

Practice of Zen

★★★★BroadwayBaby

By Johanna Makelainen

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*Practice of Zen*, currently streaming as part of C ARTS' online offering, explores the sensuality and resilience of traditional Chinese swordplay. Performed in Cantonese with subtitles in English, the play by Theatre Ronin revives the essence of Wuxia films through mystical folklore, beautiful aesthetics and strong emotional bonds.

The perfect antidote to TikTok addiction

Wuxia, which means "martial arts and chivalry", is a genre of Chinese fiction concerning the adventures of martial artists in ancient China. It is not to be confused with violent martial arts films, think more in lines of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Wuxia films are characterized by high-flying sword fights, complex ethical narratives and mystical elements. A code of chivalry requires Wuxia heroes to right and redress wrongs, fight for righteousness, remove oppressors, and bring retribution for past misdeeds. From this same rich tradition comes epic films like *Matrix* and *Kill Bill*.

*Practice of Zen* is a beautifully shot series of loosely connected dramatic scenes with smooth, elegant and intense choreography. It takes place in a vaguely defined fantasy world rooted in Chinese history. The story explores the themes of loyalty, justice, revenge, and the conflict between personal desires and societal expectations. Through the use of romantic imagery, it endeavours to preserve the world's reminiscent beauty before its aura vanishes in the age of new media.

Throughout the play its aesthetics are spot on; everything is beautifully surrealist and absurd. The clash between the ancient world and the cold dystopia of a mechanical future makes the intriguing Yin and Yang of the story. Magic, mythical creatures, and characters with supernatural abilities are always present. A key line in the story is: "Here we have everything but logic". The enjoyment starts the moment you let go of trying to understand it.

The Wushu – the actual martial arts in *Practice of Zen* – follows the tradition of Tai Chi, with slow, graceful and meditative movements. Tai Chi utilizes flowing movements to neutralize or redirect an opponent's force, so there are no explosive fight scenes in the play, but a constant slow, fluid and calming movement of actors on stage. There may be instant health benefits in just watching the play, such as a reduction in stress levels and an improvement in posture.

*Practice of Zen* is created, directed, and designed by Alex Tam Hung Man, the artistic director and founder of the Hong Kong-based Theatre Ronin. Their repertoire is inspired by the culture and literature of Hong Kong with thought-provoking theatrical works raising humanistic concerns. All this is spot on in *Practice of Zen*, which offers the unique aesthetic and thematic richness of Wuxia films and pays homage to ancient Chinese philosophy and tradition.

After watching *Practice of Zen*, you will feel calm and tranquil – and confused. But hey, that's Wuxia for you. Theatre Ronin have mastered the perfect antidote to TikTok addiction.

<https://broadwaybaby.com/shows/practice-of-zen/809892>