

Teaching Robert De Niro Tai Chi

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American movie star [Robert De Niro](#) has been nominated dozens of times for major film awards and won 21 of them including two Oscars and one Golden Globe Award in addition to 14 other special awards. He is versatile but he is best known as a tough guy. It is humorous when Director [Nancy Meyers](#) wanted this “raging bull” to play [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji) in the comedy [The Intern](#).



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Master Tiffany Chen (left) teaches Robert De Niro and Anne Hathaway Tai Chi.

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Jules Ostin, played by [Anne Hathaway](#), the founder and CEO of a fashion ecommerce startup, agrees to a community outreach program that a retired senior Ben Whittaker, played by [Robert De Niro](#), will intern at her firm. Warner Bros. Pictures will distribute the film in the U.S., Canada, and internationally and has scheduled to release it on Sept. 25, 2015.

Writer-director Nancy Meyers has a unique talent to dissect a seemingly mundane topic of a relationship between men and women, young and old, and parents and children with a laser-sharp lens and present it in a hilarious way. Her movies are always heart-warming yet thought-provoking. Her credits include box-office winners [Private Benjamin](#), [Baby Boom](#), [Father of the Bride](#), [The Parent Trap](#), [What Women Want](#), [Something's Gotta Give](#), [The Holiday](#), [It's Complicated](#), among others.

Originally, Nancy planned to invite Grandmaster [William C.C. Chen](#) of New York City to teach Robert De Niro Tai Chi so Robert could act like a seasoned Tai Chi practitioner. She contemplated when she met Master [Tiffany Chen](#), who accompanied Grandmaster Chen for their first meeting in Manhattan in April 2014. Tiffany recalled that the second meeting with Nancy was in the following week with the participation of Robert De Niro as well. Tiffany revealed that even though Nancy and Robert are among the biggest names in Hollywood but they were very humble. They treated Grandmaster Chen as the star when they met.

Born in the U.S. to Grandmaster Chen, Tiffany was a Tai Chi Push Hands champion at multiple National and International tournaments. *Inside Kung Fu Magazine* declared her “Woman of the Year” in 2011. Nevertheless, she is not your typical Tai Chi Master. She did not learn Tai Chi until she was a teenager. She also has a passion for western-style boxing and recently started her own line of skin-care

products. You can read more about her via a [link](#) here. At 5'8", this 37-year-old master is tall, beautiful, spunky, and hip. Nancy Meyers is a master of contrast, who astutely employs unconventional subjects or characters to tell a deeper and often funnier story. She told Tiffany that she "stole" her dad's role and would play Robert's Tai Chi teacher in the movie. Nancy modified the script accordingly.

If you ever try Tai Chi, you will understand that even though Tai Chi looks simple and effortless, it is extremely difficult to learn. In *The Intern*, there are a couple of short scenes where Robert performs Tai Chi. But Robert had to work hard and studied with Tiffany six days a week for five straight months. The movie was in a tight production cycle; Robert had to take Tai Chi lessons in between shots. The movie was filmed at various locations throughout New York City, e.g. [Prospect Park](#), and [the Waldorf Astoria New York](#). Tiffany would meet him at the designated filming location for the day and be ready to teach him whenever there was a break. One time they met at 7 a.m. to have a class. Robert also had private lessons at Grandmaster Chen's school in Manhattan. Tiffany said that Robert was very cool and she even called him Bob.

Almost all Tai Chi forms will turn to all four directions during the routine and a practitioner will have his back facing the audience if performing on a stage. For a better filming angle, Tiffany worked with a choreographer to modify the sequence. When asked whether Grandmaster Chen provided any suggestions for the movements, Tiffany said no. However, Grandmaster Chen emphasized making sure that Robert was sitting (or sinking) his Kua's (or hip joints).

The Intern is a love story but not a romance. In the movie, the odd couple Jules and Ben build their relationship by sharing their knowledge and caring for each other. Jules taught Ben how to utilize technology for business and daily life and Ben shared his experience with Jules, which are the fundamentals of life. Tai Chi Chuan is more than just a martial art or healing art, it is about cultivating a perspective toward life or a holistic way of living. "Experience never gets old," claims the movie's tagline. In *The Intern*, we see how the ancient Chinese art Tai Chi Chuan becomes the focus of life.

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