

Heng Wei: let's play

Heng Wei, the 35th descendant of Shao Lin temple, is teaching western people Kung Fu and Chinese culture.



Hu! Ha!

Martial Arts Master Heng Wei walked out of the line. With hand spreading out low and high he first posed "White Crane Spreads its wings". Suddenly he ran, then jumped and he seemed to be flying in the air and made a beautifully spinning kick.

The splendid movements and the yellow Kung Fu suit make Tang Long Kung Fu School seem like a part of Shao Lin temple, but actually it is located in London. The students wearing professional Kung Fu suit are not Chinese either, they are western people who come to learn more about this famous Oriental martial arts.

Right from Henan, the heart of Shao Lin temple, Master Heng Wei is the 35th descendant of Shao Lin. 20 years of practicing Chinese martial arts brought him broad knowledge in this field and made him one of the only teachers in the UK teaching Ba Ji Quan.

At first he just came to the UK for performance as a representative of Shao Lin Temple in 2003. Quickly he noticed lots of western people were attracted by Chinese martial arts. The idea of establishing a Kung Fu school then fell into his brain.

"At that time it was really difficult. I did not have enough money and I could not speak English. I felt extremely alone in the first half year and I basically did not go anywhere except the place where I taught," Master Heng Wei said.

Thanks to the popularity of Hong Kong Kung Fu films, lots of western people came to his place and became his students. In their eyes, Chinese martial arts are a fascinating thing: people can fly in the air and even be invincible to weapons.

"These will only happen in a film," Heng Wei laughed when he was asked whether people could be flying in the air after practicing Kung Fu, "Chinese martial arts are mainly about self defence and meditation. It makes people feel confidence and peaceful, but it certainly cannot make you fly."

Still they were attracted to this ancient fighting style, especially after watching Master's performance.

"When viewed by other practitioners, the dedication to detail that Shifu instills in his students is evident. This training

Kung Fu, not football



provided me with real life benefits beyond the practice of martial arts," One of his students Ron Boschetto commended.

Teaching kids gave Master Heng Wei a good chance to learn English. After one year's teaching he earned enough money and practiced a good London ascent. Then he rent a place in Finchley Road and named it Tang Long.

"Tang Dynasty is regarded as the highest point of Chinese Kung Fu culture and Long, which means dragon in Chinese, is a symbol of China." Heng Wei explained, "I put them together to indicate that martial arts are an essential part of Chinese culture. I am not only teaching Kung Fu, but also the rich and sophisticated Chinese cultural heritage to my students."

With years' development, now Tang Long owns a good reputation in Kung Fu School circle. Lots of people come and study martial arts. Many of them have spent more than one year in practicing Kung Fu and some of them even get rewards in competitions held by London schools.

"Last year we got several medals in the Martial Arts competition held in London," Tang Long's manager Karen said proudly, "This year the eleven years old boy Oskar won a gold medal at SENI, the International Combat Sports Show."

When asked why he wanted to learn Kung Fu, Oskar answered innocently:"

I want to be a Kung Fu master and get famous, and then in the school nobody will beat me." Interestingly, big star Bruce Lee answered more or less the same when he was asked why he wanted to learn Kung Fu at the age of thirteen.

In the students' eyes, Heng is a nice teacher. He never scolds or criticises, always be patient and gentle.

"And he is really good," Karen, Tang Long's manager and also his former student, said, "He knows how to do it and he teaches the true Shao Lin Kung Fu. You know, it is not easy to find a real Shao Lin descendant in London."

Yes, Heng certainly gets something different in his personality. Though it is a Kung Fu school, Tang Long is always full of laughter. Even when the class is over, some of the students will still stay and practice with each other.

"It is like a playground to me," One of the students Nkosi said, "People here are so kind and nice, I just love this place."

Besides teaching martial arts, Heng also raises fund for charity. Coming from a not so wealthy family, he certainly knows the suffering of the poor.

"I organized a charity fund by myself," He said, "My hometown is a poor place. Now I have some money, I want to help those who are suffering from poverty." He pointed at the pictures on the walls and



continued: "These are the children I helped. Every year I gave out some money to them. They lost their family in the earthquake; I hope the money will help."

Talking of future, Heng gets a little exciting: "I am planning to have a branch school in other places and even other countries in Europe. I want to introduce Kung Fu to more people. This is how I show my respect to the culture."