YMAA International Newsletter

1 October, 2021

CELEBRATING 39 YEARS OF YMAA

IN THIS ISSUE

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

Founder and Technical Supervisor of YMAA

Dear Friends:

I hope you had an enjoyable summer. Here is a quick update on the past few months.

The center is still for sale and I am still looking to move to the Bay Area afterwards. If you know of anybody that may be interested in buying the property, please help share the listing info: Video & Website

We had a good time in this year's summer seminars. For two of those weeks, my disciples, Michelle and Jonathan, ran their summer camp here. It was great to finally meet in person again, both old and new faces.

In addition, I'm happy that my wife, son, and daughter have been here to help since the start of the seminar season.

During the fifth week, I also accepted my longtime student, Daniel Chadud (director of YMAA Chile) to be my disciple. I am grateful for his many years of friendship and dedication.

Blog post: Discipleship Ceremony of Daniel Chadud

Continued on page 2

Watch the anniversary video!

@ymaainternational

YMAA turns 39 today! It's been a challenging 19 months to say the least.

Sadly, a few YMAA schools closed and many instructors suspended classes without knowing when and if they would restart.

As people feel safer participating in activities again, many instructors are resuming classes with some starting from zero.

However, there have been some silver linings during the pandemic.

Read on to hear what directors have to say.

Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming continued

My webinars are currently on hold until further notice. The future of the center is still uncertain at this time.

In the meantime, Jonathan and Michelle will continue to offer recordings of past webinars for a limited time through their Vimeo channel.

NEW release: Spine & Back Qigong

(Special price until Dec 31st)

Thank you to all the students who have participated in my webinars and seminars, and to all those who have supported me for all these many years. I hope we can continue helping and supporting each other as the pandemic continues on.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

Europe

YMAA Italy-Apulia

The events of the last 18 month were challenging and the last things we would ever expect to happen. It saddened me very much to know about fellow instructors forced to physically close their schools.

As YMAA Italy-Apulia's director, I had to face the same fate. The past 18 months have been swinging months of closure, re-opening, closure again, re-opening, etc.

The uncertainty of this situation forced us to offer a mix of online classes during the winter season and small group classes in the public park during the summer season.

During this time, few but very dedicated students kept their spirits high, maintaining the hopes for the future of our school alive.

I don't know how things are going to turn out in the next months, but we have learned a lesson: adaptability and flow are key in these times. We are going to do all the necessary adjustments to keep honoring our mission, no matter what the future events will call for.

Director: Enrico Tomei

YMAA Napoli (Italy)

The YMAA Naples has very few students at present, last year the gym was closed due to the pandemic. In this period we have practiced in outdoor places whenever possible.

In October we started a Qi Gong class for beginners at a social center, where there is a large terrace, and we plan to look for new locations to organize a Taiji class.

Hugs,

Director: Alessandra Fogliano

YMAA Salerno (Italy)

Due to this endless pandemic, I ended up having no more students for in-person classes. For nearly two years, I've offered online lessons.

What I've taught until last June was mainly Qigong since it's rather hard to teach online taiji and other material unless you have already trained it and only need to revise.

Due to the pandemic, I also stopped going to Enrico's seminars for my personal training and on the other hand, he himself has not been able to organize any seminars in about two years.

At the moment, I'm doing my best to organize lessons in the open spaces as it's sunny here. We'll see.

The best,

Director: Rossana Paolillo

YMAA North (United Kingdom)

We held a successful class restart at the YMAA North UK (Chester) school in September. It was great to see nearly all of our core members (7 people) returning to continue their Tai Chi journeys.

Everyone had missed this weekly opportunity to train as a group. I believe our core members will continue to train with YMAA for the foreseeable future.

In addition, we have the prospect of a new member joining next week, which is great news! It would be good to grow the Chester school – however small the steps may be – and we'll be doing all we can to support and encourage new members.

It's also clear from the first classes that our members remain cautious about the COVID-19 risks. It's likely that opportunities to train 1-2-1 with partners, e.g. Taiji Pushing Hands and Fighting Set, will be limited for now.

Director: Mike McCann

Instructors:
Martin Evans & George Skinner

YMAA Portugal-Amadora

Dear Friends,

YMAA Portugal has been going through difficult times as all of us understand due to the nature of our activities in the times of this pandemic.

We lost many students including one of the most emblematic schools operating for over two decades.

We are back to presential classes with minimal restrictions. Thanks to a very successful vaccination campaign, 85% of the Portuguese population has full vaccination completed and this fact is taking us back to normal.

Online classes have been reduced to a minimum but still allow for events and a smoother transition to normality.

Keep focus and we will make it again!!!

Director: Pedro Rodrigues

YMAA Białystok (Poland)

Director: Arkadiusz Gawroński

Middle East

YMAA Iran

With the onset of the pandemic and quarantine, as in other schools, a shock hit us, and all activities were suspended for almost four months.

Despite this, YMAA Iran, using its technical knowledge, the support of the Wushu Federation and skilled Chinese medicine specialists, provided the following:

1. A free Qigong training package to boost the immune system

2. 40 hours of free live training on Instagram

3. Active discussion with the Wushu Federation on challenges of practicing Taiji at home

4. Specialized Qigong and Taijiquan content on 150 one-pagers. One-Pagers are a practical and effective method for conveying concepts and have a global basis.

YMAA Iran continues to hold online classes and training workshops for the Wushu Federation – for federation representatives and the general public.

Currently, Iranian students from all over the world, including the United States, Canada, Mexico, France, Austria, Spain, Turkey, and from all over Iran, regularly participate in our online training groups.

Additionally, we hold free weekly training sessions in parks in compliance with health protocols

I have been in Istanbul, Turkey since July this year to create a suitable platform for activities and foreign relations, and if all goes according to plan, YMAA Iran will have a suitable infrastructure for its foreign relations in Istanbul in three years.

Online platforms, which are now very popular, play a very important role in realizing this approach.

In my opinion, the proper combination and arrangement of online, face-to-face, offline classes + the preparation of educational packages and other events such as webinars, face-to-face camps, virtual camps will be very instructive, effective, and successful in the new world.

Of course, the young generation, who are full of creativity and dynamism, will be the pioneers of these great educational changes.

With the best wishes!

Director: Shermin Rezaei

Latin America

Newendao YMAA Chile

In the last 18 months, we haven't had face-to-face classes but we switched to virtual classes with YouTube and Zoom tools.

Although the in-person experience is irreplaceable, our ability to adapt and endure has opened new opportunities.

One of the positive sides is that we got closer between Latin American schools, having virtual activities and camps together, reaching new smaller locations that usually can't practise with the YMAA community.

Now we are slowly transitioning to a hybrid between virtual and face-to-face classes, but the benefits of being able to practise and follow up with virtual tools will stay forever, opening new ways of learning and exchanging experience.

We hope this helps the YMAA International community to have a closer and more frequent interaction.

Let's do our best and make it happen!

Best wishes to all,

Director: Daniel Chadud

YMAA Rio De Janeiro (Brazil)

"Between Heaven and Earth"

Currently in Brazil, nearly 600,000 people have died from the Covid pandemic.

We have certainly been affected in our school by this great transformation that is taking place all around the world. We ended the in-person activities in our physical space on 03/16/2020. We stayed at home and only the essential activities worked.

Anticipating the needs not only of my students but also of the general population to maintain one's health, I started classes online, through Facebook and YouTube.

I had no experience with virtual teaching but what moved me was the possibility of helping, free of charge, to anyone who needed it.

Despite the initial difficulties with virtual teaching, this has been a wonderful learning experience for me and my students. Virtual classes took place 3 times a week, plus a weekly meditation.

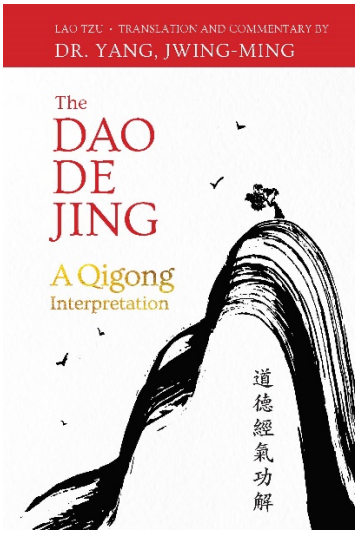
It was an excellent experience that lasted about a year in this format: new practitioners learned about the arts being taught and felt motivated.

After 6 months of starting, we also started classes through Zoom for paying groups. I started using Instagram too, for some activities.

That year most of the former in-person students stopped doing the practices, for not being suitable for virtual teaching. But at the same time, other new students began the study of practices.

I feel that virtual teaching has driven me to study new ways of teaching.

I started to use the reading of the Dao De Jing (translation and comments by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming) and carrying out the practices according to the themes covered in each poem.



Currently, we continue with online classes as I lost the physical space in December 2020 (it was sold by the owner).

I think virtual classes are here to stay and I encourage everyone to use the virtual classes. But as soon as possible, maybe in October or November, I will restart classes face-to-face, primarily outdoors.

And as soon as I can, I'll look for a new space for on-site classes, which will certainly gain a lot from all the experience gained during these times.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to write this report.

Director: Fádua Gustin

YMAA Venezuela

“Making the “impossible” possible.”

This seems to be the true time to manifest inner power. If it was already difficult in Venezuela for years to continue the practice with so many basic deficiencies, somehow this surprising time “trained” us to invent ways.

As a consequence of the confinement, we lost the classroom and the practice options on the beach were no longer possible without gasoline.

In a country where electricity is removed every day and where the internet is deficient, digital classes are only possible for the students who have emigrated. It is because of this that we created multiple ways to reach everyone:

1. Classes via WhatsApp, because almost everyone could have the possibility of charging their cell phone when the electricity returns. Short 2–3-minute videos, photo sequences and texts.

2. Classes via Zoom and YouTube from Uruguay, to reach all YMAA Zhenhe students who have emigrated.

3. We recently started giving some classes face to face, in the courtyard of my house.

At the same time, Los Niños del Sol continue practicing and, in each class, the students receive a meal, sometimes their only one for the day.

We were also blessed to be in closer contact with the YMAA Latam community, and this has been a great opportunity to deepen and advance.

We have lost some family members and some fellow practitioners, yet we carry on with high spirit.

Thanks for this opportunity to share our experiences.

Director: Eucaris Navarro

North America

YMAA Boston (USA)

The pandemic hit us pretty hard. We lost a lot of students. However, we were able to move to an all online format during the lockdown and then as things opened up we moved to a hybrid format.

The YMAA Boston instructors were amazing. We all had to become computer/web conference experts in a matter of days. We would not have been able to survive if not for their dedication.

Once we were able to have classes in person, we were limited to only a handful of people in the studio for social distancing rules.

We also held as many classes outside as possible where we could have larger groups. The outside classes were a great addition even if we did get caught in the rain a few times. We still have a few outdoor kids classes on Saturday.

We held an outdoor summer kids summer camp. The kids learned several Tan Tui and their sparring applications. It was a lot of fun and a few of the campers became students in the fall.

The students and parents were incredibly supportive. Many of them were able to keep their memberships running so that we could cover our expenses.

For the students and families who lost jobs we offered free or reduced membership based on their needs. A few non-Boston folks even joined online or made donations to help.

The YMAA community is probably the most amazing part of the organization. We are deeply grateful for all the support we received from the YMAA family.

We are slowly rebuilding the program as we come out of the pandemic. Our class schedule is still a little thinner than it was before but as students return we will be able to add more classes.

We will likely keep some online classes going permanently since so many people have gotten used to online learning. Online can't replace in-person but it can be a nice addition to the program.

Director: Ben Warner

YMAA Tai Chi Ch'uan of Wisconsin (USA)

My best regards and condolences to all the YMAA family who are undergoing challenges due to the pandemic.

I have retained most of my students during this epidemic by learning how to utilize Zoom.

Since being here at the YMAA Retreat Center became an option, I am now reentering some long fist training with Nicholas, and Kathy Yang allows visitors here to "attend" her Zoom sessions as well.

It feels good to be training and also being here to assist with general duties as other visiting students come and go intermittently.

May we all transition through this with spirits unbroken.

Director: Angela Laughingheart

YMAA Andover (USA)

Since YMAA Andover closed down in October of 2020, I took over as director and have continued teaching in both small group and private lesson formats.

This has meant traveling to students' homes and teaching in various places whether it be raining, hot and humid, or single digits and windy.

Over the past year, I have been slowly rebuilding the program and have added several new students.

When Massachusetts fully reopened, we were once again able to do some of the things that made our school a success. Students can now practice two-person material following precautions and based on comfort level.

The demo team students have had a few opportunities to perform at local events.

We were able to have a send off party for our seniors headed off to college and on Sept 11th, some of my students tested requirements for the first and second levels.

Congratulations to Grant G., Amanda D., Lucas and Juliana K., Wolfie and Ravi D., Jeremiah and Samuel C. Elena M., and Ryan and Samantha H. for their spirit and consistent training during these unusual and difficult times. I have another test planned for the near future.

My hope is to continue to draw back those students that stopped because of the pandemic and to encourage new students to experience the benefits of martial arts.

Currently I am teaching my group classes out of a gym. This will be the home of YMAA Andover for as long as the space meets my needs.

Director: Chris Fazzio

YMAA Memphis (USA)

Director: Milan Vigil

Andover Taiji (USA)

We are a group of students and teachers from Yang's in Andover, MA. Unfortunately, Yang's had to close its doors because of the pandemic a year ago.

For the better part of the last year a group of five to ten of us have been meeting on Sunday mornings at a small grassy area abutting some woodlands in Andover.

Thankfully the weather has, for the most part, cooperated and we have adjusted to the seasons as needed.

We meet not so much to hold a "class" but to do qigong and to practice the taijiquan form together, and it's also an opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions, explore, refine, and continue to ponder qigong and taijiquan.

Dan Boland

YMAA Tulsa (USA)

Qigong of Tulsa (YMAA-Tulsa) continues to struggle on a month-to-month basis. The pandemic has not been kind to us and we really don't know what the future has in store.

It looks like the Tulsan's are still very leery about what is going on, all business within our shopping center have lost the traffic they once had.

Director: Tom Bowman

Jon & Michelle (USA)

Opening a physical school has been on hold but we've been fortunate to have a variety of teaching opportunities.

We're all familiar with the difficulties with teaching and taking online classes so we're very grateful for having dedicated students from around the world.

Online classes have not only made our students better listeners and learners but also helped us develop into better teachers. They have been part of our model since before the pandemic and will continue to be in the foreseeable future.

In-person classes have kept us sane. We're teaching our youth kung fu class, Chinese school programs, a new Taiji & Push Hands class, and classes at YMAA Boston.

The online format was a struggle for most kids and we lost most of our youth students. However, a few of them took us by surprise with their effort and dedication.

Some of them performed with us for the first time at two demos in August. Demos are always a good motivator to push harder and they reminded us of what was and what can be.

It's also been great having outside students occasionally attend our classes and workshops. We hope to continue growing and inviting other students and teachers to share in our mutual appreciation for the arts.

Visiting Dr. Yang at the Retreat Center was a wonderful break from our daily routine.

For our first time back since 2018, Michelle coordinated a 2-week training camp which ran concurrently with Dr. Yang's seminars.

It was a busy but happy time filled with lectures, teaching, training, chores, and enjoying the getaway. (Blog posts: Retreat Center Camp Part 1 & Part 2)

We wish everyone the best in your personal and martial arts lives.

Michelle Lin & Jonathan Chang

YMAA Québec (Canada)

At YMAA Québec, since the pandemic required us to be 2 meters apart during spring and at the beginning of summer, we mostly focused our training on basic staff training.

We covered 4 golden points: poking and striking, basics, Qi Mei Gun matching techniques and the sequence. This allowed advanced students to revisit the basics of staff principles and newer students to discover the specialty of Shaolin.

Toward the end of summer, we gradually shift our attention toward Qin Na. We organised two Qin Na seminars, one covering the basics (coiling, escaping, level 1 Qin Na) and the second one level 2 and 3 Qin Na with guest instructor Richard Levesque, the founder of our school.

During the seminar, students had high training spirit and they brought the intensity required to practice Qin Na (as you can see by their faces).

Our summer practice was punctuated by the beautiful and strong weapons hand made by one of our students, David Santosh Jean.

Designed for intense practice, they proved themselves to be super resilient to our striking staff against staff. No chipping, to the convenience of our hands. Follow him on Instagram to see his work!!

Director: Ethan Deblois

@santosh_weapons

Board of Directors

The board of directors has been working to overcome its own challenges. YMAA has a unique, nearly four decades-long history and running the organization as a team has been a new experience for all. The first step has been learning how to work together with people from different backgrounds and cultures. Progress has been made but not without an abundance of patience and understanding. In listening to each other, we've learned about the different realities in particular regions and the common goals we share.

Over the past year, we've asked the directors to provide an update on their school and express their thoughts through a survey and emails. We all have our ideals of what YMAA can and should be, which can vary from person to person. The first question to answer was: What is YMAA? Specifically, *who* makes up YMAA?

Once we knew who the members were, we could better understand their interests and goals. A large percentage of students are interested in the health benefits of the practice, the school's culture, and social aspects. Others are drawn to a defining aspect of YMAA: the depth and quality of the curriculum. Although the values are not mutually exclusive, they can require different approaches when it comes to addressing some of the organization's issues.

Instructors and directors may share similar values with the students but their needs are different. They have had to balance teaching, training, and running their schools as businesses - made more challenging during a pandemic. The consensus is, they wish for YMAA to grow, more students to test, more instructors to be developed, standards for testing, and resources to help them achieve these goals. To that end, the board has been working on the following areas:

1. Structures: board, organization, constitution to define protocols, new school contracts to be developed
2. Curriculum: determining requirements, testing criteria, ranking levels and titles
3. Communication: website, director updates for newsletters, and provided updated info for the public

Concrete changes won't be apparent overnight. However, we are deeply appreciative of the feedback and expertise we've received so far. We look forward to working together with the school directors to improve the functionality and services of the organization.

Sincerely,

YMAA International Board of Directors

Corlius Birkill (Chairperson, Business Development Co-Director)

Daniel Chadud (Internal Training Co-Director)

Jonathan Chang (Business Development Director, External Training Co-Director)

Michelle Lin (Co-Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer)

Pedro Rodrigues (Internal Training Director, Co-Treasurer)

Robert Wąs (External Training Director)

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