

## Drunk on Tai Chi

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[Hsia-Jung Chang](#) of New York is a pianist. Through a common friend, I recently chatted with her, discussing many topics including [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji), life and her creative work.



*Hsia-Jung Chang*

Hsia-Jung Chang was born to the famous Taiwanese singer/songwriter [Ho Lan](#). Influenced by her mom, Hsia-Jung started to learn music at age 6. She played piano for a couple of years before moving to the U.S. In high school, she won a competition and was invited to play with the Spokane [Symphony](#). She continued to pursue her passion and majored in piano at the University of Maryland and later to the University of Houston to study with award winning pianist [Abbey Simon](#). Hsia-Jung later relocated New York to study with [Constance Keene](#) and later received a Doctorate of Musical Arts from the [Manhattan School of Music](#).

Hsia-Jung was 8 when she migrated to the States. Aside from her family and relatives, Hsia-Jung learned Chinese culture through reading the novels of [Dr. Louis Cha Leung-yung](#). Cha is a prolific

bestselling author better known by his pen name Jin Yong, who has elevated the genre of Wuxia (martial art warriors) novels to scholarly study. Jin Yong's novels reflect the history of China in the 6th, 11th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. Hsia-Jung appreciates that Jin Yong's characters are complex; no one is perfect -villains are not totally evil but have faults in personalities. This fits well with the quintessential Tai Chi principle of Yin and Yang. In high school, Hsia-Jung studied [Lao Zi](#), the originator of philosophical Daoism and author of [Dao De Jing](#).

As a child, Hsia-Jung was physically weak and prone to sickness. At 10, Hsia-Jung learned Cheng Man-Ching Style of Yang Tai Chi from her dad Danny Chang. She enjoyed it and practiced it once daily until she was 26. "During those 16 years, I was never sick, not even a cold," said Hsia-Jung. At 26, she moved to New York and her room was too small to practice so she stopped for two years and got pneumonia twice. At the suggestion of her brother, she started to learn Chen Style Tai Chi Chuan from Grandmaster Ren Guangyi. Gradually her [health](#) improved quickly. Now she practices weekly, if not daily.

Hsia-Jung's forte is Chopin and has recorded close to 60 of his works. However, her repertoire also includes other music. Chang has been featured live on radio and television, including KUHT, KAMU, Danish National radio, Taiwan radio and TV, and on Indian TV in 2007 as the music ambassador for World Aids Day. At the request of Grandmaster Ren, she improvised a song called *Drunk on Tai Chi*. Hsia-Jung appreciates the unique quality of an ancient Chinese instrument called [Gu Qin](#), which is similar to a zither with seven strings. Gu Qin songs have spaces or quiet time in between notes, which leave room for imagination and [meditation](#). *Drunk on Taiji* was written in a tempo flowing like a Gu Qin song but inspired by the tempo and rhythms she experienced during Tai Chi Chuan practice, flowing, shimmering, and swirling. It is less than four minutes. When listening, I can picture sunlight and feel a breeze.

She also uses ideas from Tai Chi in playing of Western Classical music as well. Practicing Tai Chi outdoors and listening to the rhythms and tempos of breezes moving through trees, and watching the changing currents of the river, has helped her tremendously with her latest album "[Debussy](#)", where much of the music was inspired by nature.

Why named it *Drunk on Taiji*? Hsia-Jung explained that many Tai Chi practitioners express having a euphoric moment during practice. It is a different kind of high than using alcohol or substance because people are focused, centered, grounded, and calm. While practicing Tai Chi, people experience increased sensitivity while still being totally relaxed. Hsia-Jung called the mind-state as buzz with clarity. In the enclosed video, you can listen to this song and watch Hsia-Jung practice Tai Chi and her sister Hsi-Ling demonstrate Chinese martial arts.

## **SUGGESTED LINKS**

- Paul Brennan is God sent
- Wesley Snipes has swept the floor here!
- Vincent Lyn: a master of martial and musical arts
- A top notch banking recruiter on Tai Chi and drumming
- Zhong Ding at every second



## **Violet Li**

Tai Chi Examiner