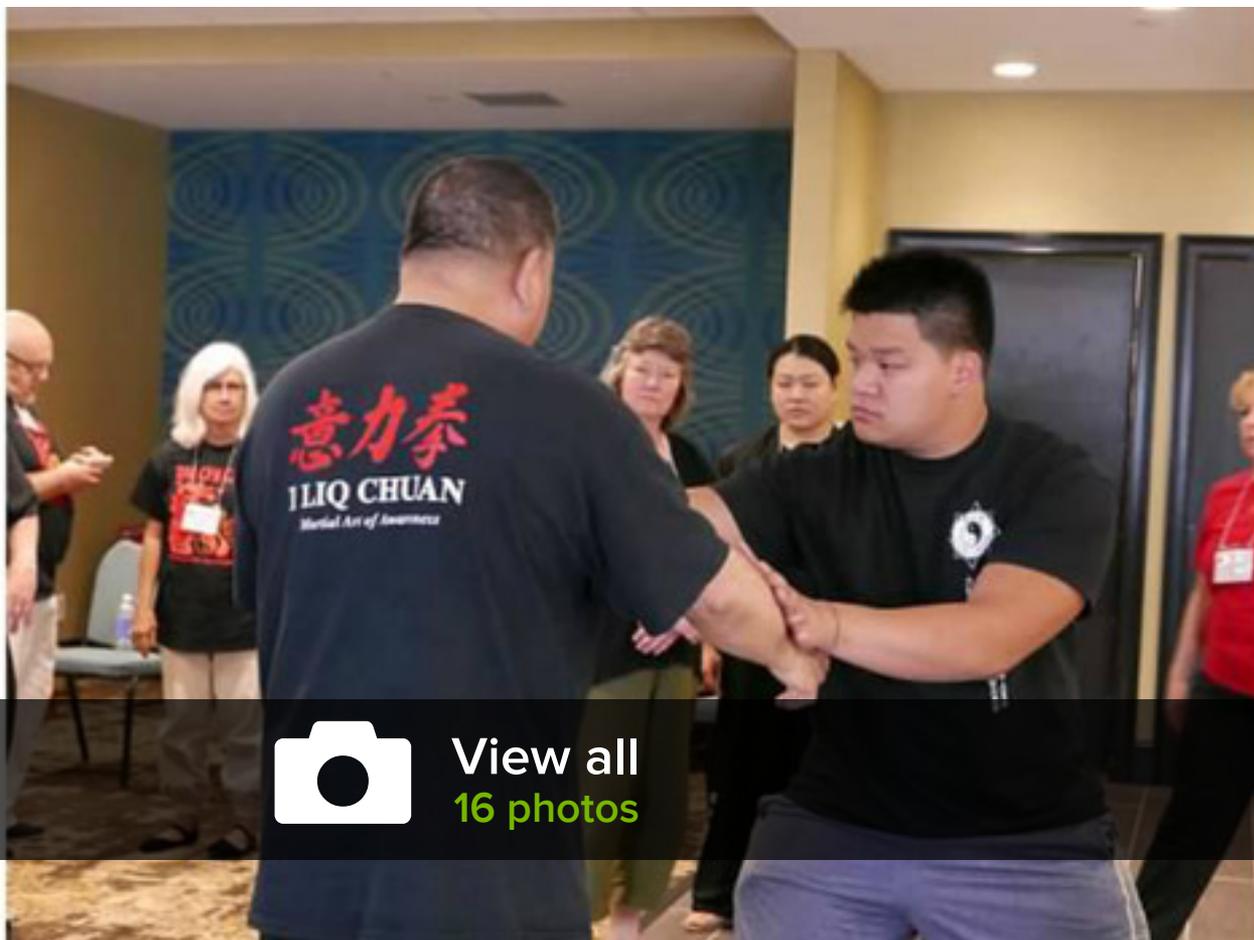


The Tai Chi Gala was too short

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Highlights of 2016 Tai Chi Gala

VIOLET LI

I arrived at the venue of the 2016 [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji) Gala in Albany, New York in the late afternoon of Friday June 3. With the new remodeling work, the hotel lobby had more ambiance and looked attractive. It did not matter much to me because what drew me most was the warmhearted atmosphere generated by the Gala staff and attendees who came earlier. I saw new faces among many familiar ones. It was good to see young people joined this year's event. Some enthusiastically discussed what they learned from Sifu Richard Clear during the pre-Gala sessions on internal power (energy).



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Originally founded by Grandmaster [Jou Tsung Hwa](#) and named the "Zhang San Feng Festival", the Tai Chi Gala is now organized by Jou's disciple Sifu Loretta Wollering to unite [Tai Chi](#), Bagua, Xingyi, [Qigong](#), and other internal arts enthusiasts in a sharing spirit. This year's Gala was held in the weekend of June 3-5 and followed by a weeklong training of Water Palm of the Nine Dragon Baguazhang hosted by Dr. Painter.

On Friday evening, Sifu Wollering kicked off the event by hosting the opening ceremony and a Daoist (or Taoist) Incense Ceremony to express the gratitude toward Zhang San Feng, the creator of the internal style [martial arts](#), late Grandmaster Jou Tsung Hwa, and any passing teachers people wish to honor. The opening ceremony was welcoming, informative, and spiritual. It was almost 11 pm when the ceremony ended. Scores of aficionados gathered in a meeting room and practiced push hands with each other until 2 am.

Surprisingly, about 80 people showed up for the 6 am Silk Reeling workshop next day. This year's program was enhanced with new classes of I-Lig Chuan, which is literally translated as "Mental-Physical Martial Art." Lineage holder Sifu Sam Chin stated that I-Lig's core feature is centered on cultivating consciousness as based on the philosophies of Taoism and Zen. Sifu Chin introduced the concept of balancing the Yin and Yang muscles in Push Hands that was intriguing and generated much interests from attendees and even other Sifus.

Sifu Ren Gang Wang stated that Da Cheng Quan or commonly known as "Yiquan," is a martial arts system created by Wang Xiangzhai. It strips away a lot of the excess and gets to the "core" of martial art and a rock-solid mental stability and unshakeable inner peace. Sifu YuZhi Lu taught Tai Chi 24 and

provided refinements for advanced students. Sifu Avi Schnerier offered an advanced correction class on the Chen Man Ch'ing form. Avi also introduced a segment of Sun Style Tai Chi form, that incorporated elements of Tai Chi, Bagua, and other internal arts. Dr. John Painter explained exactly what “double weighting” mean in both internal and external martial arts not only physically but also mentally. I taught **Bai Si Fang**, a short form with elements of *Peng* (ward-off), *Lu* (roll-back), *Ji* (squeeze), *An* (press), *Qian Jin* (forward), *Zuo Gu* (turn left), *You Pan* (turn right), and *Zhong Ding* (central equilibrium) as an introduction to Chen Tai Chi. Real Iron Palm not only does not damage your hands but strengthening them. Sifu Dale Dugas stated that Iron Palm is 80% internal with many exercises trained before hitting your hands on a bag full of medium. Sifu Ken Lo helped students to explore the use of circular forms, or spirals based on the Wu Mei Pai teaching.

There were a few sessions mainly focusing on the health aspect. Sifu Donald Wong shared **Qigong** and energy techniques for self-healing of low back pain and stiffness. Dr. John Painter taught how to use Baguazhang Five Circles to generate full body energy (Jin), stimulate the lymphatic system, increased oxygenation of the body, open tight joints, and improve flexibility. Sifu Jian Ye Jiang trained people with easy yet effective Chinese Yoga and Yin/Yang Medical Qigong for health purposes. Sifu Ren Gang Wang said that Yiquan is derived from the Chinese internal art of “Xing Yi Quan” and shared effective standing meditation techniques to strengthen people inside out. Sifu Steve Watson stated that the body is the crucible for the mind-heart alchemies brought into action by martial art or meditative practices. The body is the temple, and spirit must be brought in for the body to repair and rebuild.

As a Push Hands expert, Sifu Richard gave two in-depth workshops. First he talked about how to use breath work (or Qigong), Silk Reeling/coiling (Chan Si Jin), and Qin Na (grappling and joint locks) work in push hands. He also introduced the concept of Internal Push Hand by building and utilizing Qi (life force energy), Yi (intent), Jing (martial energy), and developing a powerful root. Sifu Steve Watson said Qigong and Push Hands are meant to dynamically interact and give rise to one another.

Sifu Ken Lo taught how to appreciate fine Chinese teas in a pleasant 2-hour tea ceremony. The teas were served in a set of two cups, a tall aroma cup that concentrated the tea mist to release wonderful aromas reminiscent of flowers, cream, grass, and caramel, and a short cup that cooled the tea to present rich tastes that are earthy, fresh, green, and sweet.

As a journalist, I felt exhausted to cover this event due to multiple sessions taking places at the same time. Just like many attendees' remark that the program was rich and they were sorry that they had to make hard choices which workshops to attend. Some said that a weekend was not long enough and they are now looking forward to next year's event.

Note: There are over event 400 photos online. You can click the [link here](#).

Disclosure: I was a presenter at 2016 Tai Chi Gala.

SUGGESTED LINKS

- [Tai Chi versus Thai Boxing](#)
- [Recommended: “Tai Chi: The Perfect Exercise”](#)
- [Tai Chi lineage](#)
- [Tai Chi Chuan or Tai Chi Dao](#)
- [Tai Chi reduces chronic pains and more](#)



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