



Wudang

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

5/18



From Sifu Paul

Greetings, everyone,

I hope your May Day was filled with dances, singing, and cake, or at least a walk out into the sunshine. In this issue, you'll find a guide to mastering the Solo Form, updates on Twin Cities T'ai Chi demonstrations at White Tiger Martial Arts and science-fiction conventions, new posters, classes, and more.

Learning and Mastering the Solo Form

The complete system of T'ai Chi Ch'uan encompasses solo and partner practices, weapons practices, philosophy, and meditation. The root and center of the system, however, is the T'ai Chi Solo Form.

People begin learning T'ai Chi for a variety of reasons, such as improved balance and circulation, the experience of deep relaxation, concentration and memory, and other markers of good health. In addition, there is a rapidly growing body of scientific evidence supporting the health benefits associated with T'ai Chi that attract people to begin learning and develop a practice.

In order to maximize the potential benefits inherent in the T'ai Chi Solo Form, it is important to have a systematic and graduated approach to learning it. Understanding the different facets of the form and when and how to integrate them into your practice will make the form a vibrant and unlimited resource for health, self-empowerment, and moving meditation.

There are three primary categories or stages in learning the Solo Form, each with an



associated internal quality to be focused on and mastered. They are (1) Relaxation, Posture, and Sequence, (2) Rhythm and Harmony, and (3) Breath and Energy. A brief look at each of these facets of the form will serve as a guide to learn and master the solo form.

Relaxation, Posture, and Sequence

In a typical first T'ai Chi class, a student will begin learning some of the movements that resemble those in the fluid, dance-like sequence they have seen performed by masters and students of the practice. They may be surprised to learn the long, continuous sequence of movements is comprised of many smaller individual movements called postures that are distinguished from each other by unique, often poetic names such as White Crane Spreads Its Wings, Needle at the Sea Bottom, and Bend the Bow Shoot the Tiger. Postures are learned and then linked together to create a form.

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[A guide to learning the Solo Form](#)



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The studio celebrated World T'ai Chi Day on April 28 by holding a full day of classes and hosting visitors who attended with friends.

The arrangement of postures in the form is called a sequence, which includes natural break points in the form called sections. The form taught at Twin Cities T'ai Chi is the Yang-style long form, which contains three sections. Each of these sections has been divided into smaller groups of postures to make the form easier to learn.

Learning any of the postures in the form requires understanding three components:

1. Footwork—knowing where the feet begin and end in a posture and how to transition smoothly with the feet from start to finish. These beginning and ending points are called stances.
2. Movement mechanics—how the whole body moves in relation to the feet, the ground, and the force of gravity.
3. Shapes and measurements—the shapes formed by the arms throughout the posture and their height, distance, and angles from the torso.

In addition, knowing the name of each posture gives them an identity and helps a student remember the posture and the larger form sequence.

There is an energy quality that should be focused on in this phase of learning the form, and that is relaxation. Becoming aware of excess tension in the body and letting go of it requires repetition and practice of the postures. Deep relaxation while moving through the sequence of postures, even a limited sequence, begins to produce a feeling of calm that diminishes the effects of stress in the body by releasing blockages and opening the energy channels.

Rhythm and Harmony

Each of the postures contains a fixed number of movements that can be counted numerically to help one learn the posture and develop continuity. When the posture can be performed smoothly, an inherent rhythm and harmony emerges that adheres to the phrase

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“start together; stop together.” This unity and harmony in a posture is called Zheng Ti Jing in Chinese, or “whole-body power,” in which maximum efficiency is achieved in a flow of movement and timing, and the whole body is integrated into every individual part. This deepens the feeling of relaxation in the body and also connects the bones together through the joints in a kinetic chain that roots to the ground through the feet, increasing balance and stability.

From this unity of the body comes a mind–body unity that goes beyond the concentration required to know what comes next, as in the posture and sequence phase of the form, to an imagined resistance as if you were doing the form in a medium denser than air such as water. This imagined resistance builds toward the direction of completion in the posture. This is known as “swimming in air.” Forms from the past were long to sustain this body–mind harmony as long as possible. Today’s T’ai Chi forms are short to accommodate the collective erosion of our ability to pay attention mentally and physically for long periods. We are not too busy to learn a long form as much as we’re too distracted.

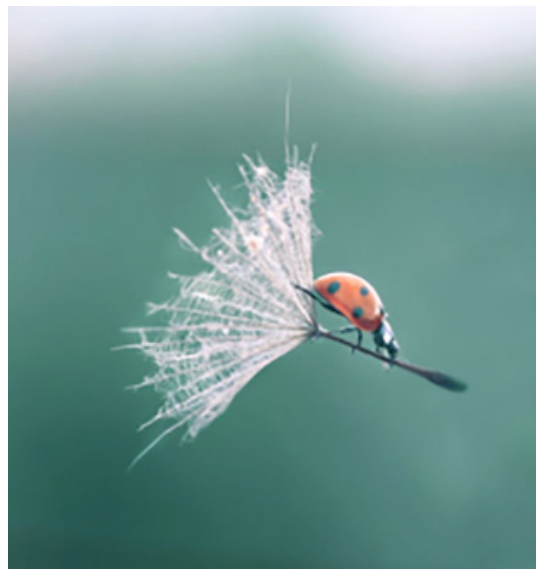
Breath and Energy

The T’ai Chi classics say, “The qi should be stimulated; the spirit of vitality should be retained internally.” To the Chinese, qi is the primal energy that underlies all existence. It is everywhere in everything. The most commonly written Chinese character for qi simply means air or breath. In T’ai Chi practice, the body and breath work slowly, softly, smoothly, and silently together to increase blood oxygen saturation levels. Oxygen diffusion in the tissues increases and is felt as a warm and pleasant tingling in the extremities. Excess tension in the body or mind will make the breath shallow and erratic. Movements that are relaxed and unified allow the breath to be natural, deep, and continuous. Our bio electromagnetic energy becomes stimulated through the rhythmic repetition of the postures, and it begins to move the cerebrospinal fluid along the spine and in the brain as well as moving the lymph to help remove

toxins. The crystalline structure of the bones, when stressed, converts the mechanical energy of the form into electric current, which promotes bone growth and repair.

The regular and correct practice of T’ai Chi builds up the physical body, the body’s bioelectric energy body, and relaxes and settles the mind into lower brainwave frequencies that reduce stress and release our positive brain chemicals.

Each of the stages of mastering the form is challenging but ultimately rewarding. New learning requires repetition. Having a map to follow makes the path clear and lets the journey of mastery be fulfilling, one Solo Form at a time.



Ruthann Godollei Wins Fulbright

Congratulations to studio member Professor Ruthann Godollei, who has just been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship! Fulbright Scholars are chosen for outstanding achievement in their field of study and for having exemplary teaching records. The award entitles Ruthann to spend a semester in Edmonton, Alberta, teaching graduate students and creating a public art project.

Ruthann is the DeWitt Wallace Professor of art at Macalester College and a longtime member of our studio. We are delighted for her continued success in sharing her creative gifts both at home and abroad.

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The Rhythm and Harmony stage of learning the Solo Form emphasizes unity of movement: “start together, stop together.”

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Congratulations, Ruthann!

Upcoming Class The Six Healing Sounds and Five Animals Qigong

The Six Healing Sounds is one of the oldest qigong practices in China. It is a calming energy practice that uses movement, sound, and visualization to balance the emotions, working with the energy of the body's five major organs.

This class integrates seated, standing, and moving sequences. The movement practice combines the healing sounds with five animal movements to create a short, easy-to-learn practice that's perfect for summer.

This is a one-hour class at 7:30 on Wednesday evenings that runs 8 weeks. It starts July 18, 2018. Cost: \$96 for nonmembers. Free to members.

Seeking Demo Team Members

The studio is looking for experienced students able to demonstrate T'ai Chi at off-site events, such as meetings, conventions, and educational exchanges with other schools. To join the team, you must know the Solo Form, some Qigong, and at least one weapon form. You should also be comfortable performing for an audience and answering questions about our style and our school.

Upcoming demos include:

- May 12: Educational exchange with White Tiger Martial Arts Academy
- July 6: demo/mini class at CONvergence sci-fi convention
- Sept. 28–30: demo/mini class at DeCON-gestant sci-fi convention
- Jan. 4–6, 2019: demo/mini class at CON-sole Room Dr. Who convention

Contact Kim Husband if you're interested in being part of the demo team or if you know of other events at which the studio could participate.

T'ai Chi

Twin Cities T'ai Chi is dedicated to teaching the art, science, and spirit of T'ai Chi. The practice of T'ai Chi has been shown to produce increased levels of energy, flexibility, balance and an elevated sense of well-being. **Visitors are always welcome and your first class with us is free.**



Twin Cities T'ai Chi 

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New Studio Posters

The studio has a new poster design in full color that is ready for distribution. Thanks to Todd Nesser for the beautiful design. If you have a favorite coffee shop, kiosk, co-op, library, bookstore, or other location where you could hang one of our posters, please take one or two or more and help share the gift of T'ai Chi and our studio. Posters have been a very effective means of bringing people to the studio and getting our name out.

Seeking Submissions

If you have an idea for an article or other information you would like to submit for the *Wudang*, please contact Sifu Paul at the studio or send us an email with your proposal. We'd love to hear from you.