

Rod Tossing
Partner Exercise for Adults and Children
Part 1: Adults

Rod tossing requires that you find a willing partner to play with you.

Begin by standing face to face about three feet apart. One person holds the rod upright in the right hand, carefully positioned so that the hand is right in the middle of the rod. They will now draw the rod back, as if pulling an arrow back in the bow. With a light release, throw the rod to the partner's left hand. Take care that the rod stays absolutely upright, so it won't injure the partner.

Now the partner returns the rod, throwing with the left hand to the first person's right hand. (Notice that the rod is not thrown diagonally from the thrower's right to the receiver's right hand.)

Establish the understanding that it is the responsibility of the *thrower* to get the rod to land in the receiver's hand. Try to make it completely stress-free for the receiver.

Begin to develop a give-and-take with the rod toss. You are aiming to discover how to let the movement "breathe" between the partners, by using the image of drawing into the back-space before releasing the rod. The drawing back movement is similar to the moment in an orchestra before the first beat, when the conductor says ".....*aaaaand*.....throw!"

When you are comfortable with this exchange, then play with two rods. Each person holds a rod in the right hand, and both pull back together in preparation. Without words, both sense the exact moment of the release, and the rods sail to the partner in unison. Remember: right hands throw *to* left hands. Now return the rods, with left hands throwing to right hands. Play with a light and comfortable rod exchange.

This can be elaborated upon in many ways later one, by playing with different rhythmical patterns. We will begin with the most simple pattern, the "anapest" rhythm. This is a rhythm familiar to poets as the short-short-long rhythm. You will find it in a poem such as this:

**Brave and true
Will I be,
Each good deed
Sets me free.
Each kind word
Makes me strong,
I will fight
For the right,
I will con-
quer the wrong.**

Not that each line begins with two "short" syllables which are followed by one "long."

In the rod-tossing exercise, the short beat is practiced by tossing the rod from one hand to the other. Each person holds the rod upright in their right hand just before the shoulder, and then tosses it to the left hand. This short throw is as narrow as one's own body width.

The long beat is expressed by tossing the rod to the partner.

The two partners stand across from each other, with the rod in the right hand. They then each throw "right-left-across, left-right-across." This can be done to a drumbeat, or to the recitation of a poem. The exercise starts out slowly, and can build to quite a quick speed.

This is only one short example of how this exercise can be expanded upon in a rich and diverse eurythmy curriculum.

2. Addendum for working with Children

The rod tossing exercise is great fun for working with people of all ages.

It is first appropriate in the eurythmy curriculum in 5th grade, when the children study the ancient Greek culture. In that age, we teach the children the wisdom of all the classical rhythmic patterns, including the iambic, dactylic, trochaic, anapest, and about ten more! The rhythmic patterns were used in ancient times to induce certain states of soul and develop different powers.

In the Waldorf school curriculum, the children not only learn *about* these rhythms: they move them. They learn to dance them, to do eurythmy to them, to run and leap in rhythmic patterns, to recite rhythmic poetry. In the process, the exercises strengthen their own breathing systems, and harmonize their developing souls.

The rod tossing exercise is of course a great element in this curriculum. It is great for the teacher to do with the student, and it is great for the students to do together! If you can play a drum or a piece on the piano that has a nice short-short-long element, it can help harmonize the movement even further.

Hidden in the rod exercise are of course certain challenges, including eye-hand coordination, left-right coordination, rhythmic coordination. There is no need to dwell on them, but they are fun to work on.

I find that the rod-tossing exercise is a never-ending source of fun, play and cooperation.