquired jing mutually support each other and are stored in the kidneys. What we eat and drink has an effect on the jing in the body and in turn affects our vital qi and overall health.

**Qi**, as previously stated, is the energy or the natural force that fills the universe and our bodies.

**Shen** is most commonly translated as “spirit” and encompasses mental functions, self-awareness, and our individual expression of consciousness. Shen is derived from and relies on jing and qi for the sustenance to maintain its function. The term “vitality of spirit” describes the abundance of the shen and is a reflection of one’s state of health.

The three treasures of jing, qi, and shen nourish our perceptions, feelings, and actions in the physical world.

In addition to the three treasures, the Chinese believe in three powers of qi in the universe:

heaven (*tian qi*), earth (*di qi*), and human (*ren qi*). Heaven qi is the most important of the three, consisting of forces exerted by the stars and planets, gravity, electromagnetic energy, sunlight, moonlight, climate and weather, etc.

Earth qi is controlled by heaven qi but generates its own qi as well: the heat and electric current generated from the earth's inner and outer core, its magnetic field, and, the Chinese believe, lines and patterns of energy similar to meridians in the body that flow throughout the earth.

Human qi is controlled by the natural cycles of heaven qi and earth qi. Every human being and every living thing has its own qi field. The energy of heaven, earth, and humanity is constantly seeking balance. When excess or deficiency is present, nature finds ways to rebalance—sometimes with extreme cosmic and climatological events, and through illness. The practice of Qigong directs the function and movement of qi and is used to remove obstructions to qi flow, increase the circulation of blood and lymph, manage mental and emotional stress, and help bring the body into balance.

Another principle of three asserts that the body is endowed with three fundamental centers of vital energy and intelligence. These centers are located in the head, at the heart, and in the viscera, the region of the abdomen we call the gut. The Daoists referred to these centers of intelligence as the lower, middle, and upper dan tien. Dan tien translates as “field of elixir.” An elixir is a medicinal preparation used to induce rapid change or transformation, and a field is a region of activity or space where the transformation occurs. The body is seen as a reservoir of natural medicine, and Qigong is designed to release it.

### The Three Brains

Science is beginning to use the word “brain” to describe each of these areas of the body. What then qualifies them as brains? Each contains neurons that transmit and receive information through electrical and chemical signals. They both process and store this

information and then adapt and change accordingly. Both the heart and the gut have their own nervous systems that possess a high level of memory and intelligence. In short, each of these centers of intelligence can learn and communicate. This communication happens via the vagus nerve, the longest of our 12 cranial nerves.



When Qigong and T'ai Chi are practiced, the slow, relaxed movements and deep breathing activate our parasympathetic nervous system, which calms the body down. This in turn stimulates the vagus nerve, which is attached to the brain stem and travels through the neck and into the chest, where tens of thousands of nerve fibers pass through the heart, lungs, stomach, pancreas, and most other organs in the abdomen.

Eighty percent of these fibers send information from the body to the brain, while 20 percent send signals from the brain to the body. It uses chemical signals called neurotransmitters to stimulate the organs while it reduces inflammation in the body. Stress can inflame the vagus nerve, which in turn causes inflammation in the body. Healthy stimulation of the vagus nerve through Qigong practice creates vagal tone, a condition of optimal health of the vagus nerve.

### The Language of Qigong

The practice of Qigong has been likened to a language, a way of communicating with the qi within and outside of us. Qigong is not an exercise so much as a method of discovering, gathering, circulating, directing, conserving,

storing, transforming, and transmitting the qi.

When we move the body slowly and consciously, we create vagal tone and parasympathetic activity. When we breathe slowly and deeply, we increase communication between the body's three energy centers and reduce blood pressure. When we sing, chant, or tone, as is common in Qigong, we stimulate the lungs, increase heart rate variability, and release oxytocin in the body—our bodies' own elixir of love. When we relax deeply, we realize that stress isn't in the mind as much as it's in the nervous system. And when we practice in groups, we develop social relationships that increase positive emotions and an awareness of our interconnectedness.

Qigong is an integral part of our curriculum at the studio and is part of every Solo Form class that we teach. Regular practice of Qigong produces feelings of calm and well-being and sensations of the movement of energy in the body. We are a small universe of energy and part of the larger field of energy we call the universe. Having a basic knowledge of some of the fundamental principles and elements of Qigong will enhance one's experience of the practice and accelerate progress in mastering this dynamic form of energy work.

### Graduation News

Congratulations to Tom Brazill and Jennifer Lewis for completing the Solo Form!

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Congratulations,  
Tom and Jennifer!

### Practice Makes Perfect

There is an open practice on Fridays from 1:00 to 2:00. Come and tune up your Solo and two-person forms.

### Rising Sign

Thanks to Tim Dennis and Todd Nesser for repairing, weatherproofing, and reinstalling our outdoor studio sign.