



Wudang

2/19

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER



From Sifu Paul

Greetings, everyone!

Gung Hay Fat Choi! Which means: wishing you great happiness and prosperity in this Chinese New Year of the Boar/Pig. Winter has let us all know that the Get Out of Winter Free card we received in December was only temporary. Unfortunately, we've had to cancel some classes due to the cold and snowy weather. It's worth noting that if there's any question in your mind about severe-weather cancellations, there are three resources you can check to find out the status of a class or classes:

1. The studio website. Just check the home page for the red banner at the top, and it will tell you.
2. Our Facebook page.
3. Email. This is often a little slower but gets to your inbox eventually.

I never want to cancel classes, but sometimes safety is an issue, and I know that we will practice Tai Chi together another day.

In this issue, T'ai Chi stances and footwork, upcoming new classes, graduation news, and more.

Happy New Year.

Question of the Month: What Are the Stances of the T'ai Chi Solo Form and Their Functions?

There's a famous passage in the Tao Te Ching that states: The journey of a thousand miles begins beneath your feet. In T'ai Chi Ch'uan,



the journey of learning the Solo Form starts to finish begins with the patterns of movement made by the feet, called footwork. The individual movements that make up the Solo Form are called postures; the positions of the feet at the beginning and end of each posture are called stances. There are eight stances in the Yang-Style T'ai Chi Solo Form taught at Twin Cities T'ai Chi, four primary and four secondary stances.

The Four Primary Stances:

1. Wuji Stance

The Wuji Stance has the feet shoulder width and parallel and in line with the shoulders. It has a weight distribution of 50/50. This stance marks the beginning of each of the three sections of the Solo Form. It is also found at

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the midpoint of the Cloud Hands posture. The Wuji Stance is strong from either side. In Wuji, it is easy to lower your center downward along your midline. Think of a squat to clarify this concept. Sample posture: Cross Hands.

2. Bow and Arrow Stance

The Bow and Arrow Stance, commonly called a Bow Stance, is a shoulder-width stance with either the right or left foot forward. The forward foot points straight ahead, while the rear foot's toes are turned out 45°. The heel of the front foot should be forward of the toes of the rear foot by ½ to 1 of your own foot lengths. This will be a medium-frame Bow Stance. There are two weight distributions: front weighted and back weighted. Front weighted is 70/30 front to back and is used to issue power in a forward direction; back weighted is 30/70 front to back and is used to neutralize power in a rearward direction or to pull. At our studio, we've adjusted the back weighted bow stance to be 40/60. This allows for more downward rather than backward movement and is a very stable stance. Sample postures: front weighted: Single Whip; back weighted: Roll Back.

3. Cat Stance, also called an Empty Stance and a Toe Stance at the studio

The forward foot points straight ahead with the ball of the foot touching and the heel raised slightly. The rear foot toes are turned out 45°. The heels are in line with each other front to back so that the front foot can pull straight back and just graze the rear heel. There is a distance between the front heel and rear toe of ½ of one of your foot lengths. The weighting: 0/100 front to back. The front foot can be weighted up to 30% depending on the use of the stance. The Cat Stance is used to throw a front kick, to assume a narrow protective guard, and as a transitional stance, creating mobility. Sample posture: White Crane Spreads Its Wings.

4. 7-Star Stance, also called a T'ai Chi Stance and a Heel Stance at the studio

The forward foot points straight ahead, with the heel of the foot touching and the toes

The Eight Stances

1. Wuji Stance
2. Bow and Arrow Stance
3. Cat Stance
4. 7-Star Stance
5. Rooster Stance
6. Taming Tiger Stance
7. Repulse Monkey Stance
8. Ready Stance

raised slightly. The rear foot toes are turned out 45°. The heels are in line with each other front to back so that the front foot can pull straight back and just graze the rear heel. Like the Cat Stance, there is a distance between the front heel and rear toe of ½ of one of your foot lengths. The Weighting: 0/100 front to back. The front foot can be weighted up to 30% depending on the use of the stance. The 7-Star Stance is used to trap an opponent's foot or to hook behind an opponent's heel. Sample posture: Lifting Hands.

The Four Secondary Stances

5. The Rooster Stance, sometimes called a Chicken Stance or a Crane Stance

The front leg is elevated so the upper leg is parallel to the ground or slightly higher or lower. The knee is centered and faces forward. The foot is relaxed with the toes aligned with the knee and not touching the ground. The rear foot toes are turned out 45°, and the rear foot bears all of the weight: 0/100. The

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Rooster Stance is used to strike with the knee, throw a kick, or block a kick. Sample posture: Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg.

6. Taming Tiger Stance

The Taming Tiger Stance is a shoulder-width stance with either the right or left foot forward. The rear foot is turned toes out to a rear corner direction (if facing north with the left foot forward, the right foot would face southeast), but is modified in our form to turn out 90° (east) to the front leg's direction. The rear leg bears 80% of the weight; the front toes turn inward slightly. The weighting: 20/80 front to back. The stance is used to duck under something/someone and set up a strike or throw. Sample Posture: Squatting Single Whip (the back-weighted part of the posture).

7. Repulse Monkey Stance

The Repulse Monkey Stance is a shoulder-width stance with the feet parallel and one foot forward. The distance between the forward heel and rear toes is $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 of your own foot lengths. This is a backward-moving stance that could be compared to walking backward on railroad tracks if the rails were shoulder width apart. The weighting: 0/100 front to back.

The stance is used to keep the perineum/tip of the sacrum area open as an energy pathway to connect the front and back channels. This stance is used in the Repulse Monkey Posture. The arms move the Qi in a fire path micro-cosmic orbit. For martial applications, the rear foot turns out 45° to a rear bow stance, and the hand pattern simulates a simultaneous pull and strike. Sample posture: Repulse Monkey.

8. Ready Stance, also called a Natural Stance

The Ready Stance brings the heels together, with the toes of each foot angled out 45° . Weighting: 50/50. This is a traditional stance used to begin and end forms in Chinese martial arts. In T'ai Chi Ch'uan, the heels touching together represent the undifferentiated unity of Tai Yi: the Great Oneness. The form emanates from and is returned to this



unified state at the beginning and end of the Solo Form.

Plot Your Course With a Compass

In order for the footwork in your form to be smooth, stable, and able to support the activity of the waist and arms while moving through the sequence, it's useful to think of the forward foot in a stance as a compass needle that marks the precise direction of the completed posture. If the direction of the needle is off course, the integrity of the posture and form will be compromised. The rear foot at 45° adds stability to the structure of the stance and posture.

Whether you practice T'ai Chi for health, meditation, or martial arts, understanding the construction and use of each of the stances will help build a strong root and foundation. From there you can develop balance, power, and fluid movement in your form postures and Solo Form.

Have a question? Just write it down and put it in the idea box in the practice hall.

Graduation News

Congratulations to Lynn Scott on completing the Solo Form. Now the fun begins!

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Congratulations, Lynn!

Upcoming Classes and Schedule Changes

Monday-evening Weapons class 7:30–8:30
will begin learning the cane on February 11.

This is a great class to try if you have no previous experience with weapons.

The 12 Animals class Saturday 10:30–11:30
will begin a new cycle and begin learning the Dragon. Come and join the class if you are interested in this dynamic style.

The 43 Postures Form class Saturday 11:30–12:30 will begin learning Symmetry 2.

The Healing Tao Meditation class Wednesday 7:30–8:45 will begin learning the Wuji Gong Primordial T'ai Chi Meditation on March 6. Learn the original 800-year-old lineage form of Chang San Feng, the 13th-century founder of Tai Chi.

This 15-minute form is easy to learn yet uniquely powerful. It's totally different from T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Its ancient name was "wuji gong." It literally means "develops skill for entering the Supreme Mystery." It is often translated as "Primordial Qigong" or "Primordial T'ai Chi." Qigong is the historical Mother of T'ai Chi. It was done for health and spiritual development and is older than Tai Chi Ch'uan done for martial self-defense. Usher in the New Year with a powerful Qigong form that really manifests and embodies the changes you wish to create in your life. Wednesdays 7:30–8:45, \$144 for 12 weeks, free to members. All are welcome.



Just Done

*A month alone behind closed doors
forgotten books, remembered,
clear again.*

*Poems come, like water to the pool
Welling,
up and out,
from perfect silence
—Yuan Mei*

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Wintering Tree
by Paul Abdella

Seeking Submissions

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