

Wudang



09/22



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

From Sifu Paul

Greetings, everyone,

Late summer has arrived. In September, the harvest full moon signaled the shifting radiance of summer's light and the beginning of the harvest season—bearing the final gifts from our gardens. The native Ojibwe call it the falling leaves moon as autumn emerges one red and yellow tree at a time, and nature shows us the beauty of letting things go. There was wonderful weather all summer for our T'ai Chi in the Park classes at Hampden Park this year, and they will continue, weather permitting, through the end of October.

In this issue: our annual fundraiser begins in October, a listing of what new classes will be offered, advice on how to learn the left side of the T'ai Chi Solo Form, and more.

Build toward your success one class at a time. Keeping a positive habit active is a powerful practice. I look forward to seeing you online and back in the studio.

Our Annual Fundraiser Begins in October!

October is the month we officially begin our annual fundraiser, which will run through December 31. Thank you to those who have already donated.

Since 2017, the studio has been offered a \$5,000 gift by a generous studio member to be used as an incentive for a matching-grant fundraiser that has been held in the fall. This year, we are grateful and pleased to announce that we have been offered the same opportunity and gift: If we raise \$5,000, we'll get a \$5,000 bonus.



We have made our match five years in a row—and even exceeded it. We hope to do the same this year.

If you feel inspired to donate—in any amount—please know that your tax-deductible contribution will be immediately doubled; \$10 becomes \$20, \$100 becomes \$200, etc.

We celebrate having served our members and community for the past 29 years in our current location. We look forward to many more years to come.

With Gratitude

Thank you to everyone who has paid their third-quarter membership fee. The fourth quarter begins in October. Help us end the year fiscally strong by remembering to stay current with your membership. We are grateful for your support and presence at the studio.

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Fall fundrasier starts next month.

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Dues are due soon.

Double Happiness at Our Summer Social

Sometimes, a little rain must fall—especially during drought conditions—but it's nice when it doesn't rain on your parade or your picnic. On August 6, we held our breath because there was an 80% chance of rain, and then we held our Summer Social as scheduled. A morning shower provided much-needed moisture, followed by a reprieve from the rain at precisely our start time and the resumption of showers at our scheduled end time. You get lucky once in a while.

In between, a steady flow of new and experienced members, their friends, families, and a few surprise former members all arrived and began to mix and mingle.

Soon, it was time for food. A box lunch from D'Amico and Sons provided the food and fuel for more conversation and getting reacquainted. An impromptu group round of the T'ai Chi Solo Form followed lunch; group demonstrations of some weapons forms and partner Symmetries followed before a gentle rain started up and signaled it was time to end.

Thanks to all who came and spent some time together. It was good to see and connect with each other.

New Studio T-Shirts

We will be restocking and also taking orders for studio T-shirts soon. In addition to our familiar studio logo design, we will feature a new design option that was created by Todd Nesser, pictured here.

Stay tuned for further announcements.



Upcoming New Classes

T'ai Chi Single Straight Sword: The straight double-edged sword (Jian—pronounced *jyehn*) is most closely aligned with the Solo Form. The footwork and leg and waist movements follow the general mechanics of the Solo Form. The blade follows the body, and the eye follows the tip of the sword, providing a point of concentration and transmission of energy. The graceful choreography of the sword form and the rhythmic counterpoint of the free hand create a practice that is both meditative and energizing.

Just as the T'ai Chi Solo Form began with the original 13 postures, the T'ai Chi sword practice has 13 techniques that will be taught along with the Yang-Style Sword Form.

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 written by Paul Abdella unless otherwise noted.

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New T-shirt design available soon!



Advanced level starts Monday, October 3, 7:30–8:30.

If you know the T'ai Chi Solo Form, you can start the beginning-level sword class on Thursday, October 6, 7:30–8:30. Please sign up online—class size is limited to 12.

The T'ai Chi Symmetries: The T'ai Chi Symmetries are two-person form cycles that teach applications for each of the postures in the T'ai Chi Solo Form in the order in which they appear in the form.

There will be a **new Symmetry 1 class opening Tuesday, October 4, at 6:00 p.m.** that

will teach the posture applications for Ward Off, Roll Back, Press, and Push.

The class will be taught by Kim Husband. Kim has deep knowledge and experience with this form. Requirement: You need to know the full T'ai Chi Solo Form. Class size is limited to 6 people.

To apply to get into the class, send an email to the studio expressing your interest or talk to Sifu Paul at the studio.

The 6:00 Symmetry 2 class will continue working on that form.

The Advanced Symmetries class at 7:15 will begin working on Symmetry 4.

You must be vaccinated and wear a mask to participate in these partner classes.

*“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you.”
—Anne Lamott*

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New Symmetry 1 class starts Oct. 4!

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Board of directors seeks new secretary. Interested? Contact Sifu Paul or email the studio.

The Importance of Writing Things Down

Writing things down helps you clarify your thoughts, become more creative, remember what was said, record what needs to be done, stay motivated, record your progress, and reach your goals.

Writing things down is simple, especially with modern technology. It's no wonder it's an integral and core component of our board of directors. We need to have a scribe who helps us realize our goals, track our progress, and maintain a record of it all.

If you have an interest in being on the board and helping the studio grow, we are looking for someone to fill the position of secretary. The secretary will take notes at the monthly meeting, turn those notes into the minutes that get sent to the other board members so each has a record of the meeting, and also sends out a reminder of the next meeting. It's a straightforward, fairly simple yet important position on the board.

If you would like to begin with a one-year trial as secretary or just get some more information, send us an email (studio@tctaichi.org), or talk to Sifu Paul at the studio. The term will begin January 1, 2023.

Learning the Left Side of the T'ai Chi Solo Form

“Whether you want to teach T'ai Chi or not, always accept one student—your left side.”

—T.T. Liang

The benefits of a T'ai Chi practice are numerous, ranging from deep relaxation and stress release, balance and flexibility, strength, and whole-body harmony to deep breathing and breath control, body–mind integration, and much more. The central practice of T'ai Chi is the Solo Form, a graceful sequence of 43 slow-moving martial art movements that puts the body through a wide range of shapes, stances, turns, and patterns.

The form is laid out in three distinct sections. The first and shortest section establishes the basic footwork patterns and primary postures. The second section is the longest and most complex. The third section is in between in length and is a composite of Sections 1 and 2 with movements added in that are unique to Section 3. With sufficient practice, the form becomes slow, soft, smooth, and above all, *song* (relaxed).

At this stage of development, it is beneficial to begin learning the left-side Solo Form.

Learning the left side involves following the same sequence of postures but with the hands and feet in the inverse positions from the original form. In other words, if a posture ended with the left foot forward and the right hand forward, it would now finish with the right foot forward and the left hand forward.

T'ai Chi evolved as a martial art. To acquire a usable skill in this area, one needed to be able to perform all techniques with equal proficiency to the right and left and to move with lively and effortless footwork in any direction. In addition, Tai Chi's emphasis on the deep release of excess muscular tension (*song*), the cultivation of the breath's energy (*qi*), the heightened awareness of external stimuli such as sight, sound, and touch (exteroception), the increased communication between the brain and body and how it senses and integrates



information about its internal states (interoception), and the development of balance and awareness of body position and movement in space (proprioception; kinesthesia) are all enhanced when the form is performed to both the left and right sides.

What, then, is the best way to go about learning the left-side of the form? Answer: the way you learned the right side. The first stage of learning the form is relaxation, posture, and sequence. Prepare yourself with some stretching to release excess tension in the muscles and open the joints. Also, practice Qigong or some kind of breathwork that will get the body to relax more, release blockages, and open the energy channels.

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. Knowing the name of each posture gives them an identity and helps a

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The best way to learn the left side of the Solo Form: through relaxation, posture, and sequence.

student remember the posture and the larger form sequence. Since this has already been learned on the right side, begin the process of learning each posture on the left side by starting with the footwork.

When a student begins to learn T'ai Chi, they watch, follow, and learn the movements from a teacher. When you begin to learn the left side of the form, your right-side Solo Form is your teacher. Start by performing the first two or three postures on the right side, then do the footwork only for those postures. Try the footwork again, this time on the left side. Repeat until the footwork is smooth, then add the hands back into the movements. This will be challenging at first, but it becomes easier as you access what you know on the right side. This back-and-forth process deepens your understanding of the Solo Form in general and will efficiently and effectively create your left-side form.



The Yang Style Long Form, as the name implies, contains a substantial volume of movements. Even with its division into three sections, getting from the beginning to the end on the left side can seem intimidating. Creating smaller sequences of postures is a more efficient and enjoyable way to learn the left side. The following is a breakdown of the first section of the long form into smaller "mini-forms." Each small section should be learned in the footwork-first method de-

scribed above and then practiced until it becomes relaxed and fluid like the right side.

A complete breakdown of the entire form into subsections is available in the Members section of the Twin Cities T'ai Chi website (tctaichi.org). Learning and mastering the left side of the Solo Form is challenging, balancing, and enjoyable and provides benefits for a lifetime.

Section I: Left-Side Solo Form Practice Divisions

1A. Ward Off Section:

- Preparation
- Beginning
- Ward Off Left
- Ward Off Right
- Roll Back
- Press
- Push

1B. Single Whip Section:

- Single Whip
- Lift Hands
- Shoulder Stroke
- White Crane Spreads Its Wings

1C. Brush Knee Section:

- Brush Left Knee
- Play the Guitar
- Brush Left Knee
- Brush Right Knee
- Brush Left Knee
- Play the Guitar
- Brush Left Knee

1D. Parry and Punch Section:

- Chop With Fist
- Deflect Down, Parry, and Punch
- Withdraw and Push
- Cross Hands

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To make left-side practice easier, divide a section of the Solo Form into "mini-forms."

The Last Word: Advice From Professor Cheng Man-ching on T'ai Chi and Self-Cultivation

When you practice the form try to remember: all parts either move together or rest together; support your entire body upon a single leg. Let your waist guide your movements. Every part of your body must follow your waist, from the bottom of your feet to the top of your head—even your vision.

When your Wei-lu (tailbone) is centered and straight, your spirit can rise to your head top. The entire body should be light and nimble. When your Wei-lu is misaligned your spirit cannot rise.

Every point throughout your body has the potential for full and empty. Without full and empty there would be no yin or yang; without yin or yang there is no T'ai Chi. The yin/yang distinction in your hands or legs is expressed physically as full and empty.

The only true secret in T'ai Chi is the phrase: your mind is the commander. Your mind moves your chi, and chi transports your body

through an initial impetus. Your hands and feet never move independently but wait until your waist clearly receives the mental command—then they follow the waist. So when we read that in T'ai Chi the hand should not move, this includes the feet. Also, remember to move as if every part is strung together on a single thread.



A Fond Farewell

A fond farewell to Kimberly Joet Anderson. So many days, nights, and years, you supported our martial arts without ever having practiced one. You will be missed. —P

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Sifu Paul with the late Kim Anderson and the late Sifu Doug Anderson, founder of Eclectsis, 1978.

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Sunrise over Lake Superior.
Photo by
Todd Nesser

