

The bagua transition

In his mid-sixties Malcolm Davy-Barnes is a retired NHS Jungian psychotherapist. He worked in mental health services for 35 years.

Currently he teaches bagua zhang in and around his home town of Maldon, on the Essex coast. Two of his three classes are in conjunction with a local 'falls prevention' scheme.

How long have you been practising tai chi?

I started learning tai chi in 1980 with John Hine in South East London.

What stimulated your interest?

Like many of my generation, watching the Kung Fu tv series as a 14 year old. This led to an interest in Chinese philosophy and history and later to tai chi.

What does tai chi mean to you?

The internal arts have a depth and breadth that I continue to discover. They have become a part of my life; from aiming for correct body structure and relaxation, to other physical, psychological and spiritual benefits. I marvel at the ingenuity of those before us.

Who or what inspired you, both in the beginning and now?

I would like to acknowledge my two main teachers. Sifu Jim Uglow from whom I learnt Yang style tai chi in the 1980s and 90s. Since 2014 I have been learning Fan family baguazhang from sifu Phil Morrell. Both, inspiring teachers. I am very grateful to them for sharing their knowledge and for their patience with me.

What is the most important aspect to you?

To keep going at my age. Continuing to learn and practise.

Do you have any personal goals?

I enjoy teaching and I am fortunate that Fan style bagua has a wide curriculum with a number of foundational qigong, jibengong exercises and forms that are suitable for beginners. Bagua is sometimes seen as a kind of post-graduate art, but I'm keen on spreading the benefits to



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folks with different levels of fitness. For myself practising I love those rare and brief moments when everything clicks and you feel really connected in yourself and with what's around you.

What do you think of tai chi's current popularity?

I think it's a great thing, the blossoming of tai chi and qigong. I just hope those blossoms have good roots. I'd also like to see other arts like bagua included and promoted more for their benefits.

What are your views on competition?

My main competitive spirit is with myself. I can be very critical when seeing myself on video. However competitions seem a good place to share and meet with fellow practitioners.

What direction would you like to see tai chi taking in the future?

Many of the issues such as accreditation, working with professional bodies, diversity of lineage, etc are familiar to me from the psychotherapy world, and seem to be a bit of a minefield. However I'd like to see perhaps the TCUGB offering courses and assistance to instructors. I've found the couple of coaching courses I've done with the BCCMA (I'm not a member), very helpful. 🌱

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