

THE LEADING INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF T'AI CHI CH'UAN

T'AI CHI

Vol. 19, No. 2

**Chen Qingzhou
on Traditional
Chen Style
Training**

**Yang Jun on
Yang Style
Push Hands**

**Wu Kung Cho's
10 Essential
Principles**

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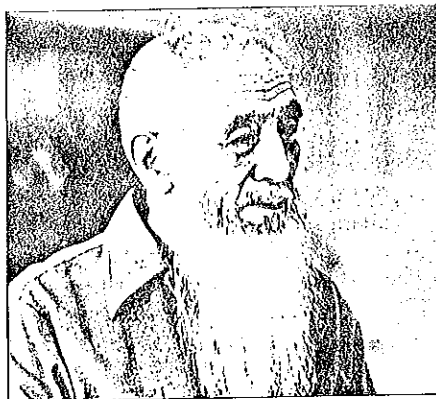




Chen Qingzhou



Yang Jun



Wu Kung Cho

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T'AI CHI

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Chen Qingzhou on Traditional Chen Style Training

Chen Qingzhou, highly regarded for his neutralizing skills, talks about the importance of traditional Chen style training. He tells about five dynamic methods and five important levels of development. He was a student of Chen Zhaopei.

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Yang Jun Interview on Yang Style Push Hands Training

Yang Jun, grandson of Yang Zhen-duo, tells about his early training in traditional Yang style form and push hands. He gives suggestions for improving skills.

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An Excerpt from Wu Kung Cho's 'Gold Book'

Douglas Woolidge has translated part of Wu Kung Cho's book, and here gives an interesting excerpt of a chapter on The 10 Essentials. Wu was the second son of Wu Chian Chuan.

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A Perspective of the Yang Style Inner Way

Vlady Stevanovitch, who has studied ch'i for 50 years, expresses some of his ideas about T'ai Chi and the way that it can be used as a path to inner development and higher understanding.

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T'AI CHI is
printed on recycled
paper.

Cover: Chen Qingzhou with
single broadsword.

Teaching T'ai Chi to the Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Greg Mucci, a longtime practitioner of the Yang style, tells about his experiences teaching the deaf and hard of hearing and his own feelings as someone deaf who learned T'ai Chi. He gives some useful suggestions for teaching the deaf or hard of hearing.

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3 Standing Postures to Absorb Qi

Ted W. Knecht, a T'ai Chi and qigong teacher, tells about three standing postures he learned in China that help the body to absorb Yuan qi, or original internal energy. The postures are good for health and internal development.

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The Clinical Application of Qigong in China

Lao Cen writes from Beijing about principles of qigong practice and the effects of qigong in treating common diseases. He tells about some clinical observations of the benefits of qigong practice.

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The Hard Work of Relaxation

John Walter explores some of the problems and benefits from learning how to apply relaxation in T'ai Chi practice and daily life. He discusses how to develop skill in relaxing.

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Chen Qingzhou on:

Traditional Chen Style Training

Chris Eckert, a disciple of Chen Qingzhou and who has lived in Chen's home town, Xulu Village, Wenxian, Henan, China, for over a year, served as translator for this interview.

By Marvin Smalheiser

Chen Qingzhou is a frail-looking man who, at 60 years of age, vigorously defends what he believes is the true tradition of Chen style T'ai Chi Ch'uan (Taijiquan). This tradition involves developing internal energies and the full range of Chen style gongfu (kung-fu).

A 19th generation successor of the Chen style, Chen Qingzhou adheres to the old style Chen teaching and forms he received from Chen Zhaopei and feels that the development of new Chen forms (hsin jya) could bring about the loss of Chen style gongfu if basics are not passed on to students correctly.

The true development of Chen style skills, Chen Qingzhou feels, relies on the cultivation of chan si jin (silk reeling energy), dantian energy and five fundamental training dynamics that help to produce them.

Cultivation of chan si jin (silk reeling energy) is so essential to Chen style T'ai Chi Ch'uan, that Chen Qingzhou says you don't have dantian energy nor real Chen style without it.

"Without chan si jin, there is no movement of the inner qi to move the external form.

"You may have the movements of Chen T'ai Chi but you don't have the essence of Chen style."

A traditionalist who learned Chen style old form and then the hsin jya (new form), he now refuses to teach the new form.

An indoor student of Chen Zhaopei, Qingzhou believes in maintaining traditional training and theory, which in-

cludes step-by-step instruction through certain levels of achievement.

He is concerned that now teachers, either intentionally or unintentionally, will not pass on traditional Chen style gongfu to their students. And because of this, future generations will be unable to reach high levels of accomplishment.

Major goals of Chen style practice, he said, are to achieve skill in zou hua (the ability to dissipate an opponent's energy), ting jing (the ability to listen to the opponent's energy) and dong jing

practice of zhan zhuang (standing meditation) and practice of the traditional Chen style gongfu frame as opposed to the competition frame. "If you practice T'ai Chi gongfu and don't practice zhan zhuang, it is meaningless. You must practice zhan zhuang."

Chen Qingzhou doesn't feel the popular posture of standing as if embracing a ball is productive enough and recommends a different posture. The posture he uses involves standing in a medium to low horse stance with the right hand out in front, palm facing to

the left with the middle finger even with the nose. The fingers are slightly apart. The left hand is held behind the back, a little lower than the mingmen point directly behind the navel. The left hand faces up and forms a hooked hand with the middle finger separate from the other fingers. The left hand rests lightly against the back. The gaze is fixed on the middle finger.

The mind, he said, should be focused on the dantian. "The thinking, spirit, energy, everything is concentrated in the dantian," Chen said.

While holding the posture, up to 10 minutes, certain sounds are thought. They are e, a rising tone, during an exhale; xi, a high tone during inhale; xu, a high tone, during an exhale; and chui, a high tone, during inhale.

The sounds are said to have a connection with the organs.

Eckert said:

"The whole body must be relaxed and soft, sinking down. It is not so relaxed that there is nothing there. You must still have elements of peng energy, or inflated energy, and elements of chan si jin. The upper part of the body has to be empty, weightless. The lower part of the body should have extreme heaviness, a feeling of being connected to the ground. If you don't have the rooting, you are going to fall down easily."



Chen Qingzhou and Chris Eckert in a fixed step push hands waist turning exercise to improve neutralization skill and waist flexibility.

(the ability to understand another person's energy and control it).

Chen, who is highly regarded for his zou hua skill, visited the United States earlier this year with a disciple, Chris Eckert, who had studied with him for a year.

He described five fundamental dynamics of training.

1. The first is pei gen, or rooting into the ground. This is achieved with the

She said that from the rooting comes some of the internal energy called chan si jin.

Qingzhou said that zhan zhuang helps build chan si jin and from this chan si jin comes the fajing, or explosive force, encountered in the Chen style, particularly in the second routine.

He said that fundamental training is like building a foundation, pouring the foundation for a house. When that has been established, then the walls can be erected and finally the roof.

When you do zhan zhuang, he said, you will begin feeling this in practicing the form and then it will come out in push hands.

In zhan zhuang, he said, the ching, or clear, qi occupies the upper half of the body and is said to rise. This makes the upper part of the body feel very light and buoyant.

Chen said that in the lower half of the body there is zhou qi, or turbid qi. This sinks down in the body and some exits out into the ground. This qi makes the body feel extremely heavy and fixed in the ground like a tree.

"You want to have exactly the same feeling as if you are a giant tree with big billowing branches filled with wind and also feel that your roots go down deep into the ground," Eckert said.

"When you do push hands with people who have this, it feels like you are trying to move a mountain. But in the upper part of their body, it feels just as if they had no bones," Eckert said. Chen added that this comes from the diligent practice of zhan zhuang.

2. A second important method of fundamental training is yao jin, or training of the waist energy, Chen said.

This is not just turning the waist, he said. In T'ai Chi, he said, the waist is not just the outside part around the torso but it is actually the inside part, between the skin, inside the body. He said it exists inside the body like a ball.

"If you are not using this kind of waist energy," he said, "then you are not practicing T'ai Chi gongfu."

From the rooting, he said, comes some of the internal energy called chan si jing. But to build it up, he said, zhan zhuang is important and also involves turning the dantian.

Eckert said that this kind of training at first involves moving the hands in circles around the surface of the belly. Then you learn to turn the area inside the belly in the waist area as if it were a

as it moves around your dantian and begin to feel the ball as if it were inside your abdomen. You switch from left to right and from right to left and back to front and front to back.

"The most important thing is to get the feel of the ball doing this spinning on an axis. Then you try to fajing the ball and pop it up into the air, not by throwing it up but by exerting force from the dantian. When he exerts force on the ball, it jumps up. And it is entirely from internal energy."

Chen emphasizes dantian energy because he feels that the internal energy is expressed from the dantian outward, starting there and then spiraling through the body and coming to the hip, to the rib, to the shoulder, to the elbow, to the wrist to the hand to the fingers. The spiraling of the energy through the body is said to be the silk reeling energy. This energy coming from the movement of the waist is said to carry the frame in its movement.

The development of the chan si jin, he said, leads to the development of ting jin, or listening energy, which refers to feeling the partner's energy so you can feel what the partner is going to do almost before he does it.

"In the beginning, we have no ting jin," Eckert said. "He can push us down and we don't know where he is coming from.

Slowly, you begin to build up the chan si jin. It gives

you elements of peng, which has feeling of inflated energy.

"That inflated feeling gives your skin sensory perception, which is a feeling almost with the mind. You feel the partner move but you know where he is going to go. Ting energy is very deep. It has to be developed to an extremely high level."

3. A third method of fundamental training, Chen said, is structural dynamics.

This involves training to develop hand methods, eye methods, posture methods, and footwork.



Green Dragon Comes Out of Water from first routine, old frame.

ball. This is also coordinated with breathing.

"I did this with him for two months," Eckert said. "When I first met him, I trusted him. I thought, 'What is this? Every morning he comes out for 10 minutes and does this.' I thought, 'Is he tricking me?' But I faithfully followed him and I did it every morning and every night I did it on my own. Then I started to get the feel of what he was talking about.

"Then about the second month, he gave me what is called a T'ai Chi ball. It is a little bit bigger than a basketball. At first you just cradle the ball in your hand. Then you take the ball and feel it

4. The fourth method is qi xue, or qi circulation. "This is the method of circulating the qi, or the internal energy, so that the inner qi moves the outer frame," Eckert said.

At the beginning a student has very little or no internal energy, or neigong, she said. This is called yi xing yin qi. "In the beginning, everyone is like this, empty. This is whether a girl is too soft or a guy is too stiff. It is all external with no internal circulation of energy. The external frame moves the internal qi, if there is any movement of qi at all."

She said that as a student does zhan zhuang and practices turning of the waist and practices the first Chen form and sword form, they begin to get a feeling of energy moving through the body.

The next level, she said, is called yi qi cui xing, when the internal energy moves the external frame. The student begins to find this and they must have this for further progress.

Eckert said that the external manifestation of energy is that the practitioner looks like he is stuck to the ground, but he also looks as soft as a piece of silk blowing in the wind. "There is an other-worldly appearance to the movements as the mind moves the body."

5. The fifth method of developing T'ai Chi gongfu, according to Chen, is to work really hard. "If a student works at the five steps well with a good

teacher, a student can get to the stage of dong jin, which is understanding energy."

He recited a poem, which he said describes this level of accomplishment.

Ren Bu Zhi Wo
Wo Duo Zhi Ren
People don't know me,
but I know them very well.

This is the level, he said, where it is possible to know what a partner is going to do almost before the partner does it. Then the partner can be neutralized and defeated.

Eckert said that when she started pushing hands with Chen, "I got the feeling from the beginning that I was falling through the air and falling down. I had no idea where he came from. Now my ting jin is getting a little better so now he is having a harder time throwing me down. Sometimes, I can zou hua his energy.

"Very slowly you get to the point where you feel you know where he is going to go. Then you get to the point where nobody can find you. That's dong jin. Very few people reach that high a level."

Chen said that what is seen and felt in practice looks very soft, like silk, but the skill behind it is zou hua, which involves dissipating the other person's energy. "It is done through the ability to let the opponent's body go right by.

"There is a point where the opponent is most empty and that is the point of yin jin lou kong, where you have drawn him into a big hole. Then he is virtually weightless, helpless. Then with the slightest little bit of energy you can almost push him down with a finger, using no force whatsoever.

"But if there is a serious attack, you can use fajing, explosive energy, where you could injure someone."

Chen feels that yin jin lou kong, leading the partner into emptiness, is the essence of Chen T'ai Chi. And in push hands, there is a special characteristic of softness. But in



Spring Autumn Broadsword.

the middle of softness is hardness.

"A way to visualize this," Eckert said, "is a fluffy, fluffy piece of cotton with a piece of steel in it. It is the concept of iron and silk that all gongfu talks about. But the Chen T'ai Chi special characteristic is that the outside, the frame or the body, is very soft.

"He is very soft. He does not have big muscles. His hardness is inside, so he is like a steel bar wrapped in cotton. That is why Chen style people, highly skilled players, look like you could push them over with a feather. But you definitely can't.

"When I first did push hands with him, I told him, 'Shifu, you have no bones.' But when he does fajing, it is like a monster coming at you. Yet, he is 60 years old and looks frail."

Eckert said, "When you push him, no matter how you push him, you're not going to be able to push him down. There isn't a good word for what he does. He doesn't like me to use the word escape. You want to push him down, but you don't push him down. In Chinese, they say, 'You can't find him.'"

Eckert described her own experience pushing hands with him by saying it is like "swimming in high waves and the feeling is like when a wave sucks you back out into the ocean. You attack him and what he does in zou hua. You have a feeling of almost total helplessness, like being sucked into a big wave or sliding on ice."



Left Heel Kick from first form, old frame.

In training Chen style T'ai Chi, Chen said, it is important to behave as if there were an opponent when you are doing the movements, otherwise a student will not get the maximum effect for health, relaxation or self-defense.

"If a person does the form with strength or stiffness or tension, that is not right," Chen said.

Eckert said that in every movement, "You can feel the softness in him. There is not one tiny, tiny ounce of brute strength in him. Not even the slightest little bit."

While emphasizing softness and avoidance of external brute force, Qingzhou noted that many people have dropped out fajing, explosive energy, from the first routine.

Eckert said: "He said that there are many places in the first form where you fajing, whereas many people do not fajing in the first form. He said if you don't start from the beginning practicing fajing, this is an error. The first form places a priority on softness, but it also contains elements of hardness."

The second form, or pao tui, he said, is inclined toward hardness, but hardness from the inside. "It has a lot of fajing, but it is internal fajing."

Eckert said that according to Chen, "In the real traditional practice, from the very beginning, day one, they build up internal energy and hardness on the

inside. If you practice only softness, you may develop some zou hua skill, the ability to lead the partner into emptiness. But if you don't have the fajing, you are only getting part of T'ai Chi."

He said: "My teacher, Zhaopei, said you must practice the hardness within the softness. If you are only doing soft movement, then you are missing the idea of T'ai Chi practice."

He also said that if the form is practiced with hardness, then that is an error, too. Most people, even in China, he said, use external strength. "Most of them don't have the inner aspect. Either the top teachers don't teach the inner gongfu or the students are not being taught very well," he said.

Chen Qingzhou feels that practice must be closely tied to the study of T'ai Chi theory. "You must have T'ai Chi theory. You can't have just practice. You must have a connection with theory and practice."

Training with Chen Qingzhou starts with the Chen style's first routine. He doesn't do separate exercises. He said everything is in the first form. But the first thing he teaches is zhan zhuang.

The first four aspects of T'ai Chi that he teaches are peng, lu, ji and an.

Peng, he said, is frequently translated in the U.S. as warding off energy. He said that there are two Chinese characters for peng. The one that he teaches has the meaning of "inflated" energy. This energy can be used by itself in an attack and he said it is also contained in every other single movement of Chen T'ai Chi.

Eckert explained that it is an outward pressing energy. "Peng is an action in itself, but peng is also contained within all the other methods. Peng is the expression of chan si jin and must be present in all movements at all times."

Lu is a backward drawing or leading energy which can go upward or downward to-



Fist of Covering Hand and Arm, first form.

ward an emptiness, he said. It can spoil peng energy.

Ji is used when the partner's energy is going backward. It follows the partner's energy and uses ji (attack) energy in a multitude of ways. It spoils lu energy.

An (push) is initially an upward pressing energy and then a downward pressing energy done in a circular pattern. The an energy spoils ji energy.

Chen feels that a lot of the inner aspect of Chen T'ai Chi is being lost.

Eckert said: "He feels very sad about that. He just loves this. His love for T'ai Chi is deep as deep can be. He feels that this treasure of China, born of very intelligent Chinese minds, needs now to be a gift to the world so that everyone can feel it and benefit from it.

"Unfortunately, what is happening now is that you are getting a lot of the external. The internal aspects are not being taught. It is just lost.

"He is as stubborn as an old mule. It made it possible for him to defy the government and to continue to teach the old style gongfu. Others badly needed food and had to bow to the pressure to teach the new styles required by the government.

"Even high level people just aren't teaching the traditional gongfu and it is not that it is difficult to learn or teach."

Although Chen said he learned what he called the new frame (hsin jya) from Chen Zhaokui, he abandoned it and



Oblique Appearance, first routine, old frame.

feels that the essence of Chen T'ai Chi boxing has been removed from it. "A lot has been taken out. There is virtually no one on earth who is doing it the old, old way."

"A lot of the people developed their gongfu skills from the old teaching, but with their changing the style, the question is whether what they are teaching now is going to pass on the old skills. That is his biggest complaint," Eckert said and added, "That and his feeling that the changes have changed the applications of Chen T'ai Chi."

Eckert said that many people don't care whether they learn the old frame or the new frame, but Chen feels that "the proof is in the hands. The proof of what you talk about is in your skill."

Chen Qingzhou said Chen Fake never taught the new frame. He said that "without a doubt" it was created by Chen Zhaokui, Chen Fake's fifth and youngest son.

Zhaokui went to Beijing and then came back to the Chen village and began to teach his classmates and also persons such as Chen Xiaowang.

Eckert said that according to Chen Qingzhou, "What you are seeing in the world today is almost 100 percent new frame. That happened as a result of the Chinese government forcing this change in gongfu to take away a lot of

the self-defense and turn it into a dance-like competition."

Chen Qingzhou learned the new frame, Eckert said, sneaking away on a bicycle during the Cultural Revolution, to study with Chen Zhaokui. "He can play it but now he hates it. His position is that T'ai Chi boxing has been handed down from the time of Chen Wangting as a full and complete system. It is a fighting system and should be preserved and passed down."

Chen Qingzhou, when he was 28 years old in 1962, went to Chen Zhaopei and was accepted as a closed door student.

He had been very sickly as a child. He started to train some Chen style postures with his father, who was not of high skill. His father later introduced him to Zhaopei.

He trained with him until about 1967, when the Cultural Revolution became intense. "His teacher was criticized and had to wear a placard around his neck and write his own self-criticism."

Chen Qingzhou was the manager of a tire factory and would travel by bicycle at night to train with Zhaopei.

Eckert said they trained in dark rooms so they could not be detected. Qingzhou's relationship with Zhaopei was really close, Eckert said. "Zhaopei lived in a little mud house and Qingzhou would stay overnight in the house before bicycling back in the morning to Wenxian. He was with him in a close relationship for nine years until Zhaopei died."

When Zhaopei was dying, Qingzhou made a promise to his teacher to continue teaching the traditional Chen style and not change it, Eckert said.

Chen Qingzhou said there are five levels of T'ai Chi gongfu and each level has three stages.

At the first level, he said, everyone who starts is either too soft or too hard, physically. "Inside they are very



White Goose Spreads Its Wings, first form.

empty and they have no understanding of ting jin, listening energy or dong jing, understanding. Almost everyone starts with hard energy."

He said it takes about one year to go through the first level and rid the body of the hard force.

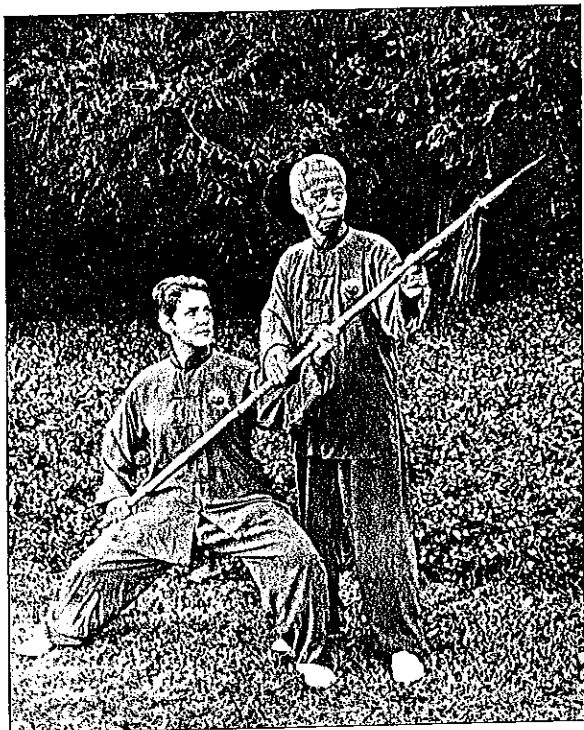
Then slowly, the student moves to the second level where the inner qi circulates and moves the outer form. Gradually, this gets refined.

At the beginning of the second level, he said, the student has some inner gongfu and skill.

Eckert said that in the second level, when the inner energy is moving the outer frame, there may be some feelings such as vibration, heat, or a flushed feeling. She said it can take another one or two years to get to the end of the second level, although some people never pass this level because they can't train enough.

The third level, she said takes another seven years. Through the end of the third level, she said, can take 10 years.

Chen Qingzhou's eldest son, Chen Youze, was undefeated in all of China's push hands competition for his weight level, and he was in the third level and has just entered the beginning of the fourth level, she said. Chen's fourth son, Chen Youhua, won first place in the Henan Province push hands championships six years in a row and retired undefeated. He is about third level middle, Eckert said.



Chen Qingzhou and Chris Eckert with Pear Blossom Spear with White Ape Staff.

She said Qingzhou is probably at the fourth level middle or end. The famous Chen Fake, she said, was probably at the end of the fourth level, entering into the fifth level of gongfu.

Eckert said, "It is said that only two people in history have attained fifth level. According to Chen's teacher, that is the point where you are most impervious to attack. You can feel what people who are close to you are going to do even before they touch you."

In the fourth level, she said, you almost can't see the person move to throw an opponent away because their movements are so subtle.

"I've seen huge macho guys come at him and you can hardly see what he's done to throw them away. One big guy was a wrestler. I was only there a couple of months and I was so worried that my teacher was going to be hurt. The next thing I know, the wrestler is just flying through the air. It was as if he was shrugging off a fly. His energy was so powerful and so short."

At the fifth level of gongfu, she said, there is the highest level of understanding energy, "so that when an opponent attacks, you know everything, can feel everything the opponent's going to do and you use that against him to lead him into emptiness."

Eckert said Qingzhou was attacked twice in Beijing. "Two men with knives came at him at a train station. The first one was sent flying and the other one received an elbow in his chest."

The skill of Chen Zhaopei, she said, was not as high as Chen Fake, but he was extremely well respected all over China.

She said some people say a student cannot surpass the level of his teacher, so it is difficult for people to get to the fifth level. But Cheng Qingzhou said it can be done in 30 years of hard training, if the person is really dedicated.

"The problem with getting to the fifth level," he said, "is that there is really nobody who is going to work hard enough to do it. Our lives have changed now. We have a lot of outside pressure."

He said that if someone did not have family responsibilities and had nothing to do but train, it is possible to reach the fifth level, but it is very unlikely.

To reach another level of gongfu, he said, it would be necessary to be practicing 40 to 50 sets a day, including the first two Chen routines, fajing and weapons, plus zhan zhuang. •

Masters From China

Presents

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Weekend seminars in Chen T'ai Chi with Ma Hong and George Xu are scheduled in April, May and June.

For information, contact George Xu, 4309 Lincoln Way, San Francisco, CA 94122. Tel. (415) 664-4578.