

Yin & Yang in perfect harmony (almost)!

Some years ago the Italian singer, Battiato, sang 'I'm looking for a fixed centre of gravity.' This year, more than any other, the lessons offered at Acquavenice taught us how to find (and be) just that.

To feel as if your centre of gravity is so grounded to suggest that it is rooted permanently, to search, to probe, to sound out, to always be 'centred' not just physically but also mentally. In the mind, yes, but not just there – in the heart as well (we know where to find it without confusing the organ with its function), yes, THE heart and most of all the heart of everything.

A quick look at who was there starting with the honoured guests – perfectly balanced just like the five elements:

Sue Woodd :- as the surname suggests (apart from the extra 'd') she embodies the spirit of the **wood** element.

Marianne Plouvier :- assured, determined and unmoving like penetrating **metal**..... but with a childlike smile that would melt anything!

Ronnie Robinson :- adaptable, fruitful and welcoming like the **earth** of fertile land.

Gianni Groppelli:- like the volcanic **fire** in a constant state of eruption.

Franco Mescola:- Fifth element – that of **movement**. Like a gentle breeze, omnipresent even when he's not there!

In addition, the input from Giancarlo Ronchi and Arcadio Rizzardi in their role of weapons instructors and competent co-ordinators was much valued and appreciated. Not to mention the tireless work behind the scenes (and sometimes in front) of Marzia Bianchi to whom we offer a very special vote of thanks – a vote of thanks also extended to President Cavalleri, Rita (Secretary), Tony (patient ferryman) and to all those who helped ensure the success of this event.

A success for its content, the bonding of the group, the social aspects, the beauty of the place, the fun and harmony shared – and, of course, the ability to manage the inevitable disagreements!

We could go on at great lengths about the never-ending creativity of Master Mescola in his teaching of Tui Shou and martial applications, and likewise we could wax lyrical about the Bio-spiral Chi Kung he offered every morning at 6.30am all staged against the magnificent backdrop and enchanted setting of the Strologhi loch.

Instead, let us talk of the intensity and precision of Pa Tua Chin – the artform offered by Marianne Plouvier who, herself, is a true female warrior. A perfect example of cotton and steel. From here we move on to the kindness and vitality of Sue Woodd – ever willing to impart her knowledge of the Dragon Dao Yin and share some very important explanations regarding energy flow in the meridians.

A masculine-feminine presence full of hope and what we hoped for, stimulating and a great example for everyone.

Ronnie Robinson, through his pushing-hands, re-kindled the subject of looking for the 'critical point'. 'I like to be challenged continuously – to get to know my 'critical point', to be able to accept it, to drawback from it, to constantly shift its boundaries. The English language is very expressive and prosaic at times: 'you have to drop into your body', you have to have faith in 'the shit moment' – that

exact point where you just know the other has 'got' you and there's not a damn thing you can do about it. Your 'centre' is compromised. Expertly put - even if a little less prosaic!

Ronnie Robinson and Gianni Groppelli treated us to a wonderful display of Tui Shou which lasted a few minutes – minutes that were unforgettable and during which time the air stood still just exactly as pushing hands should be for those who practice Tai Chi. Once again, a demonstration full of hope and what we hoped for.

This seminar offered a big lesson in 'listening' and those who stayed on to take part in the pushing competition (practiced standing on a beam balanced between two tables) really got the message.

It was evident that the women in particular had understood (resisting for some time before one gave way) that in order to be in the true spirit of Tai Chi we must learn to trust our instincts so that we can really feel the closeness of the attack and minimise any delay that may be caused if we let our thoughts intrude. And... the women won! Once again, like many years ago, the feminine side won – even that of the men.

And so to conclude:.....

Intense moments shared, parties around the fire until three in the morning and everyone (well, nearly) up and ready for the Chi Kung sessions at 6am! Sweeping toasts all round by the 'Toastmaster', Giancarlo Ronchi.... Final lunch at the Vignotto's and surprise, surprise, the news that Daniele Minio had made the grade as an instructor (MASTER?). Well done Daniele, you truly deserve it. May the force be with you.....always.