

From Russia with true Tai Chi power (Photos)

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He is lanky and bearded, wears short hair, and a gentle smile. His voice is soft but clear. He looks peaceful and a little bit shy. However if you try to push him, he can repel you easily without even moving his arm or leg. Recently, in the U.S., a few big guys tried to push him at his lower abdomen (or Dan Tian). He did not blink or move but they were instantly bounced a few feet back. Meet Vladimir Sidorov, a [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji) master from Russia.



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Front row from right to left: Charlton, Brian Guan, Mrs. Zhang, Master Zhang Xue Xin, Justin and Vlad. Behind Vlad is Michael Xie. Malcolm Dean missing.

Justin Meehan



Violet Li

Born in Togliatti, Russia, the 36-year-old master started his internal [martial arts](#) training with [Baguazhang](#) at age 12 from a Chinese-trained Russian teacher. He commented that Baguazhang helped him to build a foundation of rooting and solid footwork. At 19, like other Russian youth, he was very much into Push Hands. It was then that he realized the importance of developing one's energy, or Qi. In 2000, he went to China hoping to seek higher knowledge of internal martial arts. In Shanghai, he was told that if he was serious about learning Neigong (internal Kung Fu), he needed to go to Beijing to study with Grandmaster Feng Zhiqiang (1926-2012).

Grandmaster Feng grew up in a martial art family. He began to practice martial arts at eight, and learned Shaolin Tongzi Gong and other martial art forms. Later, he learned [Tongbeiquan](#) from Han Xiaofeng in Hebei, Liu He Xingyi Quan from Hu Yaozhen of Shanxi, and Baguazhang from several famous masters. In 1951, Feng began to learn the Chen Style Tai Chi from the famous 17th generation Chen Family Grandmaster Chen Fake in Beijing and became one of Chen's favorite disciples. After practicing Chen Tai Chi for years, he modified it by enhancing the Neigong or [Qigong](#) cultivation and named it the Chen Style Xin Yi Hun Yuan Tai Chi Quan system or Chen Style Hun Yuan for short.

In Russia, Chinese martial arts have been part of physical education since the 1980's. After learning many Tai Chi forms, Master Sidorov started to teach in his 20's. By 2005, he had already taught many students; even his students' students became teachers. He took three generations of students with him to Beijing to study at Grandmaster Feng's Hun Yuan Tai Chi (Taiji) academy. They stayed there for two weeks. Since then, he had visited Beijing several times a year with different groups of students until the death of Grandmaster Feng in May 2012. Unlike other foreign students, Vladimir and his students did not go there to learn forms, Chin Na (Joint Lock), or throwing techniques. Vladimir asked to learn

Neigong, which got Grandmaster's attention. Feng spent much time personally teaching Vladimir and his students.

Master Sidorov quoted Grandmaster Feng that Neigong is initiated from Dan Tian and learning Neigong is a more direct way to study Tai Chi for better [health](#) and martial art prowess. It does not matter which Tai Chi styles people study that they can benefit from learning Neigong. Among a thousand of students that Sidorov has taught Neigong, many learn other Tai Chi styles. One time in China, he met a Shaolin Kung Fu practitioner. Even though they had language barrier, but they had no problem communicating with each other with regards on how to develop Neigong. Sidorov noted, "it is universal and we need no words".

In Russia, Vladimir travels from city to city to teach Neigong and Tai Chi. Currently, he teaches in 15 cities. He believes that Tai Chi was designed for the outdoors so they hold classes in open-air even during winter months. In his hometown of Togliatti, which is about 600 miles Southeast of Moscow, the average temperature from November to March is below the freezing point. It does not bother Vladimir and his students. They would do 45 minutes of Neigong exercise, break for tea then do another 45 minutes Push Hands or form practice. Vladimir's Neigong exercise is very effective. I tried it for five minutes and felt extremely warm throughout my body.

[Sifu Justin Meehan](#) of St. Louis, Missouri, was a pioneer of Tai Chi in the U.S. He studied many Tai Chi and Qigong styles with grandmasters and masters of our time and finally became a disciple of Grandmaster Zhang Xue-Xin, a close friend and disciple of Grandmaster Feng. Justin is a serious writer on important Tai Chi and Qigong subjects. He has taught many students and has been a judge for national and international tournaments. In winter 2011, Sifu Meehan led a delegation from St. Louis to Beijing attending the Third Hun Yuan International Tai Chi Exchange Conference.

Vladimir also led a Russian team there. Aside from his students competing, he also participated in Push Hands competition as well as demonstrated Tai Chi sword on stage. It was then that Sifu Justin realized how profound Vladimir's Tai Chi skills are. It was also then that Sifu Justin found out that they shared the same philosophy about martial arts and they both cherished the art so much that they were willing to give up chances to become champions. According to Justin the Push Hands competition was both savage and dangerous to all competitors and in direct opposition to Master Feng's stated HunYuan principles, especially "use soft to overcome hard" and "avoid li or brute force". After discussing the matter with Vladimir, although earning the right to fight for the Gold medal round, Vladimir instead dramatically bowed to his competitor and to the chief judges and then walked off the fighting ring, giving up his chance for the gold in order to honor GrandMaster Feng and his HunYuan Taiji system. His student [Natalia Sinelnikova](#) was going to compete with Justin's student Jardana Green in women's Push Hand division for a gold medal. At the advice of Vladimir and Justin, Natalia and Jardana gave up the fight and instead they demonstrated friendly Push Hands and won the respect of 1,000 conference attendees. (Read [To fight or not to fight.](#))

Sifu Meehan respects Valdimir's integrity, knowledge and skills. He invited Valdimir to the States in late February to meet Hun Yuan practitioners in St. Louis as well as Grandmaster Zhang, Master [Michael Dorgan](#), Senior instructor Brian Guan and Dr. Jean Ou in San Francisco, CA. He also asked Valdimir to teach a couple workshops on Hun Yuan Neigong in St. Louis. (Read [Learned Neigong from Master Valdimir Sidorov](#).)

After 45 years of study from the world's greatest Masters, Sifu Meehan stated happily that he had to travel to China to meet a master from Russia who not only understood how the internal engine works but who is ready, willing and able to provide step-by-step instruction to others on how to perform it themselves. According to Meehan's judgment, Master Vladimir is going to revolutionize the Tai Chi world's understanding of internal power and has demonstrated his ability as well as understanding wherever he has gone. Justin used an interesting analogue that there are many beautiful planes, trains and automobiles in this world, but without an engine, they are unable to go anywhere. Regardless of style, Master Vladimir's HunYuan Neigong is going to give all sincere Tai Chi students the opportunity to progress from outward form to internal accomplishment.

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Violet Li

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