



Linda's T'ai Chi

Weekly Handout for the week of April 24, 2020

Cloud Hands

Cloud hands, or 'wave hands like clouds', is one of the classic T'ai Chi movements that are a foundational posture in the T'ai Chi art form. Cloud hands is performed in every style of T'ai Chi but performed in different ways.

Yang style is more of a vertical/rounded motion with emphasis on the wrist. The Chen style is more of a horizontal elbow strike while the Sun style has the palms facing outwards. What is common among the many styles is the stepping to the side, weight shifting, and rotating arms in a circular motion guided by the motion of the clouds as they move across the sky. In the martial art, cloud hands rely on leverage, proper weight shift and quickness to prevail over the opponent.

It's easy for beginners to make the arms 'flat' in this posture – instead they need to be continually projecting outwards. Imagine branches of a tree – they grow outwards, and are slightly curved.

The secret of performing cloud hands properly (or any posture) is the timing of the weight shift and the turn of the waist. Most students neglect both of these.

Let your eyes gently and softly follow the leading hand- look at the hand and through the hand. As you coordinate the breathing, weight, step, turn of the waist, bend in the knee and elbow, you will achieve the continuity of motion that is vital to this posture as is with all postures.

NOTE: Both hands come to rest (without stopping) on the right side and then the left side, as if gently touching a table.

Practice makes perfect. It is wise to practice cloud hands as a single posture, the same is true for brush knee. Both postures are signature postures and can be perfected by practicing each as a single posture.