

Biography

I began martial arts training in 1972/3 with Danny Connor who had recently returned from the Far East and was teaching a range of arts to a small group in Manchester under the title of Chinese Boxing. The styles taught included Wing Chun, Preying Mantis, Shaolin, Tai Chi and Hsing I.

Within a year the Kung Fu films arrived in this country and the classes were soon booming. To help him teach for various lengths of time Danny had several visiting teachers such as Marnix Wells, Bruce Frantzis, Alan Lamb and Peter England. Also, Rose Li would travel from her home in Durham each weekend to teach us Ba Gua.

Danny set up the Oriental World Martial Arts Suppliers and became more and more involved in the business world and less in teaching. This left a void in the Chinese arts in the Manchester area and so I looked to Aikido which was being taught by the Lancashire Aiki-kai and also took up the practice of Archery and then later Fencing at Manchester Polytechnic Sports Societies.

In the early 1980's, Danny took advantage of the removal of the bamboo curtain to become one of the first westerners to study Tai Chi in Communist China. Upon his return he started to teach again and I resumed my studies with him.

Also in the early 1980's, I pooled my skills with Chris Baldwin who had trained in several Japanese disciplines as well as Western Esoteric Arts. We co-founded the Ling Ch'ia system, which has trained several people who are active practitioners in various areas of the UK.

Other teachers in this period included Ian Cameron (Sword), Nigel Sutton (Spear), Wassl Kolesnikov (Aikido), Linda Chase Broda (Enthusiasm), Michael Tse (Qigong), Aarvo Tucker (Ba Gua), Will Bibby (H'sing I), Allen Pittman (Ba Gua / H'sing I) for various lengths of time.

For the early 1990's I was busy exploring and teaching these skills. In 1994 I was lucky enough to be awarded a grant by Dance Initiative Greater Manchester to attend a one-month training camp in Kerala to study Indian Performing Arts. The areas that I chose to study were the Indian martial art of Kalarippayattu and South Indian Chenda Drumming. Vasudevan Gurrukul and his two sons, who were featured in the BBC TV series The Way of the Warrior, taught the Kalarippayattu. A couple of years later I followed up this study of Kalarippayattu at an International Workshop Festival training course with Sathyanarayanan.

In 1996 I began a study of Chen Style Tai Chi with Master Liming Yue who had recently come to live in the UK and had set up the Chen Style Tai Chi Centre. I accompanied Liming along with several others in 1997 on a trip that he organised to train with Grandmaster Chen Zheng Lei in China.

In 1999 I returned to China, this time to study the Peking Opera Male Warrior Role at the Academy of Traditional Chinese Opera in Beijing. I had first encountered this art several years earlier through Rachel Henson who trained in the Female Warrior Role and it was she who arranged for me to have one to one tuition for a month with her teacher Liu Fusheng. Since my visit there, I have done further study with Liu and his wife when they came to the UK to teach stage fight and 'fight in the dark skills'.

Throughout this period I also spent between 1 and 2 months a year for 14 years teaching many of these skills at Atsitsa Holistic Health Holidays on the island of Skyros and the Practice Place on Crete.

Since the new millennium I have undertaken considerable study in the healing art side of things with training in Swedish Massage, 'No Hands Massage' and Oriental Therapies.

I have been involved in helping set up the Tai Chi and Chi Kung Forum for Health and Special Needs.

Explorations into the performing arts have included several martial storytelling projects combining the telling of myths and legends with martial displays.

Also percussion and movement studies have continued with training in Flamenco music and dance in both England and Spain and some traditional British Sword Dancing in Yorkshire.

More recently has seen a study of Taiko drumming in Japan with Masaaki Kurumaya and Liz Walters and in Scotland with Mugenkyo.