

Kung-fu masters demonstrate the art in martial arts

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THE GAZETTE

Fans of Chinese martial arts are in for a treat tomorrow night, when 65 students and masters from 12 local schools and eight special guests from Toronto demonstrate their skills at Ecole Primaire Le Plateau.

It's the first time such a big martial-arts show has been held in Montreal, and anyone considering taking a course will get a good idea of the options available here.

"It's a chance to see the art in martial arts," says Patrick Chan-Yu-Tin of Montreal's Tyfung Martial Art Centre.

Two traditional lion dances will also be performed. The color of the lion indicates what part of China he comes from. The fighting-green Fukienese lion will open the show and the artistic black Cantonese lion will perform after the intermission.

"Traditionally, this was one of the ways martial-arts schools showed their



talents. If your kung-fu skill was good, your lion dance should be too," says Peter Choo-Foo of Tyfung. Low solid stances, good timing and co-ordination are needed for both.

For those whose only experience of kung fu was watching David Carradine flail his way across the Old West in the TV show of the same name, Lorne Bernard of the local Shaolin White Crane Society says the audience is "definitely going to see the real thing. For years Carradine played a Chinese on TV when he wasn't. He pretended to know kung fu when he didn't."

Practice routines and sparring will be

shown. Advanced students will whirl sticks, spears, swords, halberds, whips, canes and fans around, making it all look a lot easier than it is. (Note: Don't try this at home!)

Wing chun, praying mantis, white eyebrow, white crane, hung gar, wushu, choy lee fut and tai chi are some of the kung fu styles that will be shown.

Wing chun was the style practiced by the late Bruce Lee. Sooner or later his name always comes up. "Many Lee fans come to martial-arts schools with unreal expectations," Chan-Yu-Tin says.

"They think it's easy. They don't know how much work they have to do." For those who are able to stick with it, he says, kung fu is an excellent way to develop discipline, self-confidence, good concentration and respect for oneself and others. It's particularly good for children.

Chan-Yu-Tin has six young boys among his students, including his own sons, and they all work very hard.

Legend has it that wing chun was de-

veloped by a woman who had received her own training from a Buddhist nun. Fukienese white crane was invented by a woman who was trying to keep a crane from stealing her grain. No matter what she did to drive the bird away, it responded with a manoeuvre of its own. She practiced with it on a daily basis and developed a fighting system based on its movements.

Despite this early female involvement in the martial arts, several local masters say no more than 15 or 20 per cent of their students are women. Nathalie Bonin, a 21-year-old violinist with the Orchestre Métropolitain, has been studying at the Kai Leung Kung Fu Institute for three years.

She says, "My safety is not what I think about. I'm here for personal growth. I wasn't just interested in the physical aspect of it; the spiritual, traditional part was very important to me, too."

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Three different styles of tai chi will also be demonstrated. Tai chi is one of the oldest martial arts, even if westerners tend to think of it as a sort of Chinese yoga. Most people studying it in North America learn slow and rhythmic movements to improve their general health and flexibility. But studied in its entirety, it also includes hard, fast movements and the use of swords.

Some form of martial arts has been practiced in China for more than 2,000 years. Over time, some styles have been lost, and new ones developed to suit conditions.

Bernard says some of the more familiar Asian martial arts – like tae kwon do, judo and karate – have been taught in the West for so long that they've become watered down and lost many of their traditional aspects.

On the other hand, among young people "in China,

Taiwan and Hong Kong, martial arts are not doing well these days, because everyone wants to make money and disco-dance."

In 1988, the Canadian Chinese Kuo Shu (Martial Arts) Federation was set up to keep the traditions alive, and also provide some quality control. Anyone can open a school and say they are teaching kung fu. With CCKSF accreditation, you know that they really are.

■ *Martial-arts demonstrations are at Auditorium Jean Deslauriers, Ecole Primaire Le Plateau, 3710 Calixa Lavallee Ave. (near Lafontaine Park) tomorrow at 7:30 pm. Tickets – \$25 (VIP seating), \$15, and \$6 for children under 12 – are available at the door, or through Ticketmaster, 790-1111. Video cameras will not be allowed. Raffle will be held to benefit La Petite Maison des Enfants, a childrens' drop-in centre. The prize is three months of martial-arts instruction.*