

World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day in Brighton, New York

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At 10am local time on April 26, T'ai Chi Ch'uan and qigong practitioners around the world gathered to celebrate World Tai Chi and Qigong Day (WTCQD). This event, first held in 1999, brings together the T'ai Chi community to educate the public about and demonstrate the various styles of T'ai Chi.

The Rochester T'ai Chi Ch'uan Center (RTCCC) hosted demonstrations and workshops led by many area T'ai Chi Ch'uan instructors at Brighton's Twelve Corners Middle School. The morning started with the Ching-Fen Dance Group, who performed traditional Chinese dances. Following their performance, dozens of local T'ai Chi enthusiasts took the floor to practice their forms. Great Lake T'ai Chi Ch'uan's Mark Westcott and his students demonstrated the Yang short form, while the Rochester T'ai Chi Ch'uan Center practiced a slightly different Yang form. Wu Style was represented



Figure 1: Toronto's Jill Heath and Adriaan Blaauw demonstrate two-person sword form.

by Stephen Hwa of Faust's USA Karate of Fairport. Another form was demonstrated by Jim Ransom of RTCCC, and pushing hands was shown by Jill Heath and Adriaan Blaauw of Ontario, Canada.

The mass practice was a unique and wonderful opportunity to compare and contrast many different T'ai Chi styles. The two Yang groups were obviously quite similar to each other and to our form, although there were subtle differences here and there. However, the core "feeling" of the form remained true.

The Wu style was noticeably different than the Yang style, with more subtle and internal movements actualized in a punctuated style. While the Yang style is known for fluid, continuous motion, the Wu style appears to focus on precision and tight control of qi.

Jim Ransom's form was substantially different as well, featuring a much lower posture and much more external movement. While the fluidness of Yang was evident, the form appeared to require greater physical strength and joint agility than any of the other forms demonstrated.

Following brief remarks and proclamations by Brighton town supervisor Sandra Frankel and Rochester city councilmember Dana Miller, a number of special presentations were performed by area practitioners. Of note was Stephen Hwa's explanation of three internal movements that are essential to keeping qi internalized. Keeping the pelvis stationary while turning the upper body and using your core to move your upper body and arms were especially important.

Jill Heath and Adriaan Blaauw demonstrated a two-person sword form. This form starts off very cooperative, with both participants performing the same movements without contact. However, Jill and Adriaan quickly engaged in a captivating and very carefully balanced sword combat. Following their two-person form, an audience member from mainland China demonstrated a 32-movement solo sword form.

The formal program ended and a plethora of workshops emerged to allow prospective students and teachers to work in small groups. I, along with fellow classmates Yolanda and Justin, wandered around and enjoyed the atmosphere as the gymnasium filled with impromptu demonstrations of advanced T'ai Chi. Jim Ransom and Jill Heath had particular fun with impromptu swordplay, and Yolanda and Justin took the opportunity to experience the



Figure 2: Jim Ransom and Yolanda practice Yang form

more martial side of the art.

All in all, WTCQD provided a deeper, intriguing look into the T'ai Chi Chuan artform, and I considered myself fortunate to have enjoyed this event on a beautiful spring Saturday. I am seriously considering continuing my T'ai Chi practice after this semester, having felt the wonderful energy and pure fun emanating from the gym. At the very least, I will be back next April.