

Martin Boedicker in Düsseldorf interviewing Andre Oelofse from Cape Town.

Martin: Hello Andre, welcome to Germany. Before we talk about Taichi, please can you introduce yourself a little.

Andre: I am located in Cape Town, where I have an exercise studio with the name "Body Technology" specialising in the rehabilitation of injuries and movement analysis with sportsmen and women and anyone who wants to discover their true potential. The basis of my teachings stem from 14 years Pilates experience coming from a strong sporting background (both mother and father were professional athletes). I specialise in a unique technique to free up the spine to allow for a freer movement and use boxing principles to help people find their natural rhythm.

M: Andre, how did you become exposed to Wu Tai Chi Chuan?

A: I met with Robert Rudniak in Cape Town and he invited me for a private lesson and within that session I was so inspired to see that this was the missing link on how natural movement should be taught today.

M: So you got inspired but what did Robert teach you in that lesson?

A: He taught me the Gongbu and Xubu and showed me the first preparation with the rotation of the waist.

M: This does not look like much, so why is this so special to you?

A: Because it is so clear to me that this is the natural diagonal functional movement pattern of the body.

M: So if this is natural, why is this so important?

A: Today, people don't spend enough time on the legs and this is a great tool to teach people how to create a relaxed natural strong structure, without collapsing or being rigid.

M: Is there no specific training for that in the other sports that you used previously in your teaching?

A: The previous sports training and with regards to Pilates were limited to weight bearing exercises on the legs and did not offer enough natural rotations of the waist. An additional tool I used was the boxing which offers a lot more rotation of the waist, the only thing is it was too yang. That is where the Taichichuan comes in with its blending balance of yang and yin.

M: So I think you have found a good name for our Taichichuan?

A: This is the missing link for me – the power of natural movement.

M: You also told me, that you got very excited about the body-awareness in Taichichuan. Please

introduce us to the 25% rule.

A: It is been proven in research that the natural stabilisers of the body (muscles inside the body) will support the body structure best at 25% of their maximum strength. If one uses more than 25% the global, stabilisers become too active and can't support the body structure effectively. This is just raw power and is not supporting the power of the natural kinetic chain, which relies on the power of the relaxed tendons.

M: I do not understand this in full? Can you try explaining again?

A: If one uses more than 25% of maximum effort to stabilise one's body structure then there is no synergistic connection between the natural internal stabilisers. Instead you get over activity of the bigger muscle groups of the outside of the body. This results in a stiff structure.

M: I try to simplify this. Please correct me. As soon as you use more than 25% strength to maintain your structure you start to use the wrong muscles. Is that correct?

A: Yes. In Taichi it is the same. One should use the muscles you need in a soft way to get into posture (natural stabilisers at 25% effort) and not more. That is why I think pushhands is so important because it is a true test to whether the individual can withstand the natural 25% rule in motion and under stressful conditions. And the beauty of this application is that it can be taken into daily lives and everyday movement. This is an amazing tool to stay centred these days.

M: For me it was a great experience to share some time with you, because with your background you have a very special view on Taichi and I hope you can go on to interpret Taichi in a modern western way. Everything that you say conforms to classical Taichi theory, but it explains it in our western way. In your teaching for a westerner it is much easier to get access to the deep knowledge of the heritage of the Wu Tai Chi Chuan.

A: For me I am grateful to have my connection with the Forum and I respect your insight, passion and work already done and I hope I can add some more of my insight in the future.