

Another successful year at the Tai Chi Gala

July 2, 2015

8:46 PM MST



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Highlights from 2015 Tai Chi Gala

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I was honored to be invited as a presenter this year at the [Tai Chi Gala](#), held in Albany, New York on June 5 – 7. A few days after the event, I received an envelope from the organizers and found evaluation forms filled out by the attendees in my class. I was pleasantly surprised to realize how efficient the organizers were. No wonder this event has been going strong year after year.



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Tai Chi Grandmaster **Jou Tsung Hwa**, the original founder, called the event the "Zhang San Feng Festival" in honor of the legendary Tai Chi (Taiji) originator Taoist Monk Zhang San Feng. It later renamed the Tai Chi Gala by his disciple Sifu Loretta Wollering. The mission of this event is to unite Tai Chi, Bagua, Xingyi, **Qigong**, and other internal arts enthusiasts in a spirit of sharing the arts. Following the tradition, Dr. Painter's *Baguazhang Circle* took place after the Tai Chi Gala on June 8-12 in the same location. As usual, this year's topics included some rare Tai Chi Chuan (Taiji), Baguazhang (or pa kua chang), Xingyi (hsing-i chuan), Qigong (chi kung), **meditation**, Chinese massage and acupuncture, Push Hands, and other esoteric Chinese healing and martial art subjects. There were 26 topics in total taught by 15 Sifu's including three new ones. In general, this year's format is similar to the previously years with few enhancements:

1. A couple of Chen Style Tai Chi classes were added.
2. Few Sifu's broadened their focus and presented something outside their regular practice, e.g. Sifu Jianye Jiang introduced Dong Hai Chuan's Bagua, Sifu David Ritchie introduced Wu/Hao Style Tai Chi. Sifu Sharif Bey had an excellent presentation of his theory of Unified Field Fitness, which encompasses body physics, medical insight, psychiatry, spiritual outlook, and philosophy.
3. The food was totally revamped by the hosting hotel and it was well balanced in neutrinos, selections, and tastes.
4. A non-religious kindness meditation ceremony was moved to Friday evening and was well participated by event attendees. Everyone prayed in his own way, for peace, harmony, and happiness.

5. At a request, a chair-massage service was included and made the event even more relaxing.

Over 200 people from various states attended. There were also people came from Canada, Columbia, and Trinidad. The highlights of the classes were as follow:

- Sifu Loretta Wollering's Morning Qigong & Calisthenics Set – Sifu Wollering is extremely fit for her age and showed the same stamina as in her youth. Each morning she practiced a mix of Taoist and Kung Fu inspired calisthenics, Qigong and meditation. She shared a sample of her routine.
- Sifu Ken Lo's The 8-Sided Template in Wu Mei Pai's Kung Fu Martial Strategy –Wu Mei Pai's fighting strategy uses the “Bagua” (8 trigrams) or the 8-sided template. As 2 opponents face each other, each has their own 8-sided octagonal space. The interaction of those 2 spaces helps to determine the outcome of the altercation. Participants learned how to identify the meanings of each of the 8 sides and the resultant optimal strategy.
- Sifu David Ritchie's Sample the New Wu/Hao Tai Chi 24 Form –The Wu/Hao style of Tai Chi is a lesser-known, but very meditative. The traditional form is nearly 100 postures. Sifu Ritchie shared the short form of 24 postures. This form is ideal for anyone with joint or knee pain, as well as those who are looking for a meditative form with fewer movements.
- Sifu Ren-Gang Wang's Zhan Zhuang Healing Meditation –Zhan Zhuang methods are the cornerstone for developing special structure, growing and circulating the Qi flow, and obtaining the elusive state of “peng” (or buoyancy) in Tai Chi and the internal arts. The Chinese also used standing meditations to increase intuition, the ability to project Qi, and keeping the mind calm and centered while dealing with intense situations. Sifu Wang helped people learn and feel how standing meditations should be done.
- Sifu Stephen Watson's Taoist Contemplation & Meditation –Sifu Watson showed how to release and engage the mind, using tools from Buddhist, Vedic, and Taoist traditions. Attendees practiced mudras, chanting, meditation, and gentle, flowing movements designed to exercise the body, open the heart, and discover the spirit.
- Sifu Richard Clear's Tai Chi Iron Palm & Dim Mak –Sifu Clear taught the techniques of the rare Tai Chi iron palm, poison hand (pressure point attacks), and other deadly methods of the hands. He further explained how to use and develop this with Push Hands and how to integrate it into Tai Chi or martial forms practice.

- Sifu Ken Lo's Yijinjing: Bodhi Dharma's "Sinew Change" Classic –The Wu Mei Pai style Kung Fu was preserved in China's Shaolin Temple. Sifu Lo's teacher, Grandmaster Hsieh Peng, studied in the White Crane Shaolin Temple and learned this cultivated technique from Abbot Hoi San. Sifu Lo stated that this was the most complete version of Yijinjing. It develops the tendons, ligaments and bone, and serves as a bridge that enables Qigong practitioners to use Qi in physical movements.
- Sifu William Phillips' Beginners Exercises for Push Hands –Sifu Phillips taught the special exercises that beginners could learn to get a rock-solid basis to Push Hands. Sifu Phillips is famous for his Push Hands skills for decades, and his students have become international Push Hands champions. According to him, Push Hands is not just about preparing people for sparring, it can be a meditative practice that heightens one's intuition and ability to center.
- Sifu Jianye Jiang's Qigong "Patting" Techniques to Unblock Qi, and Release Pain & Tension –In 1986, the Chinese government held a conference bringing together professors, physicians, herbal medicine doctors, and Qigong masters to discuss the benefits of traditional Qigong techniques, like "patting." Sifu Jiang shared the patting techniques during the class.
- Dr. John Painter's Practical Chinese Iron Fan Martial "Non-Form" – Dr. Painter explained that one of the most unusual and beautiful weapons of the martial arts, the Iron Fan is commonly used with Tai Chi or Baguazhang. He instructed the methods of using it for modern day self defense tactics against strikes, kicks, grabs and weapons.
- Sifu Donald Wong's A Cornucopia of Qi Development and Healing – Sifu Wong comes from a long lineage of martial artists and healers and known for his uncanny abilities to project Qi and facilitate healing and effects in people who have never experienced it. During the class, he released Qi that was felt by a few dozen students in a room. He also taught the skills to unlock the healing Qi power within.
- Sifu Jianye Jiang's Chen Style Internal Power Qigong – Sifu Jiang explained that "silk reeling" twisting and spiraling movements form the core produce a huge surge of energy or Qi through the whole body.
- Sifu Loretta Wollering's Very Rare Hou Tian I-Ching Divination Method –Most *I-Ching* (*Yijing*) divination methods use coins or sticks. Sifu Wollering introduced the tool-less method and showed how to get a deeper, richer reading of the hexagrams by adding the Taoist 5-Elements method and intensive symbolism.

- Sifu Jianye Jiang's Dong Hai Chuan Style Bagua Secrets of Training & Self-defense – Dong Hai Chuan was the legendary founder of Baguazhang. Sifu Jiang taught six movements representative of this style, and those of Dong's top students, famous Bagua masters Yi Fu and Chen Ting Hua.
- Sifu Donald Wong's Tai Chi Ruler, Metal Spheres, Qi Infused Water, and More –Built upon the concepts from his prior workshop, Sifu Wong taught more about Qi development and projection in this class by using the “Taiji Ruler” and the metal Qi balls.
- Sifu Avi Schneier's Push Hands Scenarios and Q&A –A veteran Push Hands champion, Sifu Schneier openly shared his knowledge and experience with the attendees. He further analyzed the specific situations that some of the practitioners encountered and their resolutions.
- Sifu Violet Li's Chen Style “Silk Reeling” (Chan Si jing) Warm-ups –The oldest documented style of Tai Chi chuan, Chen style, is known for its intensive spiraling and winding movements known as “silk reeling.” Sifu Li instructed several major silk reeling routines with the emphasis on proper body alignment and the Tai Chi fundamentals.
- Dr. John Painter's Martial and Practical Taijiquan–Dr. Painter explained that the Li Family Five Treasures Taijiquan (Tai Chi) Form has only four basic movements and can be blended into any form or non-form practice of Tai Chi or related arts.
- Sifu Bill Lewitt's Healing Yourself w/ an “East Meets West” Healthcare Approach –Sifu Lewitt works in the Emergency Department providing care to the acutely ill or injured, with his extensive knowledge of Western medicine. He also works in private practice utilizing complementary and alternative Medicine (CAM) to heal patients' chronic medical conditions. He shared the techniques of both Eastern and Western medicine for healing, based on his deep knowledge of martial and medical training.
- Sifu Sharif Bey's Unified Field Fitness –Sifu Sharif explained his own theory that embraces the idea of Integrated Existence through Gestalt Bioenergetics. Essentially, the Gestalt ideal examines the totality of a structure and presumes that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. What happens to each part of this structure emerges to the conscious mind through the repeated “working” of gestalt mechanisms through “Unified Field Fitness.”
- Sifu Richard Clear's Iron Body and Push Hands - Sifu Richard explained that in Iron Body Training, people start with conditioning various parts of the body so that it

becomes resistant to blows of all kinds. Iron Body training also deeply strengthens the internal organs to heal them and keep them younger. This class provided three practical ways to build iron body skills through internal Push Hands methods for fighting and health.

- Sifu Ren-Gang Wang's Advanced Push Hands – Sifu Wang shared some rare Push Hands techniques, skills and refinements for advance martial art practitioners.
- Sifu YuZhi Lu's 10 Principles of Balance Using the Yang 24 Short-Form Tai Chi – Sifu Lu shared 10 principles and methods of strengthening the balance by using the Yang 24 form as an example.
- Sifu William Phillips' Meditation and Flow –Sifu Phillips explained how to center the mind and Qi in basic Daoist (Taoist) styles of meditation.
- Sifu David Ritchie's Tai Chi Saber (Yang Style) –Requested by popular demand, Sifu Ritchie reviewed the Yang Style Tai Chi Saber outdoors with the returned students. They all enjoyed the form as well as the nice weather.

In the evening of June 6, there were Friendship demos exhibited by all presenters. Led by Sifu Sharif Bey, the Traditional Chinese Lion Dance Troupe from Yee's Hung Ga Kung Fu once again delighted all participants.

Note: You can click a [link](#) here to see over three hundreds of event photos.

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