

Waterfall Rod Exercise

Opening your backspace for Adults and Children

Part 1: for Adults

The Waterfall rod exercise is one of the most-loved exercises, as it gives you a chance to move your rod in a great full-body sweep and culminates in the challenge of catching the rod behind your back. To achieve this, you will stand tall and upright, experiencing yourself as a pillar of light connecting heaven and earth. This is the prerequisite experience for feeling the awakened I-am spirit consciousness in the body, and it is strengthened with this fourth exercise.

Standing tall, place your hands shoulder-width apart on your rod, and hold it in the “down” position, in front of your legs. Feel yourself grounded and weighted.

Keeping your arms stretched, lift your rod up and over your head in a beautiful arc, always feeling not only the rod, but also the space between yourself and the rod, thereby connecting with the space as you move through it. Be sure to stay grounded in your feet even as you bring the rod high into the light.

Do not stop with the rod above your head, but continue moving it around behind you, noticing as you do so how you enter a new dimension as the rod passes into the space you cannot see. Feel your “back space,” the space of miracles and archetypes. Let the path of the rod continue until you are holding the rod just behind your head.

Take an instant to prepare yourself and then drop and catch the rod. Do this by quickly lowering your hands as you drop the rod and placing them behind your legs, turning your palms so they face backwards. When you learn to be faster than the rod, your hands will be ready to catch the rod as it simply falls into them. Feel yourself grounded once again.

Bring the rod around the *left* side of your body to do this once again.

This exercise can be done without the aid of counting for your timing, but it is also possible to count. If you do so, you can count to twelve with each waterfall. The rod is in front of you for counts 1-6, is behind you on count 8, drops and is caught on 9 and 10, and brought to the front on 11 and 12.

Once you have become adept at dropping and catching the rod, you can practice walking with this exercise. Walk forward as you lift the rod and place it behind your head, drop and catch it in standing, and walk backwards as you bring the rod to the front of the body. This movement sequence is very elegant and satisfying.

It is possible to create other variations for catching the rod. For instance, some people like to actually rest the rod on the shoulders before dropping it, while others like to keep it a few inches behind the neck.

Others will challenge themselves by not lowering the rod behind them to their necks, but by dropping it from the very highest point of the arc. And still others will take it one step further, dropping it from the highest point of the arc, but then quickly stooping down into their knees to catch it behind themselves as far down and close to the floor as possible.

All these possibilities help you to awaken your sense of space in the dark and un-seeable space behind you.

You now have learned the first four primary rod exercises. Continue to work on them diligently for at least a month, and preferably longer. You will find yourself awakening to your body and your sense of yourself in space in simple but profound ways. Many people find that these exercises help them become more agile and graceful in all aspects of their lives, beyond the hour of their eurythmy practice.

2. Addendum for working with Children

Children love this exercise just as much as adults do! They will go through the same challenges as you will, and will feel such pride when they do it well. And when they drop the rod on the floor behind them, they will cringe! At least in your homeschooling group you won't have too many children dropping rods, which will keep the noise level down. I have met some adults who remembered having done the waterfall in school, and still have a slight horror at the memory of clanging rods hitting the floor as they learned this.

It is also wonderful to have several children do the waterfall together, and have them practice coming forwards and going backwards together. They can develop the feeling of making a fountain of water rising and falling over their heads, or a feeling of upwelling life reaching an apex and falling back to earth.

It is best to save the waterfall until your children are at least twelve years old-----even if yours are particularly athletic children who could toss and catch the rod at a younger age.

Why? This great exercise is not only about "catching the rod;" it is a journey for developing an awareness of the whole sphere of space that we stand in: above, below, right, left, front, back. Until the children is twelve, the eurythmy curriculum focuses on skills that teach them to move through space in a more natural, unconscious way. Now we want them to "awaken" to a new *experience* of the different directions and dynamics of space. We want them to move through space with *beauty, grace and style*.

As I have said in other essays, when children learn to do an exercise before they have reached the necessary developmental stage, their movements become flat, or automatic. They might be able to "toss off a few waterfalls," but they won't be able to reach the depth of focus if they have learned them at too young an age.

The Journal Box

Things to watch as your children learn the waterfall exercise.

Have they learned to catch the rod consistently each time?

What were their experiences along the way—did they drop it a lot, did they hit your wrists or elbows?

Were they able to make a beautiful rainbow arc all around themselves as they lifted the rod---or were they so focused on catching the rod that they forgot to enjoy the journey?

How did it feel to flow fluidly forward and backward with the movement?

Are they beginning to feel the grace of free eurythmical movement in space as they integrate all these capacities?