

GYMNASTICS FOR ALL

Worldwide Experiences: Volume 2



Marco A C Bortoleto, Petrina Hutchinson & Rogério Valério (editors)
FIG Gymnastics for All Committee



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Cataloging in Publication Data

G997 Gymnastics for all: worldwide experiences. Volume 2 / edited by Marco Antonio Coelho Bortoleto, Petrina Hutchinson & Rogério Valério. Lausanne, SW: FIG, 2025. 198pp.

Electronic resource

ISBN: 978-2-940714-11-7 (Digital version)

1. Gymnastics. 2. Gymnastics for all. 3. General gymnastics. I. Bortoleto, Marco Antonio Coelho (ed.). II. Hutchinson, Petrina (ed.). III. Valério, Rogério(ed.). IV. Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG).

796.4

796.41

Mrs. Dulce Inês Leocádio
CRB-8 4491
Professional Librarian



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Graphic design by João Solon

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Dear Reader,

One of the most beautiful things about sport is its power to bring people together, and Gymnastics for All captures that perfectly. It shows that gymnastics is not only the foundation of all sports, but also a joyful activity that anyone can enjoy, regardless of age, ability, or background.

Whether you are just starting out or staying active at 70, Gymnastics for All offers something for everyone. It is about celebrating movement, creativity, and above all, inclusivity. In this discipline, there are no limits - just shared passion and teamwork. Everyone contributes, everyone shines.

The magic truly comes to life during the World Gymnaestrada and World Gym for Life Challenge, exciting events where thousands unite through five essential Fs: fun, fitness, fundamentals, friendship, and forever. It's not a competition, it's a celebration, and the memories made there last a lifetime.

This is just a glimpse of what Gymnastics for All is about. Keep reading, and let yourself be inspired.

Morinari Watanabe
FIG President





INTRODUCTION

Following up the great experience with the vol. 1 of the Gymnastics For All “Worldwide experiences” it is now time to present the community with the volume 2 where more experiences can be shared.

Gymnastics For All being the gym sport that provides opportunities for everyone, with all level of abilities, at any age with no constraints regarding infrastructures or equipment, is the base for development of any national federation around the world.

Our philosophical principals provide us the guideline to have more people doing gymnastics in any country. Everyone loves to be engaged in an activity full of FUN that makes them happy and consequently enforces the development and maintenance of a proper level of FITNESS. The FUNDAMENTALS of gymnastics provide us with the core identity of our sport no matter where we are. And Gymnastics For All is very much unique with the opportunity of developing strong bonds of FRIENDSHIP that lasts FOREVER.

In many countries around the world, we have experienced many different and valuable activities in the national federations with different names. It is time to unite all these activities under Gymnastics For All. With this we would be able to include all gymnastics activities under the official gym sports recognized by the FIG and be a larger family.

Gymnastics For All is enormously rich for being able to incorporate the cultural diversity of all nations. Starting from a common gymnastics base, each project embraces their community cultural identity and enlarges the richness of our sport.

In the last years the committee has pushed forward many important ideas and discuss it with the national federations at the annual GfA Colloquium:

- GfA events can be used as a development tool;
- GfA events can be more environmentally friendly;
- GfA should be included in the Sport Universities basic curriculum;
- There is the opportunity to develop closer relationship with Sport Universities;
- GfA needs more scientific research that sustain and empowers our work;
- GfA has an important social impact in all levels in our society.

Guided by all these opportunities for a significant impact, we also have started an important step for global recognition and development by having FIG GfA events under the patronage of UNESCO, that recognizes our alignment with this UN agency goals and with their global project Fit For Life.

With this new volume the GfA Committee intend to provide a wider spectrum of experiences around the world that might inspire everyone and support your development.

I am sure many more projects and ideas will be available to include in a future edition. For now, let us all enjoy and be part of unique worldwide experiences!

Rogério Valério
FIG GfA C President



COMBINING CULTURE, ART AND GYMNASTICS

to create a World Gymnaestrada National Evening, from the beginning to post-event

Emiliana Polini

National evenings have always been one of the most anticipated moments of the World Gymnaestrada. They represent, in fact, the moment when each nation involved can express what is most characteristic of its nation and show, to the entire World Gymnaestrada people, its culture, its folklore, its art.

On the other hand, the more 'habitual' participants of this event, although well acquainted with the style of each national show, are ready to marvel every time and wait for something that triggers that 'WOW effect' that so characterises the performances of Gymnastics for All and, in particular, the national evenings.

THE CREATION OF THE SHOW



There are moments when we feel particularly inspired...

Moments in which we simply close our eyes to disconnect from reality and, thus, our mind starts to travel... It travels towards the creation of something, something that in our motor field becomes a choreography or, in other cases, a performance. In our specific case, it is the possibility of assembling gymnastic performances, combining various elements such as the

idea, the creativity, the actions, until drawing, as in the plot of a story, the different figurations of the members of the groups, harmonising everything with the music and giving life to an image, just as is done when assembling the pieces of a puzzle.

The creation of a performance is a study aimed at the realisation of a project, which aims to connect the various elements, also analysed separately, but ordered in a consequential succession to focus the spectator's attention on the fundamental points and to aim, as an end result, to be attractive to the participants and fascinate the audience.

Many times inspiration comes to life from a piece of music, or from a perfume, or even from an image or an episode that we passively witness but which connects us to something we have already experienced or that was inside us, hidden who knows where.

And then an image comes to life in our minds, an idea that then becomes something more: a story, a tale... until it becomes, precisely, a performance.



On the occasion of the creation of the 'Italian National Performance' for the edition of the 17th World Gymnaestrada in Amsterdam in 2023, the working group of the national staff of the Gymnastics for All section started from the desire to enhance the image of Italy in the world, not in an obvious way or as it had been done during the previous editions of the WG, but in a different way, in a way that would highlight what makes Italy famous all over the world. So what, if not Italian Art?

Thus was born the triggering question: *'Is it possible for Art to become Movement? Is it possible to animate the history of Italy?'*. Italy is a country of unique beauties, and the desire to bring them to life was the main idea and guiding thread for the realisation of the show in that 2023 edition.

Thus, the working group met online and a brainstorming session began, in which each member of the 'project group' presented his or her idea on how to realise the chosen theme, coming to the conclusion of representing the various arts: painting, sculpture, literature, music and so on.

In theory it was all very nice and perfectly in keeping with the original idea, but how to put it into practice while trying not to make it too obvious?

First the title was thought out: *'A Journey through Italian Art and Culture'*. There was a risk, however, of having a review, a sequence ... an obvious collage of flashes, even very well-known ones, of Italian artistic beauties.

https://www.fig-photos.com/images/world_gymnaestrada_amsterdam_ned_2023_national_evening_italy-23080426

We thus created the different parts of the show like a jigsaw puzzle, step by step, starting from the need to assign tasks (the pieces of the puzzle) to the various groups from different parts of Italy and from the desire to metaphorically accompany each spectator by the hand on this imaginary journey (... but not so much) through our beautiful Italy.

The moments epresented were:



THE ORIGINS: the birth of Rome



The «DIVINA COMMEDIA»: Inferno



THE THEATRE: 'Romeo and Juliet'

The DANCE



ARCHITECTURE

PAINTING

SCULPTURE



FASHION



The CULTURE of the TERRITORY



The FINALE

There, the different parts of the show had been created, each group had been assigned the task to perform, the art to be represented, but there was something missing...

Earlier I mentioned the inspiration that comes to life from listening to music. Well, that's what happened to me: in listening to a piece of music, the idea that was being worked on began to come to life. That idea, little by little, began to turn into images; they were, however, distant images, detached from each other, but they were there, in my mind, until, one night, it all materialised into a dream.

There, I saw it! Yes, it was before me, concrete, realisable. Before my eyes was the opening of the show: a group of tourists arriving in Italy and discovering the various works of art, which, one by one, came 'literally to life'.

That was the missing piece: the opening, an introduction to the whole show, something that would immediately catapult the spectators into the magical atmosphere of Italian art. This is how it was most fitting that the show should begin: with a journey!

It was thus decided to divide the show into 2 parts:

- An initial part to discover the artistic BEAUTY.
- A second part with the actual SHOW.

The first part featured the various artists and some of the most important works of Italian art that the tourists, who had arrived in Italy and were accompanied by a guide, would encounter:



A dancer



Dante Alighieri



Leonardo da Vinci with the Vitruvian Man, the Mona Lisa and The Last Supper



Michelangelo's David, the Pietà and the Creation



Botticelli's Venus

They would all be on stage, yes, but covered by a light cloth that only allowed a glimpse of something, just to attract the spectators' curiosity.

For this first part, the works of art to be impersonated were not entrusted to a single club, but each work/artist was 'assigned' to that club or that technician who we knew would be able to realise it as desired. Therefore, a storyboard was created to effectively plan and organise each moment of the piece of music with the presentation of the artwork, inserting annotations and descriptions to explain what was intended to be represented at that particular moment in the music.

The choice was a winning one because it immediately hit everyone in an emotional wave. With our choice the audience, who love to be involved, really felt part of the event and allowed themselves to be accompanied in the discovery of Italian art.

https://www.fig-photos.com/images/world_gymnaestrada_amsterdam_ned_2023_national_evening_italy-2308048

THE STEPS

After recounting how the idea was born and how it came to life, we analyse the various steps that marked the realisation of the show.

1. Identification of the different segments of the show.
2. Assignment of the various tasks to the participating groups, according to their preferences, ideas or representative capacity.
3. Monitoring the progress of the various choreographies by sending videos; in some cases, we asked them to change the music or modify or shorten some parts of the exercise.
4. Drawing up the set list on the basis of the choreographies performed.
5. Online meeting with the groups to show them the set list and details.
6. One-off dress rehearsal during the National Gymnaestrada in Rimini, early July 2023, where we assigned field seats, moved in and out, and where some fronts were also varied, as the room assigned to us in the WG had not just one front but three different sides with an audience.
7. Realisation of the performance on the same day as the dress rehearsal, as the National Gymnaestrada Gala, with official costumes and equipment.

Thus, the creation and assembly of the segments and the various parts were mainly carried out online.

SCHEDULE ITALIAN NATIONAL PERFORMANCE

N.	WHO	WHAT
1.	GINNASTICA ALBA TIZIANA (guide) with TOURISTS and ARTS: 1) Dance 2) Music 3) Dante Alighieri 4) Leonardo da Vinci + Vitruvian Man 5) The Mona Lisa 6) The Last Supper 7) Botticelli's Venus 8) Michelangelo's David 9) Michelangelo + The Pietà and The Creation	Introduction
2.	TIZIANA	She addresses the audience
3.	RAFFAELLO MOTTO	The birth of Rome
THE LITERATURE		
4.	TIZIANA (dressed in white among the gymnasts)	She introduces the Divine Comedy with some verses from Inferno.
5.	LA TROTTOLA	The Divine Comedy: the dark forest
6.	LIBERTAS IESI	The Divine Comedy: the entrance to Hell
7.	GINNASTICA F. PETRARCA	The Divine Comedy: The seven deadly sins
8.	TIZIANA (tour guide)	She addresses the audience
OPERA AND THEATRE		
9.	TIZIANA + IRENE (pianist) GIANCARLO e GIORGIA	Romeo and Juliet
10.	IKE	The Theatre: homage to 'La Scala' in Milan
11.	FUORI QUOTA	Opera in Venice: A. Vivaldi
12.	MA.MO.TI.	Carnival
13.	GINNASTICA ALBA + TIZIANA (tour guide)	Minuet
ARCHITECTURE		
14.	IRENE (pianist) + LA VERDIANA + KODOKAN	Royal Palace of Caserta
15.	NASTRO ROSSO	Palladio's architecture
16.	IRENE (pianist) + TYCHE	The Baroque

LOCAL CULTURE AND FOLKLORE		
17.	ARCI MARTINA + ALEGRIA	The Apulian territory
18.	TYCHE + ARCI MARTINA + ALEGRIA	Folklore: the Pizzica
19.	TIZIANA (speaking guide) with all ARTS	Funny moment
20.	GINNASTICA CAGLIARI	Colours and freedom
21.	MODELLI/E + FOTOGRAFO	Fashion catwalks
22.	LE MARIPOSE	Italian Fashion
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE		
23.	TIZIANA (speaking guide)	Introducing Painting and Sculpture
24.	FUORI QUOTA	Painting
25.	VIRTUS REGGIO	Painting in the round
26.	FUORI QUOTA	Quadri
27.	PETRARCA	Sculpture
28.	ALL	Finale "Alla salute"

Very important was the use of the screen. This allowed us to create a video that did not serve as a backdrop to the show, but was an integral part of it. In fact, the images or videos in it perfectly recalled and accompanied what was happening on the platform, because our technician made a single recording with video track and audio track (soundtrack of the show). It was a real enrichment of the entire show, it made it possible to support even more the performances as they were performed, complementing the practical work on the piste with cross-country images.

Clearly, as in all choreography and performance creations, additions and changes were necessary in the process, but these enhanced the final result:



- the inclusion of live music made the immersive effect real; some performances were, in fact, accompanied by live music alone;
- the inclusion of a narrative voice impersonated by the 'tour guide' made it possible to keep the audience's attention constant;
- Just as the entry of a 'family' of spectators (parents and children impersonating tourists accompanied by the guide) made the emotional participation of the audience itself 'popular';
- the insertion of a funny moment, halfway through the show, with the presence in the stands of the artists and the Art Works represented at the beginning of the show and engaged immediately afterwards in a very modern dance with unfailing sunglasses.

In the run-up to the event, brochures, flyers and promo videos were produced for the promotion of the show, which were disseminated on social media and distributed directly in Amsterdam.



Particularly original were specially produced facsimiles of tickets in different versions, so that they could also be collected.



While reading a book, I came across a sentence by an Italian journalist and writer who quoted 'Italy ... was born from culture and beauty. It was born from Dante and the great writers who came after him'. It was perfectly suited to our show, so it was used on the invitation handed out to the various heads of delegations, obviously made in the form of a painting. See pre-WG [promotional video](#)!



LEGACY

The live streaming gave the opportunity to reach and involve the remaining gymnastics fans (and others) in Italy. This literally impressed and excited everyone and gave the opportunity to let many more non-experts know what Gymnaestrada and, more generally, GfA really is.

The dissemination of the videos and photographs, the sharing of this experience by the participants with other gymnasts or with other technicians, the excited comments of the parents, happy that their children had been able to live an unforgettable experience, allowed the Gymnastics for All movement and the world of Gymnaestrada to infect many other technicians, gymnasts and families who, intrigued, approached the discipline. See the post-WG [promotional video](#).

In conclusion, the question arises: what has this journey into beauty and art left us as a legacy?

In addition to leaving us with the knowledge that Beauty and Art can become gymnastic movement, it has shown that when all the elements are in the right place, correctly linked to each other, when the emotions grab the audience's attention, just like in a good film, when the performance succeeds in moving them, through a tear of emotion, through suspense, surprise or jumping up to applaud, that empathetic exchange with the audience that makes a performance a spectacle has been achieved. If you link the journey, we invite you to watch this beautiful [performance](#).







CHAPTER 2

GYMNASTICS MOVEMENT PATTERNS (GMP'S)

A Brief History

Keith Russell

Anyone trying to understand (or write about) GYMNASTICS faces an immediate hurdle of deciding which of the many sports, and many activities of gymnastics they are trying to understand.

Under the governance of the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (**FIG**) there are four OLYMPIC SPORTS (Men's Artistic Gymnastics, Women's Artistic Gymnastics, Rhythmic Gymnastics and Trampoline Gymnastics) and an additional three non-Olympic sports (Acrobatic Gymnastics, Aerobic Gymnastics and Parkour). Added to this list are several other independent but closely related sports that have international participation (Team Gym, Aesthetic Group Gymnastics, Vaulting-Equestrian Gymnastics, Cheer, and several other acrobatic-dominated sports).



This above list of sports is, however, greatly superseded in participant numbers by the many **ACTIVITIES OF GYMNASTICS** (Preschool Gymnastics, Recreational Gymnastics, Educational Gymnastics, Display or Exhibition Gymnastics, Adapted or Para Gymnastics, etc.) These are collectively referred to as **Gymnastics for All** under FIG's nomenclature.

So how does one begin to understand or teach Gymnastics when there are so many different forms of it?

That was exactly the problem this author faced in 1973 when the Canadian Gymnastics Federation asked him to write Level 1 of a national coach education program. In those years most of the internationally published books on gymnastics were focused on one of two approaches. 1) **Apparatus focused**. What to teach in men's gymnastics or women's gymnastics or tumbling and vaulting or apparatus modified for school classes, etc. The other approach was 2) **Movement Family Focused** (kip or upstart family, swing family, somersault family, etc.). There was little published material that attempted to analyze all gymnastics forms into a logical taxonomy of movement. The French language authors Roland Carrasco (1974) and Phillippe Hostal (1978) were exceptions in that they advocated teaching 1) body movements and 2) limb movements.

Carrasco had ten categories of gymnastics movements that could be taught on various apparatus: Rotations forward and backward, Rotations about longitudinal axis, Rotation about the vertical axis of pommel horse, Combinations of Rotations, Spring from two limbs, Spring from alternate limbs, Raising hips overhead, Shoulder Flexion skills and Shoulder Extension skills.

Hostal had five categories that could be taught on various apparatus: Rotations forward, Rotations backward, Supports and raising hips overhead, Hangs, Rigid body activities.

There were also dance taxonomies such as [Rudolph Laban's](#) movement taxonomy that formed the basis for the British Movement Education approach to gymnastics in education: All human movement involves the Body, Space, Effort, Relationships and each of these aspects of human movement has several dimensions (Space has different levels, pathways, directions and Effort has different qualities such as light and forceful).

None of the published approaches appeared to encapsulate a taxonomy representing all the gymnastics sports and activities. This author, therefore, decided to analyze what patterns of movement were shared by all. This journey of discovery ended with the realization that biomechanics could provide the answer.

Firstly, it was observed that all gymnastics skills could be divided into either stationary skills (centre of mass stays inside base) or non-stationary skills (centre of mass moves outside base).

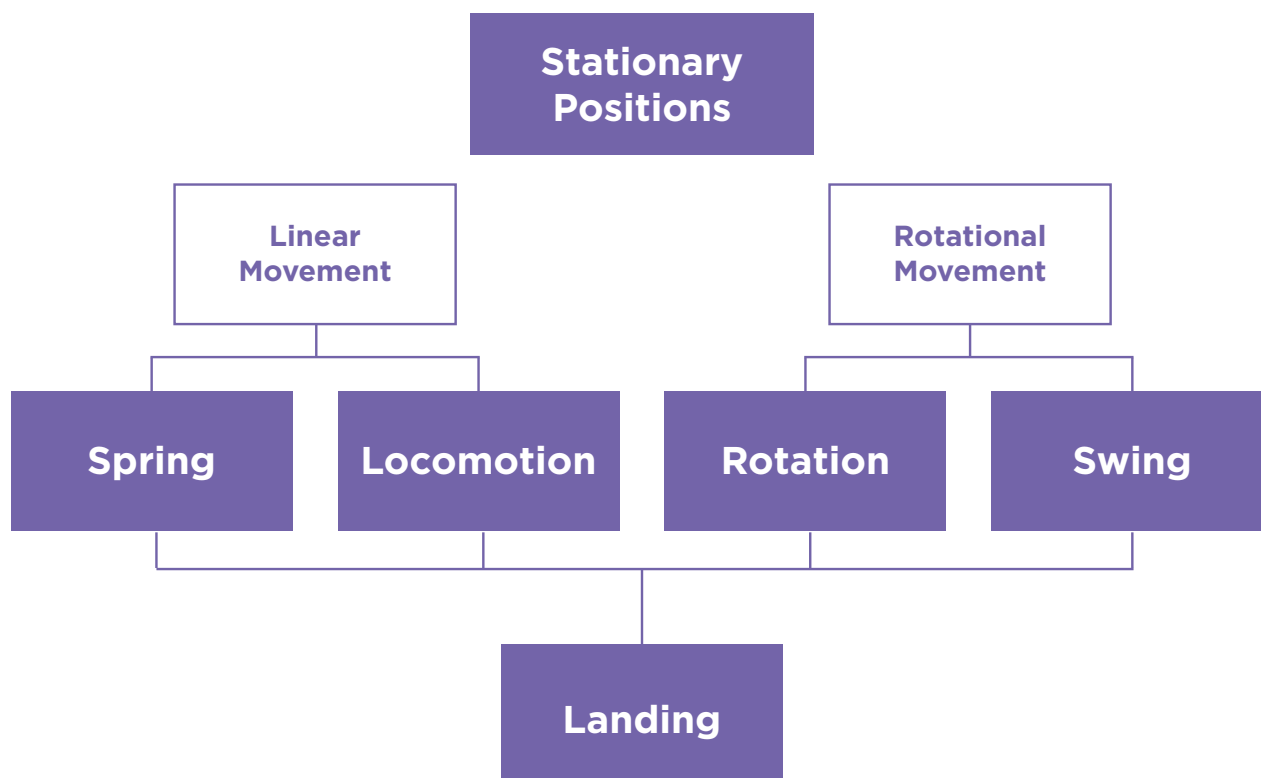
Secondly, all non-stationary gymnastics skills can be then divided into **linear movement** (force acts directly through CofM) or **rotational movement** (force acts off-centre).

ALL linear gymnastics skills are generated and modified the same way mechanically. For example, all take-off skills (jumps, leaps, hops, etc.) are linear and can be collectively called SPRINGS. It does not matter whether the gymnast springs from the legs or from the arms or from the back (trampoline). They are all mechanically the same. Likewise, if they SPRING repetitively, we can call that LOCOMOTION. The mechanics are the same as SPRING (linear force application) but are repeated.

SIMILARLY, ALL ROTATIONAL GYMNASTICS SKILLS are generated and modified the same way mechanically. It does not matter whether you are doing ROTATION about your internal body axes (transverse, longitudinal, anterior / posterior) or about an external axis (bars, rings = SWING). ROTATION and SWING are both rotational motion and are mechanically the same.

Finally, there remains only one type of mechanical-defined movement pattern to describe and then we can understand and logically categorize all gymnastics skills. This remaining pattern of movement is the transitioning from movement (linear or rotational) to stationary, and of course, these are all the LANDINGS.

It follows that we can understand ALL gymnastics sports and activities using this simple taxonomy.



This became the core taxonomy used in the Canadian Gymnastics Federation's Level 1 coach education manual published in 1974 (Foundations of Gymnastics) and was subsequently adopted by Australian, New Zealand, Portuguese and other Gymnastics Federations. In 2010 this taxonomy became the basis of the FIG Foundations Manual (used as the textbook for FIG Gymnastics for All Academy courses.)

In the original Canadian Level 1 textbook these patterns of movement were called the Dominant Movement Patterns of gymnastics (DMP's). This terminology is still used in several countries. Gymnastics Canada later changed DMP's to Fundamental Movement Patterns (FMP's), and FIG chose to use the terminology Gymnastics Movement Patterns (GMP's). All three names, DMP's, FMP's and GMP's are identical in content.

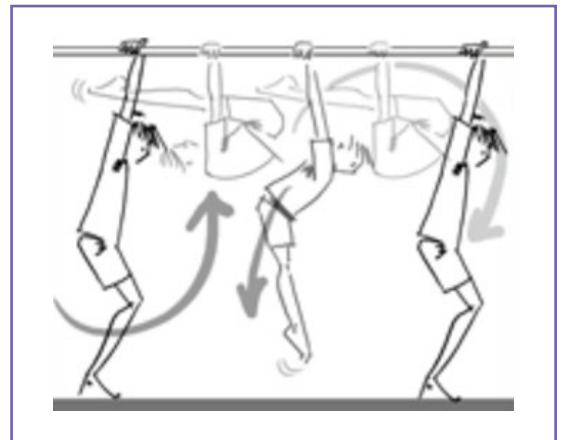
Originally Stationary Positions was termed STATICS but later changed to STATIONARY POSITIONS when this author realized that when gymnasts are stationary, they are not necessarily "static" (static = no movement, dynamic = movement). For example, a balance on one foot can involve many different dynamic limb movements so it is not "static", or a straddle L support can involve a press to handstand (the CofM stays inside base) so again it is not "static". Thus, the term Statics was corrected to STATIONARY POSITIONS.



Photos by Keith Russell and Hardy Fink.

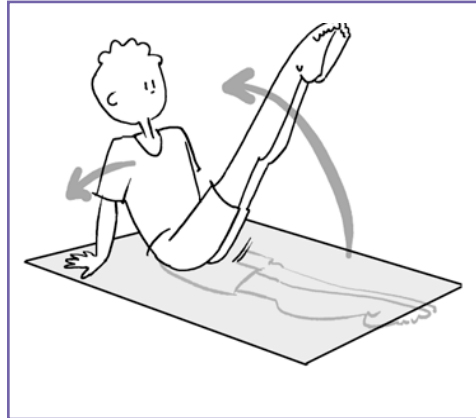
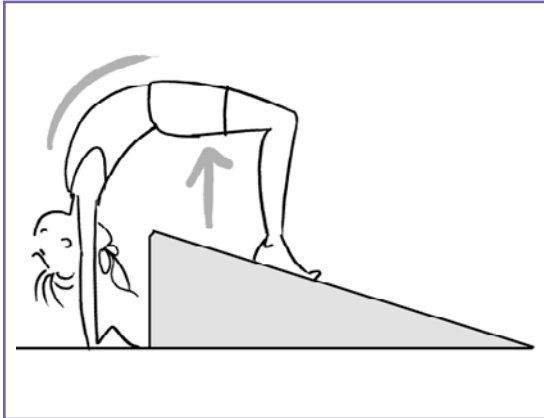
BENEFITS OF USING GMP TAXONOMY

The greatest benefit of a widely accepted taxonomy, such as Gymnastics Movement Patterns, is that it allows easy communication and understanding from beginner levels to elite levels. The same GMP can be trained at an educational or recreational or an elite level. For example, children are taught to ROTATE about their TRANSVERSE AXIS by rolling down slopes or turning upside down while hanging under a low horizontal bar or rolling forward from hip support to hang on a low bar.



The same transverse axis ROTATION is taught to beginner competitive gymnasts as they are taught to do somersaults and dive rolls and hip circles. And likewise for advanced gymnasts who are taught the same transverse axis ROTATION as they do double somersaults and free hip circles and fly aways. All these ROTATIONS about the transverse axis are mechanically identical. Their mechanical generation and modifications are the same.

A similar sequencing can be demonstrated for STATIONARY POSITIONS. Rec/Ed children can be exposed to games and fun activities that have them stopping in different supports or balances or hangs (the three subdivisions of STATIONARY POSITIONS).



Similarly, beginner competitive gymnasts would prepare more difficult **supports** (cross support on parallel bars) or **balances** (handstands) or **hangs** (piked inverted hangs). Elite competitors would, of course, be doing much more difficult **supports** (Maltese cross on floor) or **balances** (advanced acrobatic or rhythmic balances). Again, all these STATIONARY POSITIONS are governed by the very same mechanical principles no matter what level the gymnast.

Another benefit of this GMP taxonomy is that the most complex of gymnastics skills can be understood as being one, or a combination of, the six movement patterns. A twisting double somersault starts its life as a SPRING from the feet and progresses to ROTATION (transverse and longitudinal axes) and finishes its life as a LANDING. A complex vault is a LOCOMOTION (run is linear) and a SPRING (take-off from the legs) and a transverse axis ROTATION (pre-flight) and another SPRING (from the arms) and more ROTATIONS (after-flight) and finally a LANDING.

Perhaps the most beneficial use of the GMP taxonomy is to consider **Gymnastics Movement Patterns** (GMP's) as **Gymnastics Mechanical Principles** (GMP). The same principles of stability govern all STATIONARY POSITIONS regardless of the sport or level of difficulty. The same few mechanical principles explain all linear skills be they SPRINGS or LOCOMOTIONS and the mechanics of initiating ROTATION are the very same no matter which sport or how difficult the ROTATION skill or SWING skill. Finally, all LANDINGS are governed by the same two mechanical principles (attenuate LANDING impact **over time** and **body surface**). These are the same LANDING mechanics for preschoolers and Olympians.

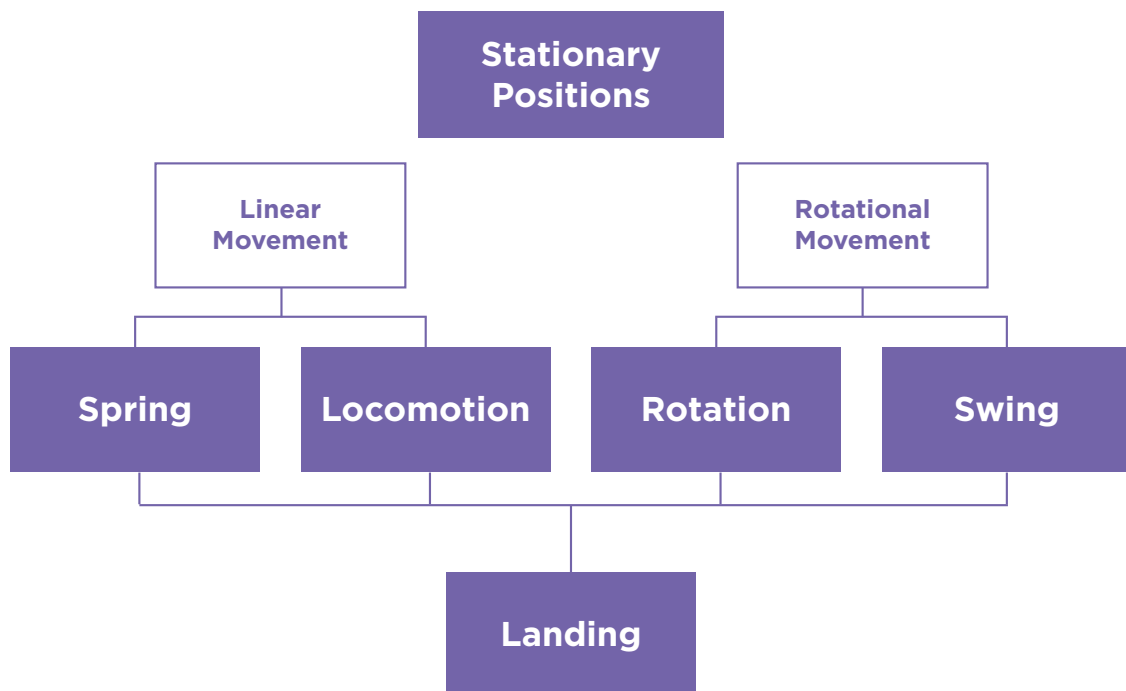
In conclusion to this introduction, all levels of all forms of gymnastics can utilize the same terminology and the same mechanical understanding and thus simplify and unify their teaching and coaching.

A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF GMP TAXONOMY

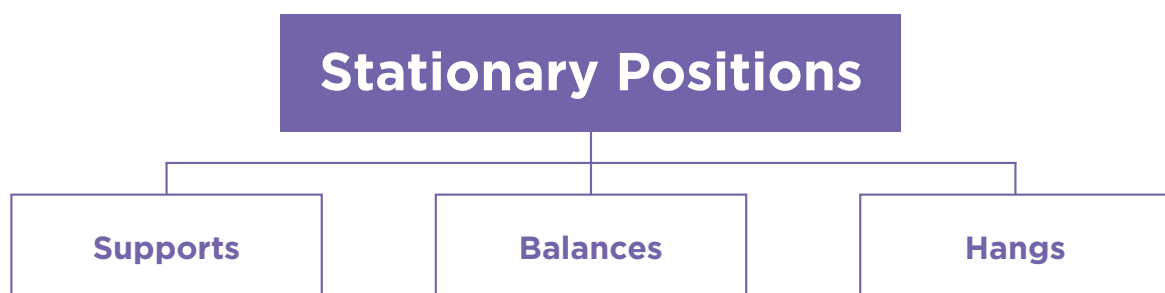
The remainder of this chapter will be a brief expansion on each movement pattern. A better understanding is available in the FIG Gym for All Foundations of Gymnastics Manual ([click here to know more](#)).



STATIONARY POSITIONS



When gymnasts' **centres of mass** do not move outside their **bases** - they are STATIONARY. There are three different mechanical subdivisions of STATIONARY POSITIONS: 1) when the gymnast is **stable** (their CofM is well inside their base) we call these **supports**, 2) when the gymnast is **unstable** (their CofM is on the edge of their base) we call these **balances**, 3) when gymnasts are most stable (their CofM is below their base) we call these **hangs**.



SPRING AND LOCOMOTIONS (LINEAR MOVEMENTS)

When a force is applied directly through a body's CofM, the body will be displaced linearly (without rotation).

SPRING					
From LEGS			From ARMS	From BODY	From Apparatus
1 Leg	2 Legs	Apparatus			
Leaps Artistic	2ft jump Artistic	board take off Artistic	Handspring Artistic	Front drop Trampoline	Throw clubs
Leaps Rhythmic	2ft jump Aerobic	Jumps Trampoline	Push up Aerobic	Back drop Trampoline	Throw, roll, spin hoop
Leaps Aerobic	2ft jump Rhythmic	Jumps Double Mini	BwD h.spring Tumbling	Throws Acrobatic	Throw, bounce ball

There are three mechanical principles that control all SPRINGS and LOCOMOTIONS (repetitive springs):

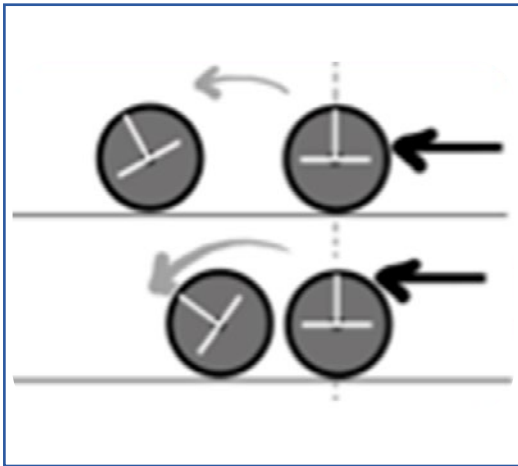
1. Increase the force (power) of contact limbs
2. Increase effective use of non-contact limbs
3. Keep a rigid body

The FIG GfA Foundations of Gymnastics course gives numerous physical and technical activities to enhance each of the three mechanical prerequisites.

ROTATIONS (ROTATION ABOUT THE BODY'S INTERNAL AXES)

When an applied force does not pass through the CofM of a body, that body will be displaced, and will have ROTATION.

The further off-centre the force, the greater will be the rotation.



ROTATION			
	Longitudinal Axis	A/P Axis	Transverse Axis
Free in Space	Twists	Side Saltos	Saltos
	Turns	Rotating Clubs	Tramp. Drops
In Contact	Pirouettes	Cartwheels	Rolls
	Pivots	Side Rolls	Bar Circles

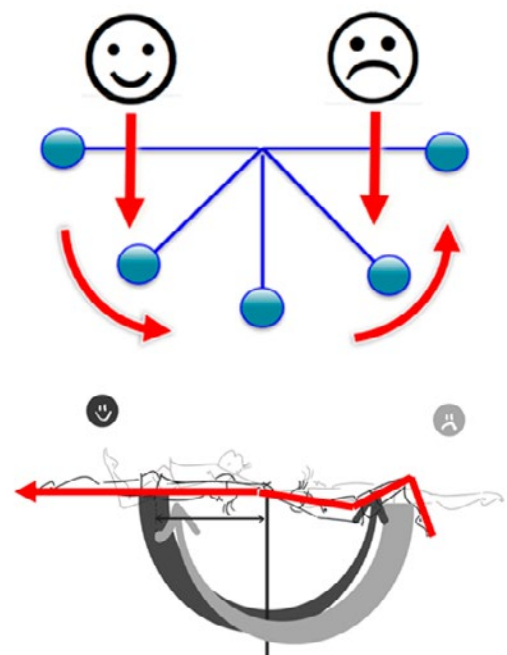
There are thousands of gymnastics ROTATIONS, but all are generated and modified by only a few mechanical principles

SWING (ROTATION ABOUT AN EXTERNAL AXIS)

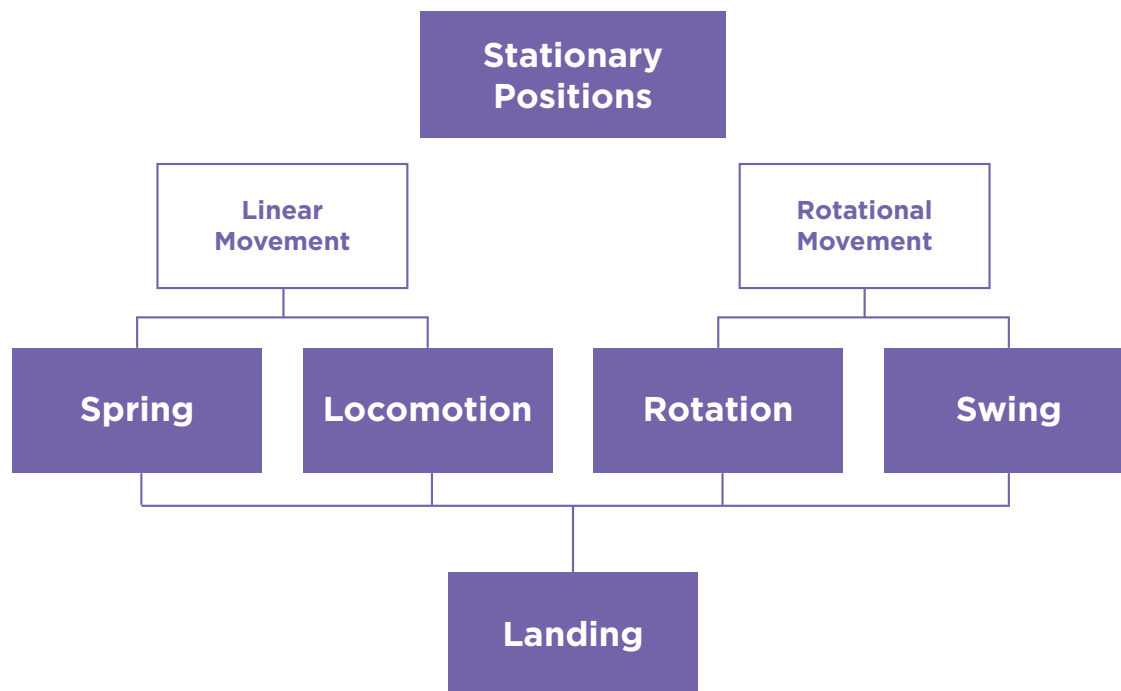
The same mechanical principles that govern ROTATIONS also govern SWING (apply forces off-centre).

In the case of SWING the force used to generate and modify swing is usually gravity.

- Gravity is working **for you** on **down** swings
- But Gravity is working **against you** on **up** swings
- You must **maximize** the effect of gravity's torque on **descent (down)**...
- And **minimize** effect of gravity on **ascent (up)**
- On **down** swings move the C of M **away** from the bar (**axis**) **as far as possible, for as long as possible**
- On **up** swing move the C of M **closer** to the bar (**axis**)



LANDINGS

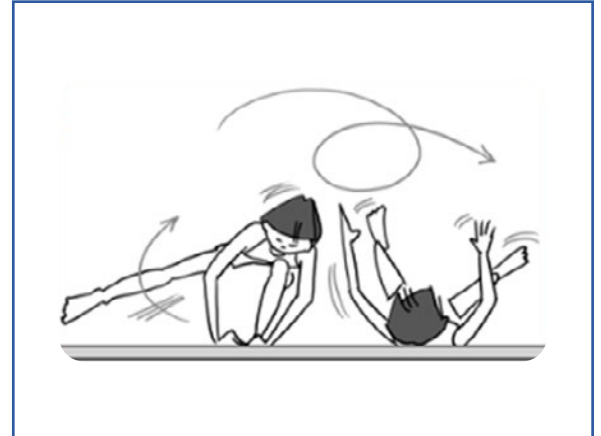
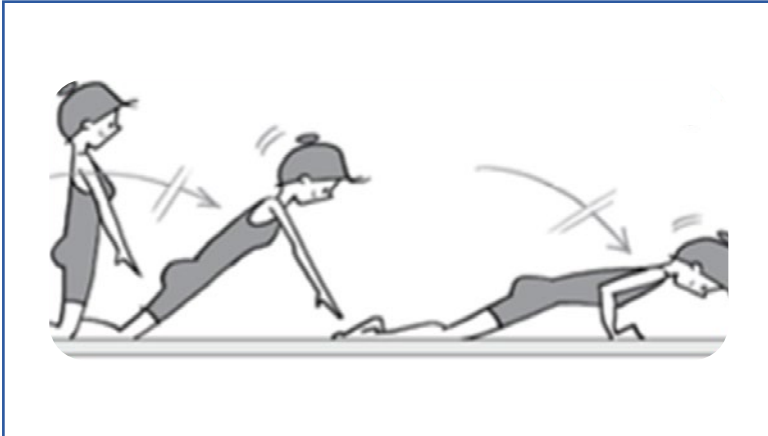


	on the FEET	on the HANDS	with SHOULDER ROLLS
Foward			
Backward			
Sideward			

Finally, the most common and most important of all the GMP's is LANDINGS, **but it is usually the least taught.**

Ideally coaches and teachers will understand and teach the two mechanical principles that govern ALL LANDINGS:

Decelerate using as much **time** and as much body surface as **possible**.



Ideally coaches of all gymnastics sports and activities will devote daily training to LANDINGS. Gymnasts never get injured in the air - they mostly get injured LANDING. Coaches should never have gymnasts go UP, until they have taught them how to safely come DOWN.

In summary, the Gymnastics Movement Pattern taxonomy is a convenient way to understand gymnastics in its entirety, and provides coach educators with a simple unifying conceptual framework.





GYMNASTICS FOR ALL IN ZIMBABWE

How GfA has worked together with Education to promote development

Chris Muchatuta

Zimbabwe is a country in Southern Africa with a land area of 390,760km² and a population of 16,300,000 at the last census. With our large land mass and small population, it means travel distances between schools and establishments cover large areas; with the onset of better technology we have been able to bridge this gap and bring gymnastics to all in the country.

[Zimbabwe](#) has been an independent state since 1980 and has two main traditional languages spoken by the majority of the population. Of this population, 12% are over the age of 65, and 39% are under the age of 18. This presents a very different situation compared to worldwide statistics and has created a need for a diverse approach to enable this growing population to develop and promote change in future generations. With this mindset, achieving our goals now will catapult our next generation into good, healthy habits and remove lifestyle disorders from our hospitals in the future. Given that the average education level of the population is 6 [IGCSE](#) or a minimum of 6 O levels, it became apparent that schools present our best opportunity for this change.

While gymnastics has been present in Southern Africa since 1927, it was primarily only Artistic Gymnastics and mainly focused on a minority of the population and elite schools. This meant that very few people had any interaction with the sport, creating an assumption that gymnastics was open only to the few rather than the masses. Through the 1960s to 1970s, a few of the Olympic disciplines started to gain traction in Southern Africa, but still primarily amongst the minority. Individual projects in various countries started but failed to convert gymnastics into a mass participation sport. Through the 1980s with various national partners, gymnastics was introduced to the military as a means of fitness and discipline; unfortunately this trend also fell away with the change in government and military structures. Once again, gymnastics was left to fend for itself, with little support and no access to the masses.



In 1986, the [Zimbabwean Gymnastics Federation](#) was fully recognised by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) and has maintained its membership to this association since. As the national federation grew, it consisted mainly of volunteer teachers and later on, coaches who were passionate about the sport. This ethos continues today, as the federation remains made-up of unpaid volunteers. Throughout the 1990s, with more information pouring in regarding the benefits of gymnastics, many private pre-schools and later Early Childhood Development (ECD) establishments introduced basic gymnastics for mobility and fitness. At this point, Gymnastics Zimbabwe began working on developing a new generation of gymnasts and had the opportunity to establish itself as a school sport; however it was still mainly for the more affluent members of society.

The beginning of the change began for Zimbabwe in 2013 when South Africa hosted the World Gym for Life Challenge in [Cape Town](#). At this event, both officials and gymnasts were able to attend and witness it first-hand at a low cost, due to its proximity in Africa which was accessible to us by bus. This allowed, for the first time, many teachers to see and experience a mass-gymnastics event.

Throughout 2010 to 2015, FIG and the GfA Committee made a concerted effort to assist in the development of Gymnastics for All through multiple courses and opportunities to engage with Gymnastics for All. This initiative saw Zimbabwe participate in the World Gym for Life Challenge in Africa, and for the first time, attend a World Gymneastrada in Finland in 2015 ([see performance](#)).

However, the main turning point for Gymnastics Zimbabwe was in 2017 when a team that travelled to Norway for the World Gym For Life Challenge won a gold medal, making this the first gold award achieved by a Zimbabwean group. This catapulted our federation's reputation and status and allowed the federation to approach the government for support for this worthwhile cause in a discipline that has low input costs and high returns for the community. During the remainder of 2017 gymnastics was added to the ECD and primary school curriculum as an optional subject.

By the beginning of 2018 Gymnastics Zimbabwe received the opportunity to instruct the teachers in the teacher training colleges as an additional subject, with most attendees coming from the physical education departments. This was the first foot-hold for GfA providing teachers in all provinces with firsthand information on gymnastics. With this step there was an increase in the formation of clubs and many schools attempting basic gymnastics. However, as an optional sport, it still faces many challenges to its further growth.



A few of these challenges are:

- Limited access to facilities such as gym halls and facilities;
- Financial constraints for purchasing of equipment both basic and specialised, with access to mats and crash mats being very limited;
- Expensive equipment can not be imported;
- Shifting curriculums and government programs;
- Inadequate follow up training and support for teachers, coaches and gymnasts;
- Cultural perceptions;
- Resistance from elite and competitive gymnastics and other sports;
- Fear of injury and misconceptions about gymnastics.

Further challenges to the early introduction of gymnastics for all schools to use within the school system centred around safety concerns from parents and school leaders who were either less informed or not involved in the 2018 projects. This really slowed down the introduction along with some of the following:

- Limited inclusion of gymnastics in physical education programs;
- Schools' lack of equipment;
- Lack of knowledge of the importance of school programs in developing interest from a young age;
- Safety concerns and risk of injury amongst parents and school leaders;
- Gymnastics can be perceived as a high-risk sport, which can deter participation. This was later dealt with by teaching the importance of safety education to reduce risks.



These concerns needed reforming and adjustment before gymnastics could become widespread. Further hampering its growth, were a myriad of social misconceptions that had been left over from the 1980s and 1990s.

CULTURE AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS GYMNASTICS AND GYMNASTICS FOR ALL

Culture plays a crucial part in shaping a society and establishing new norms; however, it can also have a negative impact on sport development. It has become crucial to overcome these cultural barriers that hold back our society. This, along with the general attitude of elitism, has pushed against GfA and created an environment where clubs struggle to grow. The absence of awards for performance is hard for people to grasp and creates a false belief of lack of difficulty, which is seen as a lack of commitment and responsibility towards GfA.



GENDER BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FOR GFA GROWTH

Many African cultures have specific gender norms that conflict with training, such as teachers enforcing that boys and girls cannot work together and certain moves are deemed inappropriate for various genders due to non-scientific beliefs. Additionally, societal struggles exist as older children are discouraged from participating in sport to instead look after siblings and family members or children from certain social standards are sent to work instead of engaging in sport. This means that anything learnt at school was immediately lost to workplace norms and standards.

Despite these challenges, we could see that gymnastics was an essential development tool for the country, offering many benefits. Some of these benefits were clear while others were more subtle. Therefore, Gymnastics for All plays an increasingly important role in promoting health, fitness, and well-being across Zimbabwe and Southern Africa, where lifestyle-related health issues are on the rise.

A few examples of these are:

- Combating lifestyle diseases;
- Physical health and development;
- Mental health benefits and focus;
- Building confidence and discipline;
- Youth engagement and development;
- Community building and social interaction;
- Promoting a culture of health and fitness;
- Economic and employment opportunities;
- Opportunities for talent development and representation.



Promoting gymnastics in Zimbabwe became an investment in the physical, mental, and social well-being of individuals and communities. By encouraging people to participate in this sport, the country can cultivate healthier, more engaged and empowered communities. This benefitted the population and the country's leaders as they could plan for a healthier, more active population in the future.

Opportunities to be gained from implementing Gymnastics for All were becoming apparent to all and we were able to highlight examples of this growth. This is intended to focus on the benefits of breaking out of social norms and societal situations, allowing for a socioeconomic position change.

A few examples of this from Zimbabwe are:

- A former gymnast from a PDI (Previously Disadvantaged Individual) background who now is employed by another NOC (National Olympic Committee).
- An [HIV/AIDS orphan](#) who used gymnastics to gain a training position at a prominent EU soccer club.
- The son of a homeless family who did gymnastics in a municipality hall, who now owns a gymnastics club and an adjoining community centre that supports him and his extended family.

THE JOURNEY TO INCLUSIVITY AND GROWTH IS A LONG ROAD WITH MANY TURNS THAT NEED TO BE NEGOTIATED BUT THESE CAN BE ACHIEVED BY GYMNASTICS FOR ALL.

Post-independence, we still have some hangovers from this time. These divides and barriers continue to hamper development of the population and the region at large, with sections of sport being deemed only appropriate for specific groups or sections of society. However, gymnastics through Gymnastics for All with its multi-faceted structure and its roots in inclusion and diversity, makes it a tool that can aid our current and future generations to achieve their full physical and mental potential. So, by utilising gymnastics and its varying benefits to help our young and older population make positive contributions to society and its growth.



Through testing, surveys, and questionnaires at various levels of education, it became apparent that the population had a general lack of gymnastics knowledge or literacy. Some results indicated that as high as 84% of those surveyed could not name a forward roll, while another showed that 77% of respondents could not identify the sport of gymnastics or Gymnastics for All.

This was the call to action that improvement was needed and highlighted the need for attention to be given to this area. This, in turn, led to the introduction of examinations on the basics of gymnastics and basic move names and later physical demonstrations to district heads, headteachers, and mass display competitions. With the increased focus on Gymnastics for All in the curriculum and focus at all levels of teaching in Zimbabwe, the aim is not just to raise gymnastics literacy of gymnastics and sport but to physically have the population participate with knowledge of the benefits of Gymnastics for All.

The reframing of GfA and its potential to assist the Ministry of Education marked our next step in growth. With mass displays/large group performances already being used in ECD, we needed to encourage the rest of the education sector to implement Gymnastics for All across all age groups.

Armed with knowledge of gymnastics' benefits and evidence of our population's lack of awareness and physical activity, Gymnastics Zimbabwe began advocating for the importance of gymnastics in the education sector. This effort began in 2012 when we changed the narrative. Gymnastics was seen as an elite, high-level sport; instead we spread the word that it is an **essential life skill**. Once this belief gained traction, we were able to lobby for its inclusion in the school curriculum, which we achieved in 2017. Acceptance from the universities and teacher training colleges followed, with partner programs and workshops from 2018 to 2020.

Amid COVID-19 lockdowns, examinations, return forms and Google Classrooms became the norm for monitoring children's activities. An unexpected positive outcome was a jump in gymnastics literacy. To avoid some of the remaining stigma, Gymnastics for All was named Mass Display for easy acceptance and understanding at all education department schools and ECD centres.

Milestones:

In 2021, the introduction of inter schools competitions (Mini Gym for Life Challenges).

In 2022, the introduction of inter provincial mass display festivals (Mini Gymnaestradas).

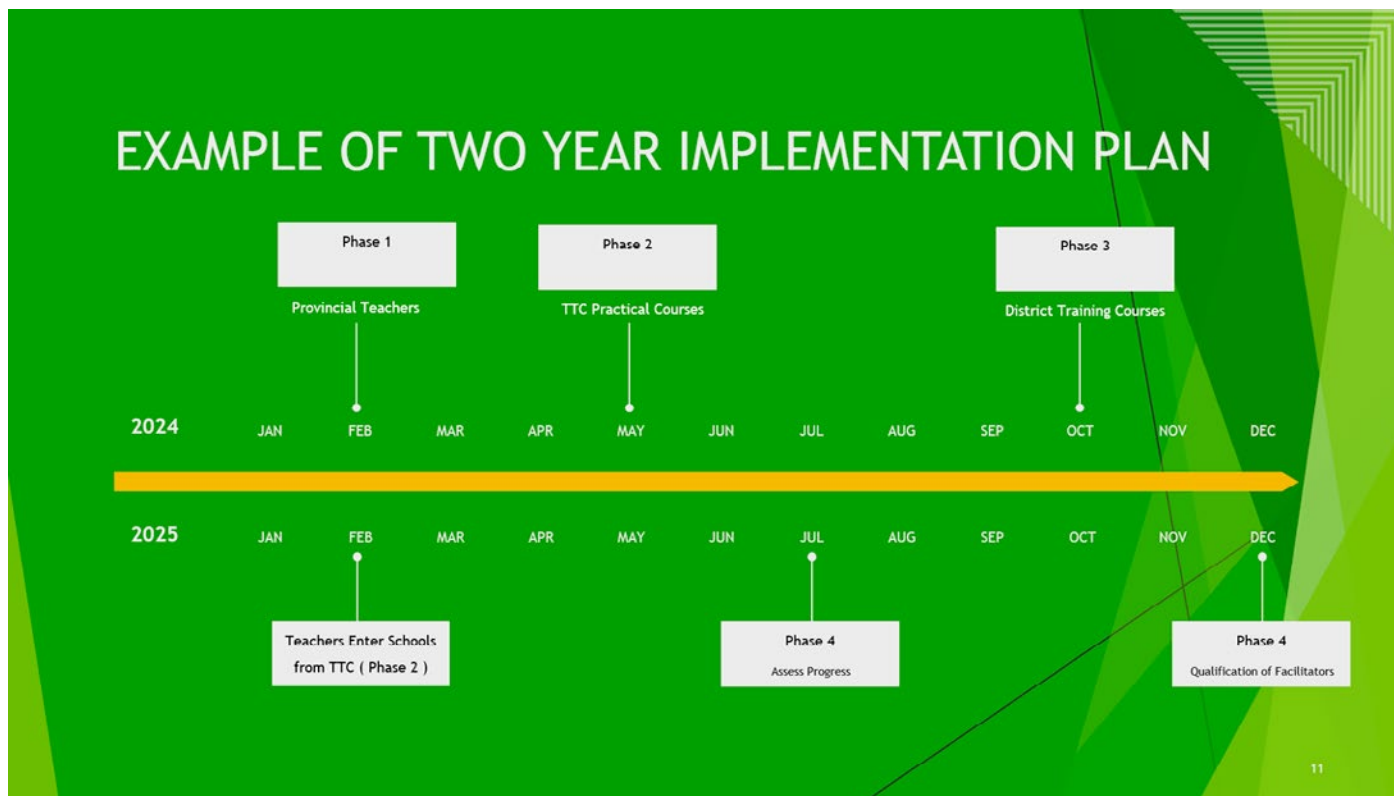
In 2023, the introduction of National mass display festivals.

In 2024, we obtained permission to access all schools and teacher training colleges. This allows us to train the current teachers' in the schools, aspiring teachers training and the first-year student teachers, ensuring they receive three years of education focussed on foundation skills and basic gymnastics.

This step, along with permission from the ministry, launched us forward allowing us to move into the implementation phase, the step we were eagerly awaiting to access all sections of the education system. The implementation progressed as follows across the next year:

- **Phase One** - 20 teachers from each province trained in one central location for the immediate implementation and downward spread of information.
- **Phase Two** - Throughout the year all teacher training colleges will receive an expert from Gymnastics Zimbabwe to present the ECD development program to them, with particular focus on the physical elements. This will ensure both long-term and immediate implementation of the program as they enter the school teaching environment.
- **Phase Three** - One member from each district will attend a session with Gymnastics Zimbabwe to receive practical instruction on the ECD development program. This can be completed either at HQ or provincial centres.
- **Phase Four** - Ministry personnel from each province and district who are identified to excel in the gymnastics teaching sphere, receive additional training from Gymnastics Zimbabwe to be the practical facilitators for all future courses at the provincial or district level.

With this implementation plan, we are set to be on a path to have the entire country learning the basics of GfA and the foundations of gymnastics by the end of 2025.



With the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Sport and the gymnastics federation working in unison, Gymnastics for All can reach every individual in the population. The cooperation of these groups is essential for the spread and success of Gymnastics for All programs. Community projects have far-reaching implications for those involved directly and indirectly.

MEDIUM TERM RESULTS

Our Current Results

- 9000 teachers in schools teaching Gymnastics for All;
- 900 districts working together to create groups and attend the National Gymnaestrada;
- 7.4 million children from ECD to A-level participating in Mass Display / GfA;
- Examinations at three stages of students' learning to ensure progress.



With this triple layered approach, we ensure that GfA continues to be implemented at all levels. With this we hope that the country will grow from strength to strength, both physically and mentally.

- Will GfA create world champion-level gymnasts or Olympians in gymnastics and other sports?
- MAYBE...
- It will create sufficient grassroots for elite gymnastics to grow in our country and region.
- It will enable children to enjoy all the advantages that come with doing gymnastics and utilise these in both life and other sports.
- It will guarantee that the next generation of parents, and therefore children, will have an appreciation of what gymnastics is, what you can do for gymnastics and what gymnastics can do for you.
- GYMNASTICS FOR ALL



The Dream

The Reality

- the sport that can help a community,
- the sport that can change a country.



THE CREATION OF "GYM FOR ALL" IN QATAR: A Journey of Growth and Success

Serge Van Poelvoorde

In 2001, a new chapter began in the world of gymnastics in Qatar, with the arrival of a project that would lay the foundation for a remarkable transformation in the country's sporting landscape.

The vision was clear: to develop a gymnastics culture that would cater to all levels, from beginners to elite athletes, while focusing on inclusivity and community participation. This vision would come to life through the establishment of the **Qatar Gymnastics Federation (QGF)**, which played a crucial role in the development of gymnastics in Qatar, especially leading up to the **Asian Games 2006**.



THE FOUNDING OF THE QATAR GYMNASTICS FEDERATION

The creation of the QGF marked a turning point in the country's gymnastics history. The federation was established with the goal of promoting firstly **Artistic Gymnastics, Rhythmic Gymnastics**, and **Trampoline**. Its mission was to provide a platform for gymnasts to excel and achieve success both domestically and internationally. The QGF was also instrumental in developing grassroots programs, ensuring that gymnastics was accessible to children and adults of all ages and abilities.

One of the federation's primary objectives was to introduce structured programs for beginners, allowing people from all walks of life to engage in gymnastic activities. This approach was in line with the growing global movement of "**Gymnastics for All**", an initiative that promotes gymnastics as a sport for everyone, regardless of age, gender, or skill level. In this context, recreational gymnastics programs were introduced, allowing individuals to experience the benefits of the sport in a non-competitive environment.



THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL MILESTONE: WORLD GYMNAESTRADA 2003



The first major international event that showcased the success of the Gym for All program was the World **Gymnaestrada 2003**, held in Lisbon - Portugal. Qatar participated with a group of 30 gymnasts who performed an impressive display of skills across all four disciplines: Artistic Gymnastics, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Trampoline, and General Gymnastics. This performance was a testament to the growth and development of gymnastics in Qatar, and it garnered great success, both in terms of public reception and praise from Qatari leaders. The Qatari delegation's performance stood out not only for its technical quality but also for the energy and passion the gymnasts brought to the stage.

The success of World Gymnaestrada 2003 was an important milestone, as it demonstrated the potential of Qatar's gymnastics program and the positive impact of offering gymnastic opportunities to a broad audience. The event helped solidify the QGF's commitment to continuing its mission of promoting gymnastics in all its forms, ensuring that the sport became a key part of Qatar's growing sporting identity.

BUILDING A GYMNASTICS CULTURE FOR THE FUTURE

In the years that followed, the Gym for All initiative continued to thrive. The QGF expanded its offerings, introducing new programs aimed at nurturing young talents and giving them the tools they needed to excel in competitive gymnastics. Through consistent efforts, Qatar became a rising force in the world of gymnastics, with its gymnasts increasingly achieving success at regional and international competitions.

Looking back, the creation of the **Qatar Gymnastics Federation** and its commitment to **Gymnastics for All** has played a pivotal role in the development of gymnastics in the country. The foundation laid in 2001 has evolved into a robust framework that continues to inspire the next generation of gymnasts. The program's success is not just measured by the medals won, but by the widespread participation and enthusiasm for gymnastics that now exists in Qatar.

The future of gymnastics in Qatar looks bright, with continued support for all levels of the sport, from recreational gymnastics to elite athletes. The GfA initiative remains a cornerstone of the QGF's philosophy, ensuring that gymnastics is accessible to everyone who wishes to be part of this dynamic and exciting sport.



CONTINUED SUCCESS AND GLOBAL PARTICIPATION: QATAR'S ONGOING COMMITMENT TO GYMNASTICS

Since its first participation in **World Gymnaestrada 2003**, the **Qatar Gymnastics Federation** has continued to embrace the spirit of **Gym for All** and has actively participated in every World Gymnaestrada event since. This commitment to global gymnastics events reflects Qatar's dedication to showcasing its growing gymnastics culture and its ability to engage with the international community.

Qatar's participation in subsequent World Gymnaestrada has been a significant part of the federation's journey. In **2007**, the country participated in the event held in **Dornbirn**, followed by the **2011 World Gymnaestrada** in Lausanne, **2015** in **Helsinki**, and **2019** again in **Dornbirn**. Most recently, in **2023**, Qatar was represented at the World Gymnaestrada in **Amsterdam**, continuing the legacy of involvement in these prestigious international gymnastics gatherings.



A CULTURAL EXCHANGE: SHARING QATARI HOSPITALITY

In addition to sending gymnasts to these events, Qatar Gymnastics Federation has consistently contributed to the international gymnastics community by setting up an **expo booth** at World Gymnaestrada. The booth serves as an opportunity to showcase not only Qatar's gymnastics achievements but also to share the rich culture and traditions of the Arab world. It has become a significant platform for cultural exchange, allowing visitors from around the world to experience Qatari hospitality, engage with the country's unique heritage, and learn about the sporting developments taking place in the region.

Through these expo booths, the Qatar Gymnastics Federation has fostered a greater understanding of Qatari culture, strengthening international relationships



and showcasing the country's commitment to both sports and cultural diplomacy. The booth has proven to be an excellent way to engage with other nations, as well as to promote the sport of gymnastics in Qatar, further highlighting the country's role as a key player in the global gymnastics community.

THE ROAD AHEAD: A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR GYMNASTICS IN QATAR

Looking ahead, the Qatar Gymnastics Federation remains dedicated to the continued growth and development of gymnastics at all levels. With the ongoing support of the country's leadership and the passion of its athletes, Qatar will continue to provide opportunities for both recreational and competitive gymnastics. The federation's ongoing participation in international events like World Gymnaestrada and its commitment to cultural exchange ensure that Qatar will remain an influential part of the gymnastics world.

The success of the **Gym for All** initiative, from its humble beginnings in 2001 to its global recognition today, is a testament to the power of sport to unite people, inspire youth, and promote cultural understanding. As Qatar looks forward to the future, it is clear that gymnastics will continue to play a pivotal role in the country's sporting and cultural identity.



OVERCOMING CHALLENGES: PROMOTING GENDER INTEGRATION IN GYMNASTICS

In the early days of the **Qatar Gymnastics Federation**, the concept of mixed-gender activities in sports was a challenge. Due to cultural and societal norms, boys and girls were trained separately in distinct spaces, which meant that the idea of joint training sessions or mixed-gender teams was not feasible at that time. This separation was largely reflective of the traditional values prevalent in the country, where male and female participation in certain activities was often structured separately.

However, a pivotal shift began as the federation became more involved in international events like **World Gymnaestrada**, where the spirit of inclusivity and diversity was central to the philosophy of gymnastics. The leadership of the Qatar Gymnastics Federation, understanding the importance of fostering unity through sport, began to push for an inclusive approach to gymnastics. The goal was clear: to create a space where boys and girls could not only train together but also represent Qatar as a unified team in global competitions.

With this vision in mind, the federation worked diligently to encourage mixed-gender participation in gymnastics activities. Over time, these efforts led to the creation of new gymnastics clubs and training programs where boys and girls trained together. This integration was not just about sharing the gym space; it was about breaking down the societal barriers that had once kept male and female athletes apart.

The success of this integration is evident today, as many of Qatar's gymnastics performances and shows now feature mixed-gender teams, with both male and female athletes working together to create performances that reflect the true spirit of gymnastics. The majority of the shows organized by the federation, whether for local events or international exhibitions, embrace this mix, demonstrating the federation's commitment to equality and unity through sport.

This change has not only impacted the way gymnastics is practiced but has also had a wider cultural influence, promoting a message of equality and inclusion. Through these mixed-gender activities, the Qatar Gymnastics Federation has played a crucial role in challenging traditional norms and helping to create a more progressive and open environment for young athletes of all backgrounds. The integration of boys and girls in gymnastics activities has helped nurture an atmosphere of mutual respect and teamwork, where athletes are united by their love for the sport rather than by gender.

Today, the participation of both male and female gymnasts working together in clubs and training environments represents a key achievement in the ongoing evolution of Qatar's gymnastics culture. It is a significant step in ensuring that gymnastics in Qatar is accessible to all, regardless of gender, and it reflects the broader goals of the Qatar Gymnastics Federation to develop the sport in a way that is both inclusive and progressive.



GYM FOR ALL: A CATALYST FOR INCLUSIVE GYMNASTICS

"Gym for All" is more than just a program—it is a powerful tool for promoting the practice of gymnastics in an inclusive and accessible way. Unlike traditional competitive gymnastics, which focuses on trophies and medals, "Gym for All" emphasizes a practice that is adapted to the needs and abilities of all participants, regardless of their physical capabilities or body types.

This approach fosters an environment where the goal is not just excellence in performance, but the development of personal qualities and life skills. Through this inclusive practice, individuals of all ages and abilities come together, united by their love for the sport and their desire to be part of a community. "Gym for All" encourages physical activity in a non-competitive setting, allowing participants to engage in gymnastics at their own pace while improving their strength, flexibility, coordination, and overall well-being.

Beyond the physical benefits, "Gym for All" has proven to be a catalyst for developing undeniable human qualities, such as perseverance, discipline, and self-confidence. It teaches participants the value of teamwork, cooperation, and mutual support, as they work together in a shared environment where everyone's abilities are respected and appreciated. This inclusive atmosphere creates lasting social bonds and strengthens the sense of community among participants, who often form strong friendships and connections that extend beyond the gymnasium.

By fostering these social connections and emphasizing personal growth over competition, "Gym for All" also helps break down social barriers, allowing individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences to unite through the shared experience of gymnastics. It promotes a sense of belonging and encourages individuals to embrace diversity, building a stronger, more cohesive society through sport.

In Qatar, the "Gym for All" initiative has played a vital role in making gymnastics accessible to a wide range of people, providing opportunities for those who may not have otherwise participated in the sport. Whether through community programs or school-based initiatives, the program has helped create an environment where gymnastics is no longer just for the elite, but for everyone who wants to experience the joy and benefits of the sport.

As the program continues to evolve, the Qatar Gymnastics Federation remains committed to expanding "Gym for All," ensuring that gymnastics is a sport where everyone, regardless of age, ability, or background, can find a place to thrive and develop.



GYMNASTICS FOR ALL: INSPIRING A LIFELONG EXPERIENCE

Fernanda Raffi Menegaldo & Marco Antonio Coelho Bortoleto

*“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.”
(Thought attributed to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus).*

USE AND PERCEPTION OF TIME IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE

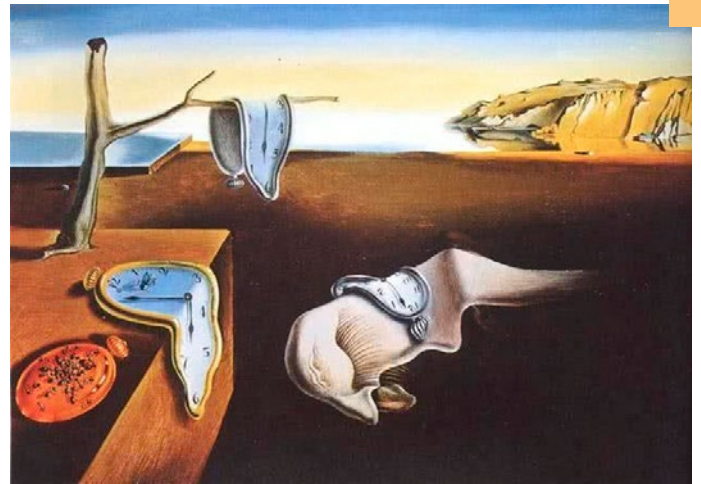
The experience of time, as an important dimension of life, is changing drastically. In fact, our perception of time is constantly shaped by the conditions imposed by the social contexts in which we live (Hall, 1980). Therefore, it is no surprise that many of us feel we are experiencing an acceleration in the pace of daily life activities, such as sleeping, working, studying, engaging in physical and sports activities and, perhaps most notably, in the way we relate to other people. This new experience of life has had a direct impact on our friendships and on the social skills required for group participation. One notable consequence of this process is the feeling of being constantly rushed, as if each day offered less time than the day before.

The clock, like other devices designed to help society make rational and balanced use of time, has become a tool for obsessive **regulation of human life**, often generating negative and exhausting effects. Smartwatch technology is a clear example of such time-controlling mechanisms and, consequently, people's lives. Likewise, social networks — through their intentional demand for rapid responses and constant connectivity — have come to exert significant control over a large segment of society. As a result, society has placed time-measurement systems at the forefront, continually refining how time is measured. Contemporary life responds directly to a standardized and institutionalized concept of time, which regulates social relations across a wide range of human contexts.

Even though we know that the perception of time — and its impact on our lives — can vary from person to person and across different cultures, for a large part of society, the strict **regulation of time** has come to control our behavior and our lives in the community. Smartphones, digital calendars, and other devices now play a central role in structuring our daily routines. Beyond the mere use of these tools, the deeper issue lies in the fact that this regulation of time often turns into an obsession — a consequence of a process inherent to the neoliberal rationality that now dominates contemporary society (Dardot & Laval, 2018). Within this context, even free time and the right to leisure are increasingly subjected to hyper-control, driven by the imperative of efficient time management. We live, thus, under constant time pressure feeling compelled to be productive in every single moment.

It is important to remember that clock time is quantitative in nature, rooted in the ancient Greek notion of Chronos (“the time of men”). It measures the duration, frequency, and sequence of activities typically carried out at school, university, work, home, in sports, and during leisure time. Chronos represents instrumental time. On the other hand, Kairos refers to a qualitative and subjective dimension of time, referring to “the right moment”, good opportunities, meanings, contexts, and purposes that arise within the flow of linear time (Chronos). Kairos, then, is associated with the special moments we experience in life. The way we experience these two dimensions of time — which are deeply interconnected (Smith, 1969), is crucial to enabling meaningful life experiences, rather than merely watching time slip through our fingers.

“The Persistence of Memory” is a work that explores how the human mind perceives time, memory, and reality through a dreamlike, distorted aesthetic characteristic of the surrealist style, which challenges traditional notions of rigid and precise time.

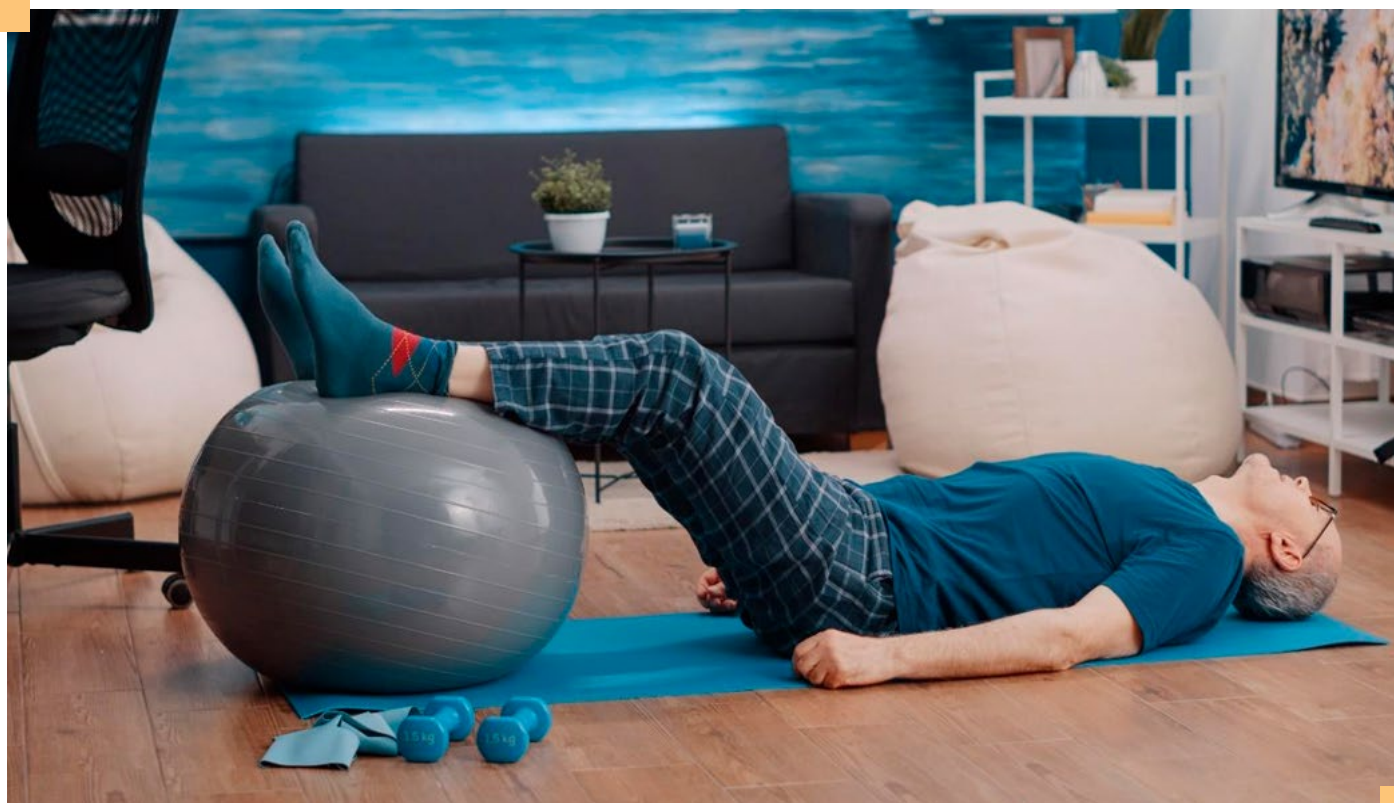


The Persistence of Memory, Salvador Dalí, 1931

So, in contemporary society, it is not uncommon for people to feel overwhelmed by the endless list of things to do in a short amount of time. Even more troubling is the sense that something must be done urgently, even when it may not actually be that urgent. In this sense, recognizing the exponential increase in the perception of time acceleration is a key point for understanding human behaviour and overall quality of life.

Regarding these feelings, Hartmut Rosa, a German sociologist who studies **social acceleration**, explains that the increasing pace across different dimensions of our lives has drastically transformed how we relate to others. The sense of “not having enough time” and the constant feeling that we always have something to do have become permanent features of daily life, even though we are surrounded by countless technologies that promise to ‘save time’. Similarly, **Zygmunt Bauman**, a Polish philosopher known for his studies on the **ephemerality** that shapes social relationships in modern society, highlights a strong tendency towards immediacy and explains how the overvaluation of consumption and the high intensity of individual experiences has contributed to the weakening of collective ones.

Building on previous findings, **Gilles Lipovetsky**, a French philosopher and sociologist, discusses what he calls hypermodernity, which is a way of life in which time is increasingly tied to pleasure and the pursuit of intense and immediate experiences. In relation to this, the phrase “carpe diem” reflects a society that constantly seeks a balance between the pressure to be productive and the desire to live life fully in the present moment. Everything is fleeting! According to Lipovetsky, this new way of living provides fertile ground for **hyper-individualism**.



The analyses above converge on an important observation: we are currently facing considerable difficulty in staying committed to a program, project, activity, or group over an extended period of time. One immediate consequence of this phenomenon is the short duration of human experiences in various social contexts, including physical activity and sports. Experiences have become brief, and people often lack the time to truly engage in the activity or to build connections with others involved.

There are many reasons behind people's difficulty in sustaining long-term commitment. Some people who, driven by goal achievement, lose interest once the initial objective has been quickly achieved. For others, permanence depends directly on gratification — whether through extrinsic motivation or instrumental reasons. Since recognition or rewards take time to arrive, they often give up quickly. All of these reasons are related to the acceleration of modern life, characterized by a *modus operandi* rooted in chronos time and clearly aligned with neoliberal logic. As a result, there is increasing difficulty in building long-term relationships, not only with activities but also with people who are part of it ([Hasenöhl et al., 2024](#)). However, we know that strong, lasting relationships take time to develop, which is why the social logic of “there is no time to lose” has hindered the strengthening of the social dimension of community life. As Zygmunt Bauman best summarizes, we live in liquid times, where nothing is built to last — not even our relationships with others.

This is the basis for the central issue addressed in this chapter: solid and prolonged human relationships that significantly contribute to quality of life require consistency, commitment, and long-term engagement. Therefore, as scientifically demonstrated, sports practices such as Gymnastics for All (GfA) require long-term participation to enjoy their benefits, including physical and mental health, as well as social well-being ([Menegaldo & Bortoleto, 2020](#)).



The GfA practice is valuable in itself. However, staying committed to a program and/or group for a long time makes the experience transformative, promoting a profound and positive impact on life!

The transformations in contemporary life have been driven, among other factors, by a radical technological revolution that has brought enormous benefits to human life, but also challenges such as a sedentary lifestyle, nutrition based on ultra-processed foods, and excessive connection to digital devices. These issues have led to a greater focus on health, well-being, and quality of life. As an immediate response to this situation, we noticed an increase in narratives about the importance of physical activity for maintaining physical, psychological, emotional and social health ([WHO, 2025](#)). Indeed, contemporary society is intensifying its efforts to promote the benefits of physical activity and sports programs, such as UNESCO's *Fit for Life* program. Consequently, regular participation in physical activity and sports programs across all age groups has become a societal desire and a significant component of both public and private governance policies, supported by substantial scientific evidence.

In this sense, different studies suggest that physical activity and sport can serve as powerful catalysts for individual and social development ([Iulian-Doru, Vasilica & Maria, 2013](#)), even helping to combat a growing epidemic of mental health issues. However, the pressures to optimize time, maximize performance, and achieve quick results have also invaded the context of sports programs, becoming **major challenges for maintaining participants in the most diverse activities**. As a result, there is a strong tendency for early dropout, leading to an incomplete experience of what such practices truly offer. These aspects help us understand the difficulty in fostering **lifelong participation** in sport, a barrier that may prevent most participants from fully accessing its benefits, such as improved health markers (weight, body fat percentage, cardiorespiratory fitness), aesthetic changes in the body, and, most importantly, the development of social and emotional bonds.

WHAT EFFECTS DOES THIS NEW EXPERIENCE OF (ACCELERATED) TIME HAVE ON THE GfA PRACTICE?

We assume that the regular practice of GfA can help minimize the challenges discussed above ([Wichmann, Menegaldo & Bortoleto, 2023](#)). Our argument is based on the premise that GfA offers a differentiated experience of time, one that runs counter to contemporary trends, especially those that dominate competitive sport. Its non-competitive nature, free from rigid rules and strict gestural codes, opens participation to all, **making inclusive gymnastics practice a tangible reality**. This is easily observed in the performances presented at gymnastics festivals ([Patrício & Carbinatto, 2023](#)). GfA, seen in this way, can be an experience of “**slow living**”.

The heterogeneity of participants in GfA groups and events reflects a diversity that is essential for having a different life experience. The possibility of bringing together people with varied backgrounds is, in itself, a **disruptive feature of GfA** in the face of a productivist culture that values results rather than the process. GfA has the potential to reduce the pressure imposed by beauty standards and age segregation — factors that widely affect contemporary society across a range of social spheres and further intensify the challenges brought on by life’s accelerating pace. This is why we argue that long-term participation in GfA — especially when it fosters **intergenerational groups** — can offer a new experience of time and, consequently, a different way of seeing life in society.

Although GfA is a practice with a long history, it is also an innovative one, closely linked to “a lifetime” of involvement (Schiavon, Toledo & Ayoub, 2017). It’s not surprising, then, that research on **gymnastics festivals**, such as the World Gymnaestrada, has clearly shown that there are participants who remain engaged in GfA for decades (Bortoleto et al., 2019; Bortoleto et al., 2023). Additionally, participation in these events has been identified as a key motivational factor for participants to continue their involvement in the activity (Patrício et al., 2025; Oliveira, 2023; Menegaldo, 2022; Patrício, 2021; Wichmann, 2014).

Recent studies on the **social dimension of GfA** (Patrício et al., 2025; Menegaldo, 2022; Oliveira, 2023; Wichmann, 2014) show a different experience of time that emphasizes the importance of the process (e.g. socializing with group members), rather than an obsession with the product (choreography, medals, awards). In addition, the quality of interpersonal relationships among group members is directly related to how long they stay in their GfA groups (Menegaldo, 2022). The importance of social affiliation and a sense of belonging are fundamental aspects for GfA participants, allowing us to say that this activity transcends some of the weaknesses of contemporary social logic, such as time pressure, the strong advance of individualism, and the weakening of community life (Wichmann, Menegaldo & Bortoleto, 2023). Friendships, social recognition and social skills developed during the GfA experience encourage people to remain engaged in this context for an extended time (Bortoleto et al., 2019; Bortoleto et al., 2023; Menegaldo, 2022).

Our GfA group has been together for a long time, we have a very strong bond with each other. It helps that the people who have been with us for less time have the impression that they are already part of the group for life. This dynamic helps us keep the group together. I think we also manage to bring in new members very well, because we understand that everyone is important. Our socio-affective relationship is very strong, we feel like a family, our gymnastics family.

Group leader when asked about the reasons why members continue practicing GfA (Menegaldo, 2022).

FOR A LIFELONG EXPERIENCE IN GfA

For decades, the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) based the development of GfA on four general principles, named the “4Fs”: FUN, FITNESS, FUNDAMENTALS, and FRIENDSHIP. The desire to promote long-term participation in GfA led the GfA Committee to suggest a change in the “Gymnastics for All Manual”, officially including the notion of **lifelong involvement**. The fifth “F” — FOREVER — was approved by the FIG Executive Committee at the beginning of 2023.

This change underscores the value of maintaining long-term practice and recognizes an aspect that had already become a reality for many GfA groups. The notion of FOREVER goes beyond simply “practicing forever”, bringing forward concepts such as LIFELONG PARTICIPATION, LIFELONG EXPERIENCE, and LIFELONG LEARNING. This fifth principle works like an amalgam of the other Fs, as it shows that gymnastics can accompany individuals through all stages of life.

FOREVER, therefore, is achieved when all the Fs are integrated and inseparable. In this way, it allows participants to experience each of the other Fs more deeply. Achieving **FITNESS**, for example, requires time for continuous and well-planned practice. Learning new skills (**FUNDAMENTALS**), such as a handstand, also demands respecting the time needed for the process — not to mention that the diversity found in many GfA groups may also call for an approach that respects each individual’s pace. **FUN** plays an essential role in creating an enjoyable practice environment, which enhances motivation and, over time, opens space for building confidence and **FRIENDSHIP**. Thus, **FOREVER** becomes a key element in enabling a deep and meaningful GfA experience.

We value what each person can offer. Those who know how to do something do it and teach others. Those who have difficulty learning need to feel comfortable and have more time to learn. Those who have done gymnastics before, teach others and can also learn other skills, as they often no longer feel confident performing certain skills.

GfA group leader asked about teaching gymnastics skills (Menegaldo, 2022).



GfA is not merely a promise of a lifelong sports participation; it already offers many examples of it. When we take a closer look at GfA festivals, we see children and adolescents beginning their practice to learn new skills and enrich their movement repertoire; we see young people seeking to challenge their bodies through gymnastics skills and to spend time with friends; we see adults interested in traveling and maintaining a healthy lifestyle; and finally, we see seniors with the same enthusiasm, sometimes gathering a bit of all the motivations they had in earlier stages of life. Whatever the reason that brings someone to GfA, it is essential to cultivate the possibility of **always learning something new and enjoying these moments**. Considering the different motivations, we must understand that the practice should be shaped to fit the different stages of life, adjusted to its participants, and aimed at fulfilling a shared purpose within the group.

Yes, GfA is already practiced by many people throughout their entire lives, and it is up to all of us to work toward expanding these examples. The length of this journey will vary from person to person, and it will be longer when people are able to find the right conditions to stay connected and committed to a group — through participation in festivals and the strengthening of interpersonal bonds, for example. By doing so, GfA emerges as a model to be followed, inspiring new ways of thinking about the future of sports practice.



The arguments presented in this chapter explore a paradox that shapes contemporary life, including the GfA practice, by highlighting the complex relationship between sports activities and time. We emphasize that human relationships require time to become strong and meaningful. But here is the key insight: it is not only the amount of time that ensures positive relationships and deepens connections — the quality of the experiences lived and shared over time is what shapes our existence. We are, therefore, living a contradiction: a contemporary life that tends to overvalue the quantity and intensity of experiences, often making it harder to build genuine social connections. In this context, GfA can be seen as a practice that unfolds within Chronos — through long-term participation, sometimes lasting decades — while also offering qualitative experiences (Kairos): memorable, profound, and powerful moments that enhance the overall quality of life.

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HOW RESEARCH HAS SHAPED THE DEVELOPMENT OF GFA IN IRELAND, WHAT WE LEARNED, AND WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS

Aimi Baker & Angela Griffin

Gymnastics presents a **unique and powerful opportunity** to support girls to develop a strong love of sport and other physical activity at a young age and Gymnastics Ireland is committed to developing and delivering **positive experiences and opportunities** for all involved in gymnastics, including our teenage girls.

As Gymnastics Ireland embarks on a fresh cycle 2025-2028, we are delighted to share the insights and finding from our research so other international gymnastics federations, and gymnasts, can benefit from the findings and contribute to everyone's goal of supporting lifelong participation in Gymnastics for All.

In a recent article [Gymnastics for All: Developing the discipline in 2025-28](#), Rogerio Valerio, president of the FIG GfA Committee, discusses how the committee are keen to promote more scientific research into GfA, on the impact of lifelong participation in gymnastics. And we couldn't agree more!



“Gymnastics for All is for all ages. We all know and can see in our community that it provides a better quality of life, but we need to say it with facts and with scientific research that supports this clearly.”

- Rogerio Valerio, President of the FIG GfA Committee.

The goal of research is to produce new knowledge and a deeper understanding of a topic or issue that is important to you. It's an exploration of the key questions of [Who, Why, Where, When and What!](#)

We want to share our research insights, findings and recommendations with everyone so that other federations, coaches and gymnasts can benefit. Throughout this article you will find links to our research, resources that supported our research or actions from our research, and the organisations we partnered with before, during and after this project.

WHY DID WE COMMISSION THE RESEARCH?



It is well documented worldwide that there is a serious issue with the decrease in the number of teenage girls taking part in sport and physical activity. In Ireland, the drop-out rate for teenage girls participating in sports continues to be of **"significant concern"**. There are two research reports from Sport Ireland that play a significant role in our research.

The Irish Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study 2018, ([CSPPA 2018](#)), suggests that very few girls are meeting the Republic of Ireland's National Physical Activity Guidelines for children of at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day, and the vast majority of girls are missing out on the lifelong physical, mental and wellbeing benefits that an active lifestyle provides, and this has to change. It is worth mentioning, that at the time of our research CSPPA 2018, was the most recent report available. Since the publication of our research, CSPPA 2022 was released, and both reports are listed below.

In 2020-2021, Sport Ireland commissioned [Women in Sport \(UK\)](#), to carry out research to explore girls' relationships with sport and physical activity in Ireland. Resulting in the publication of the Adolescent Girls Get Active Research Report, the findings of which were the catalyst for our research and the development of GfA in Ireland.

According to the Adolescent [Girls Get Active Research Report](#) **"By the age of 13-15 many girls have labelled themselves "not sporty" and are living by this label, with few attempts to counter it"**. In Ireland and around the world, gymnastics is a popular activity for girls, as it is one of the few sports that attracts more female participation than males.

In Ireland, participation has increased substantially in recent years, with member clubs over-subscribed with long waiting lists. So, if there is a high drop out rate of girls in sport overall, and as a predominantly female sport, **how do we, Gymnastics Ireland, ensure lifelong engagement in our sport?**

- (1) <https://www.sportireland.ie/>
- (4) <https://www.sportireland.ie/research/csppa-2018>
- (5) <https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2023-08/CSPPA%202022%20Full%20Report.pdf>
- (6) <https://womeninsport.org/>
- (7) <https://www.sportireland.ie/women-in-sport/news/AGGA>
- (8) <https://www.sportireland.ie/Women-in-Sport>

The teenage years in particular are a challenging life-stage to engage and retain girls in sport but a critical one that we must get right, as this is when long-term attitudes, habits and behaviours are formed to being active.

To make any meaningful and relevant changes, we need to understand what girls value in their wider lives, as well as what motivates them and what the challenges are that they are facing.



WHO WAS INVOLVED?

In 2022, thanks to a funding investment from the, Gymnastics Ireland engaged in the largest member-based piece of research to date – **“The Gymnast’s Voice - Harnessing Opportunities to retain teenage girls in gymnastics”** with the voice of our teenage gymnasts from all around the country at the heart of the initiative.

Women in Sport (UK) (6), was commissioned by Gymnastics Ireland to carry out the research with our clubs.

A mixed-method, iterative methodology was used to explore girls’ experiences of gymnastics and included the perspective of coaches and parents as key influencers in their gymnastics journey. We engaged with over 450 girls aged between the ages of 10-18 years from a variety of gymnastics disciplines and abilities, representing 34 clubs across the Republic of Ireland. The research was conducted between March and September 2022.



Because women & girls belong

We wanted to explore teenage girls’ experiences of gymnastics to help both **RETAIN** and **RECRUIT** teenage girls.

RETAIN

Deeply understand why girls drop out of gymnastics during their teenage years and seek solutions as to how Gymnastics Ireland can engage and retain them for longer

OPTIMISE & EXPAND

Evaluate existing participation programmes and innovate potential new initiatives that could appeal to a broader teenage audience, whilst also retaining those currently engaged.

The report clearly outlines what drives teenage girls’ engagement and enjoyment in gymnastics and highlights areas that can be developed to enhance progression and create more moments of pride for all gymnasts and to build an inclusive, and positive body image culture in our member clubs and the sport of gymnastics in Ireland to extend girls’ gymnastics journey beyond the teenage years, and solidify the foundation of their life long journey in the sport of gymnastics.

WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

Two key questions were asked as part of the research to try and drill down to what we needed to do to engage more effectively with teenage girls.



- What motivates and drives teenage girls' enjoyment in gymnastics?
- What are the challenges to retaining teenage girls in gymnastics and potential solutions?

The answers to these questions have (and will) underpin the development of GfA in Ireland, particularly in relation to teenage girls.

WHAT MOTIVATES AND DRIVES



TEENAGE GIRLS' ENJOYMENT IN GYMNASTICS?

Learning new skills and techniques is by far the most enjoyable aspect of being a gymnast for girls. Discovering the possibilities of their ability gives girls a strong sense of fun, freedom and expression that they often don't get the opportunity to experience elsewhere in their lives. As such, they gain a great deal of confidence, pride and accomplishment from mastering new skills.

Quote: "Not only do I get to learn new skills, challenge myself, improve my strength and flexibility, I also get to do all of that with my friends." (COMPETITIVE GYMNAST, 15)

Girl's need and value a strong support network in their lives, and trusted relationships with others give girls a sense of place and identity within the wider world. During adolescence, **friends** are especially important to girls' development, as they strive to become more independent from family and discover their own identities with peers.

Quote: "I have realised some of my closest friends are in gymnastics and I have learnt to overcome fears and struggles I used to have when I was younger." (COMPETITIVE GYMNAST, 15)

Moments of pride fuel girls' confidence and self-worth – all girls need to feel a sense of pride and achievement along their gymnastics journey. In the teenage years, girls' confidence can suffer for a variety of reasons. Moments of pride, no matter how big or small, provide emotional feedback that builds a girl's self-esteem.



IDEAS

WHAT ARE GIRLS' MOMENTS OF PRIDE IN GYMNASTICS THAT NEED TO BE RECOGNISED AND CELEBRATED?

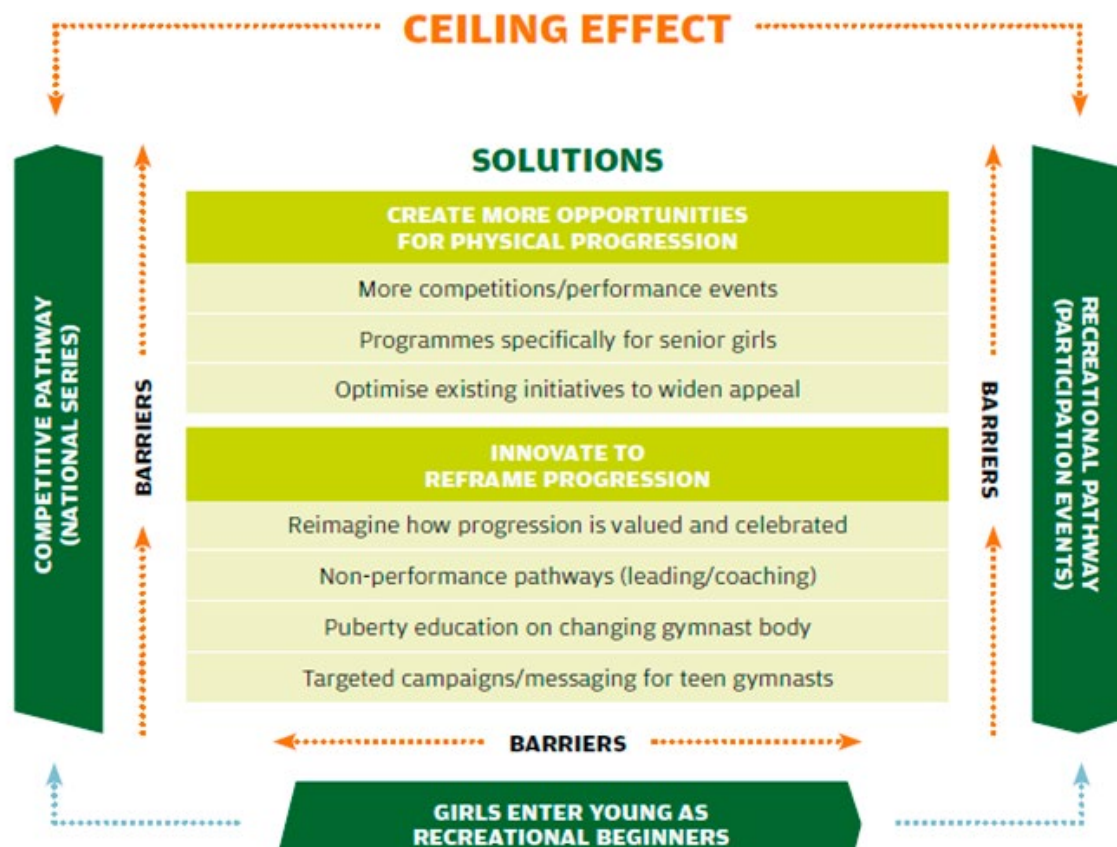
- Achieving a skill they've been working on for a really long time
- Regaining a skill that they thought they lost
- Being brave and overcoming fears about trying something new
- Being good cheerleader and supporting other girls
- Being resilient and bouncing back when things get tough
- Being creative and artistic
- Being a role model for other girls
- Being kind and doing something for others
- Taking responsibility for own development
- Having the courage to voice opinions and ideas
- Picking others up when they are down
- Making a new girl feel really welcome at the club
- Commitment to training/club (e.g., other life pressures, injury)
- Giving back to the gymnastics community (e.g., volunteering, helping others)
- Going to a competition/event for the first time

Rewards can help celebrate girls' achievements, but they must be relevant and meaningful. In addition to verbal praise and encouragement, girls are also motivated by material, tangible rewards that make a difference to their lives, either by saving them money, giving them chances to express themselves (e.g., clothing) or providing opportunities to bond with their teammates (e.g., a social trip out).

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO RETAINING TEENAGE GIRLS IN GYMNASTICS?

The Ceiling Effect. Girls have a deep-rooted belief that gymnastics has a natural lifespan and a ceiling at which they can no longer improve, therefore progression is critical for girls.

GfA plays a very important role in redefining the perceptions of the "Ceiling Effect" and, most importantly, to encourage the consideration of how to expand girls' perceptions around the longevity of gymnastics and ensure there are suitable opportunities and pathways for progression within and beyond the teenage years.



Higher value placed on competitive gymnastics than participation. Competition and competitiveness are deeply ingrained in the culture of sport and bring many positive benefits to a sport and its participants. Similarly, recreational participation is important for a sport's growth and its value for improving the health and wellbeing of wider society is well recognised. Girls question their worth when 'talented' gymnasts receive more attention.

It is also worth mentioning the importance of creating competition for all levels within gymnastics. Not only our High-Performance pathway but creating competitions for gymnasts of all levels, ages and abilities, and ensure we afford equal importance to both pathways, whilst maintaining the importance of non-competitive pathways.

Skills and progression are largely valued and celebrated through competition. Not all girls have the opportunity to experience these. Girls also link learning and progression to mastering physical skills, which can negatively impact confidence and enjoyment.

Puberty can have a significant physical and emotional impact on gymnasts – more work is needed to support girls during this time. Changes during puberty cause concern and anxiety and can hinder progression. Body image and self-consciousness can have a significant impact on girls' enjoyment – clothing, especially leotards, make girls feel vulnerable and exposed.

Quote: "I feel like all these people are watching you and you're half-naked."
(COMPETITIVE GYMNAST, 12)

34% of girls feel uncomfortable wearing a leotard...

...rising to **48%** of girls aged 15-18yrs

HOW HAVE THESE KEY FINDINGS INFLUENCED OUR DEVELOPMENT OF GfA OVER THE PAST 2 YEARS?

Once the research was completed, the next most important part of this work was turning the learnings into action!

Over the last two years (2023 & 2024), Gymnastics Ireland, thanks to a funding investment from the **Sport Ireland Women in Sport programme**, has turned the learnings from the research results and recommendations into an effective, practical and strategic action plan. The research also allowed us to reflect, review and consider how we want to do things differently, in the context of teenage girls.

The 4 key areas we focused on to put the learnings into action were;

1. Promotion
2. Programmes and Initiatives
3. Events
4. Education

As part of our strategic plan, we aim to address all the challenges and recommendations in this research. We are currently doing up the new Participation Strategy 2025-2028 in which there is a focus on teenagers (boys and girls).

1. Promotion

As well as targeting promotion about teenage girls, we also developed a marketing and communication strategy to appeal directly to teenage girls, as well as effectively reaching and engaging with our wider targeted audience: clubs, coaches and parents.

Key findings we prioritized were:

Ensuring our marketing and promotion appealed directly to teenagers.

Creating more opportunities for recognition and moments of pride.

Ensuring that our clubs and coaches had access to, and utilized, the research.

Initiatives we developed and rolled out:

1. Mini Docuseries - Visit our [YouTube Channel](#) to see all the episodes

With the assistance of Sport Ireland funding, we developed and launched a mini documentary.

2. Promotional Videos - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NosF311BqaA>

We created a promotional video to give a better explanation about GfA for our clubs.

3. Exchange National Coaches Conference - We ensured we include 'The Gymnast Voice' and topics that are relevant to them.

4. Annual National Awards

The National Awards is an annual event designed to reward all those stand out performers & contributors to the sport of gymnastics throughout the year. We introduced three new categories:

- GfA Display gymnast of the year
- GfA Display coach of the year
- GfA Display club of the year



5. Promotional Strategy for GfA National Teams

GfA Display Teams travelling to FIG or EG GfA events or festivals get the same promotion as the other national teams going to world or European events.

2. Programmes and Initiatives

Programmes and initiatives are essential for translating strategic objectives and research findings into tangible projects and ensuring that these projects collectively deliver the desired outcomes.

Programmes and Initiatives we developed and rolled out:

1. Gym4TEENS Programme:

This is the umbrella programme for all our activities and initiatives involving teenagers in our sport.



Gym4TEENS is designed to help us promote the teenage gymnast role within our sport and to highlight to teens that they have a place to belong, opportunities to transition between disciplines, engage in programmes and pathways. We have done this within our educational pathway, our events, and our leadership programmes.

2. Club Display Gymnastics Mentor Programme:

3. Body Positivity Campaign: This campaign is under way and the planned launch date is later this year. We created a promotional video to give a better explanation about GfA for our clubs.



4. Secondary Schools Gymnastics Initiative: Gymnastics Ireland has commissioned the first Schools Strategy, which is currently underway, planned to be launched in September 2025.

5. Club Collaborations – GfA Display: This programme is designed to allow clubs to share ideas & learning and visits to each other's clubs.

6. National Collaborations – Positive Period Campaign: We are collaborating with Sport Ireland Women in Sport & Her Moves to deliver their “Positive Periods” campaign to support the creation of a period positive environment in our clubs.

<https://www.hermoves.ie/resources/period-positive-posters>

*Her Moves campaign, is a Sport Ireland initiative designed to inspire and support more teenage girls to be active. It's about empowering all teenage girls, building confidence and providing motivation to find something that gets them moving."

3. Events

Our events offered a huge opportunity to address many of the findings and recommendations from the research. In particular, our national GfA Display Pathway – Our main GfA Display event 'The Floor' provides so many areas where we can implement the research recommendations, both through the development nationally and internationally. While we invested heavily in FIG/EG International GfA Display Events, (which we are happy to discuss with any federation interested in developing theirs), we just want to focus on our national event.

Key findings we prioritized were:

Designing events specially for teenagers and giving them an identity.

Creating more opportunities for moments of pride beyond medals and competition.

Focusing on the social side of gymnastics.

Opportunities to celebrate and focus on progression not related to competition.

GfA National Display Event – The Floor

Initiatives and actions we have introduced include:

Creation of a distinct opening and closing ceremony where each team is celebrated.

Introduction of 'Star Gymnast' recognition awards. This award is voted by the club for a person from their team/ club-based covering areas such as: hardest worker, best teammate, most dedicated, most fun/ energetic etc.

Formation of a 'Panel of Experts' that sit at the side of the floor and provide feedback to each team directly after their routine (like X-factor!)

Introduction of social activities such as: Games, prizes and flashmob at closing ceremony, social activities at the end of the event for gymnasts.

Improvement of the viewing experience of the gymnasts such as seating in the main arena and TV screens (with live feed) in the warmup

Production of a “personalised routine video” for each team Introduce the teams travelling abroad to FIG/ EG events that year.



Growth in attendance

Year	N° of clubs	N° of teams	N° of gymnasts
2015 *launch of event	6	9	110
2022 *post research initiatives	10	16	322
2023	11	18	356
2024	17	25	582
2025	21	42	863

4. Education

As education plays such a key role in the development of gymnastics in Ireland, addressing the recommendations from the research was very important to the growth and sustainability of our GfA programme.

We focused on education opportunities for both coaches and gymnasts. For gymnasts we developed and delivered the GfA Display Gymnasts Development workshop. These workshops are designed to cover all aspects of GfA. Our pilot Gymnast Development Day (2023) saw over 80 gymnasts from around the country participate in Hip Hop, Contemporary, Acrobatic, Rhythmic Apparatus Handling and Group Routine Construction, as well as Stage Performance.

Key findings we prioritised were:

Creating programmes specially for teenagers and giving them an identity.

Creating more opportunities for recognition and moments of pride in a club setting.

Developing club collaborations and encourage sharing with and supporting each other.

Highlighting the importance of focusing on puberty and positive body image and what clubs/ coaches can do.

Fostering an inclusive culture that values all girls and participation at every level.

Reframing how 'progress' is defined and valued in clubs and support girls' holistic development.

Opportunities for Coaches:

Provided two clubs with the opportunity to travel to the European Gymnastics Educational weekend, Croatia.

Invited Hlíf Thorgeirsdóttir, President of the EG GfA Technical committee, to present an online and an in-person information session, as part of Gymnastics Ireland's National Coaching Conference.

Facilitated an online information session, hosted by LOC of EGfLC and Eurogym 2024, to our member clubs interested in attending GfA International events and festivals.

Developed and delivered a new GfA Online information session "How to develop your clubs display programme".

Developed and delivered our first two GfA Display coach development workshops: (I) "Introduction to Acrobatics and Circus for GfA" (II) "Dance and Acrobatics for GfA".

We invited members of our GfA Family, Nina Amann and Christoph Stadler from Austria to deliver.

Collaborating with Sport Ireland Coaching to deliver their 'Coaching Teenage Girls' Workshops to our members clubs.

WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

Lots done, plenty more to do!

The last two years have been full on, however there is plenty still to do to action many of the findings and recommendations from the research.

We are always looking for partnerships or collaborations, so please connect with us!



Next Steps - some of initiatives we have planned for 2025+ include:

Develop and deliver a brand-new Leadership Programme for teenagers.

Create a Teen Panel with the purpose of having their voices heard on many different issues relating to gymnastics.

Increase the number of club collaborations.

Expand the GfA display Club Mentor Programme.

Continue to introduce more social aspects into our display event.

Run a World Gym for Life style event at The Floor, in the year of the FIG event, to provide a different type of event, with the “contest” idea.

Expand our new secondary school programme (eventually linking with our clubs and our events).

Grow the teens section of our other national participation events.

Continue to work in partnership with other national bodies and key stakeholders to share resources.

Commission further research – next topic is “How to get more Adult Women involved in Gymnastics!”



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL

A strong ecosystem is needed to support and retain them, therefore key recommendations are provided below for both National Federations and coaches/clubs as key influencers in girls' experiences.

Club Level

Reframe how 'progress' is defined and valued in clubs and support girls' holistic development. Exposure to different disciplines/events/activities, leadership and mentoring opportunities, and giving girls more choice and ownership over their development through goal setting can support girls' motivation and sense of purpose for continued engagement, irrespective of their ability.

Facilitate more moments of pride for girls within the training environment beyond just physical skills; recognise and celebrate other behaviours, soft skills and wider achievements with meaningful rewards along their gymnastics journey, to help all girls feel good about themselves.

Educate and support girls to understand and manage their changing gymnast body and promote a body positive culture. Clubs need to adopt flexible, inclusive kit/clothing policies and empower girls to make decisions on attire to help them feel comfortable and confident in their skin, with no judgement. Normalising the taboo of puberty through better education and guidance for girls (and parents).

Leverage the strength of the 'gymnastics family' and widen girls' support networks. A girl's support network and friendships are very important in the teenage years and are a strong driver of enjoyment in gymnastics. Carefully manage group dynamics to avoid cliques and create more opportunities for girls to mix with their peers within and outside of training.

Foster an inclusive culture that values all girls and participation at every level. Coaches and staff have a collective responsibility to create an inclusive culture in clubs. All girls, both recreational and competitive, want and need more voice and choice over their experience. Reflecting on how current practice and opportunities in clubs could be strengthened to support the needs of all girls, not just the talented few, would enable teenage girls to feel they are truly valued and belong.

National Level

Innovate around pathways to cater to different girls' needs and motivations to extend their gymnastics journey within and beyond the school years, especially for senior girls.

Existing participation initiatives need optimising to become more relevant, appealing and accessible to competitive and recreational teenage girls, especially seniors.

There is significant opportunity to leverage the unique strengths of gymnastics and be at the forefront of body positivity for teenage girls in sport. To do so, barriers relating to puberty, attire and body image should be addressed.

Work with clubs to reframe and expand the value of 'progress' and facilitate opportunities for more moments of pride and personal achievement for all girls along their gymnastics journey.

Tailor marketing and communications to appeal directly to teenage girls and dial up the wow factor around competitions and events.

Finally, ensure teenage girls stay at the heart of thinking and innovation. Create impactful and sustainable ways to connect with girls (e.g. via social media and clubs) to understand their experiences and to check and challenge ideas and initiatives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, we would like to express our deepest thanks to all our club members, coaches, and gymnasts who took part in the research and engaged in and supported all the initiatives and programmes created. Our clubs are a fundamental and vital part of our organisation who provide a sense of community, social interaction and shared purpose, contributing to the overall vitality and engagement of Gymnastics Ireland.



We would also like to thank Women in Sport UK for their expertise and support for carrying out the research, creating the report and working in partnership with Gymnastics Ireland, to ensure we completed the project on time and to the highest standards.

And finally, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Sport Ireland Women in Sport programme for funding our research and supporting the development of our initiatives and programmes.







HISTORY OF THE TURNFEST AS PART OF THE CULTURAL IMPACT ON GERMAN GYMNASTICS FOR ALL

Gabriele Postuwka

INTRODUCTION

The *Turnfest* (German Gymnastics Festival) is the largest and oldest gymnastics festival in the world, with an eventful history that is closely linked to German culture, politics and society. As an outstanding mass sports event, which usually takes place every four years over several days, it brings people of all ages together to be physically active, to participate in sport and to celebrate. Participation, accessibility, inclusion and social integration are all important principles of the event. Around 70 percent of the participants are female.

The *Turner* or German gymnastic movement was originally founded by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, the so-called *Turnfather*. Jahn only included male participants (Pfister, 2011) and suggested the organization of festivals. In the beginning these were local and regional events for the turners or gymnasts who had founded clubs or so-called *Turnvereine* to exchange their ideas of physical culture, to promote patriotism and social cohesion (Pfister, 2011). Until the *Turnfest* developed from a politically influenced male event to today's inclusive, modern *Internationales Deutsches Turnfest* (International German Gymnastics Festival) it was subject to many national, but also international influences and changes. This article will focus on the historical development of the *Turnfest* and will work out the extent to which the *Turnfest* played a role for the Gymnastics for All approach in Germany.

Deutsches Turnfest BERLIN 1987



Limpert

Deutsches Turnfest MÜNCHEN 1998



MEYER
JAMES
VERLA

Internationales Deutsches Turnfest Berlin 2005



Morsell

GYMNASTICS FOR ALL (GFA)

The idea of Gymnastics for All is considered an essential basis for all types of physical activity within the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG) and its associated institutions. According to this, many leisure activities in the areas of gymnastics, rhythmical movement and dance, with and without equipment as well as team sports should offer the opportunity for a healthy and active lifestyle and at the same time enable social and cultural ties. As explained in the Gymnastics for All of FIG Manual (2023, p. 6), the following characteristics can be mentioned.

- Gymnastics for All offers a variety of activities suitable for all genders, age groups, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.
- Gymnastics for All activities contribute to personal health, fitness and wellbeing – physical, social, intellectual and psychological.
- The Gymnastics for All philosophy is guided by five principles – FUN, FITNESS, FUNDAMENTALS and FRIENDSHIP that lasts FOREVER.
- In practice it can involve: - Gymnastics with or without apparatus - Gymnastics and Dance Gymnastics for All can be showcased through either demonstration, performance (e.g. “World Gymnaestrada”) or team events contests (e.g. “World Gym for Life Challenge”).
- Gymnastics for All offers aesthetic experiences in movement for participants and spectators while providing the opportunity to focus on items that are of particular interest in a national and cultural context.

Furthermore, the FIG (2023) mentions an educational approach, inspired by the four pillars of Education (UNESCO, 2023), as important offers in a gymnastics festival.

- a. Learning to know: types of gymnastics; folklore cultural characteristics.
- b. Learning to do: develop motor skills; perform gymnastics routine; perform for an audience.
- c. Learning to live together: travel with different people; share accommodations; understanding different habits.
- d. Learning to be: recognize potential and limits; desires and tastes; perceptions of what you like and how you behave in different situations

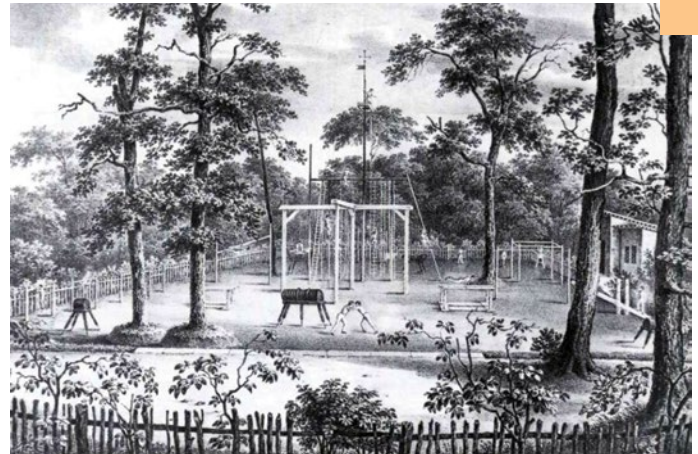
With these different aspects the idea of Gymnastics for All is briefly outlined. Now it is important to clarify whether and how the *Turnfest* developed and what impact it had on the development of Gymnastics for All in Germany.

THE ORIGINS: FRIEDRICH LUDWIG JAHN AND THE GYMNASTICS MOVEMENT

The gymnastics movement emerged during the Napoleonic Wars, a time when German territories were fragmented and striving for unity. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn introduced gymnastics as a means of promoting the physical and mental strength of the youth.

In 1811, he opened the first gymnastics field in Berlin, where the focus was on exercises that combined discipline, camaraderie and national pride (Krüger, 2011). According to Pfister (2011), he only addressed the male youth. Girls and women currently had hardly any access to the *Turnen*. Jahn's

concept of gymnastics was deeply anchored in his vision of creating a unified German identity. This combination of "physical education" and ideology laid the foundation for the German gymnastics' tradition, which was later to develop into the gymnastics festival (Pfister, 2003).

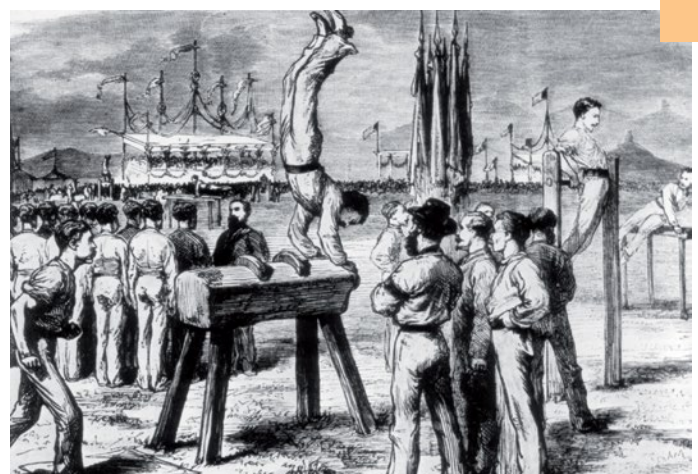


Hasenheide around 1811

THE 19TH CENTURY: NATIONALISM, GYMNASTICS AND THE FIRST TURNFEST

In 1860, the 1st Deutsche Turnfest took place in Coburg, which was attended by about 970 participants. This festival marked the institutionalization of gymnastics as a cultural phenomenon and in the course of the 19th century it became a symbol of German nationalism, and the aspirations for freedom as well as a place of encounter and social cohesion. Not only did the founding of the German Gymnastics Association (DT) in 1868 play an important role, but also the emergence of numerous gymnastics clubs and gymnastics associations, most of which supported the liberal and democratic movement (Pfister 2011).

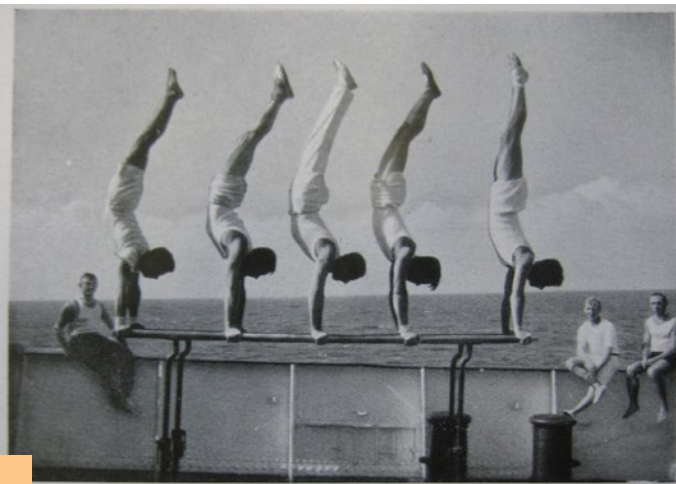
However, before the first Deutsche Turnfest in Coburg took place, the gymnastics movement had experienced ups and downs. The gymnastics movement was covered by the gymnastics ban (1820), which was lifted in 1842. By 1848 the foundation of the first Deutschen Turnerbund took place. But during the revolution in 1848 the gymnastics movement split into two groups, the Workers' Gymnasts, who strove for equal rights for male and female gymnasts, and the German Gymnasts' Association, a men's association that was supposed to cultivate virility and male discipline.



German Gymnastis around 1848, Geschichte

It was only after the *Deutsche Turnfest* in 1860 that the gymnastics movement experienced a renewed awakening. Numerous *Turnvereine*, gymnastics clubs, were founded, and the gymnastics festivals, which took place in quick succession, reached an increasingly large number of participants with their mass gymnastics, demonstrations of apparatus exercises and speeches to promote national identity. Several thousand gymnasts participated in Berlin in 1861, Leipzig in 1863 and Bonn in 1872. There were more than 10,000 participants in Frankfurt (1880) and in Dresden (1885). At the 1889 *Turnfest* in Munich the number had already doubled (DOSB, 2010). But it was not until the end of the 19th century, at the Turnfest in Breslau in 1894, that women were also admitted to the German Gymnastics Festivals.

EARLY INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE AND SPREAD OF THE TURNFEST



Turner of the Plata-Gaues German Turnerschaft during their journey to the 15th Turnfest, DTB Sprossenwand - International | Turnen unterm Kreuz des Südens: Sprossenwand

In the late 19th century, the influence of the *Turnfest* began to spread beyond Germany, and there was an exchange and mutual influences within European countries such as Norway and Sweden. In addition, the idea of German gymnastics was also carried overseas, as German expatriate communities founded gymnastics clubs in countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia. But there are also connections to South America, especially Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, as well to Japan. At the same time, the *Turnfest* attracted international visitors from many parts of the world, who followed Germany's call for excellence in physical education and innovation in gymnastics (Hofmann & Gerns, 2024).

THE TURNFEST AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY – POLITICAL UNREST AND ABYSS

At the beginning of the 20th century, the *Turnfest* took place in Leipzig in 1913, after which there was a 10-year break due to the First World War (1914-1918). During this time, gymnastics and German Gymnastics Festivals faced great challenges, not only due to the war, but also due to modernization, industrialization, political instability and different currents in the newly developing physical education and the rhythmic, gymnastics and dance movements. During the Weimar Republic (1918-1933), the festivals aimed to bridge rifts in a fragmented society, and gymnastics was seen as a means of physical and mental education. It should be emphasized that the twenties represent an important time for women's sports and their participation in gymnastics, because they were given at least moderate access to management functions of the German Gymnastics Association and were active in clubs (Pfister, 2011).

However, with the rise of National Socialism in the 1930s, the *Turnfest* was appropriated for propaganda purposes and brought into line with the ideologies of the regime (Pfister, 2006). During this time, the dark chapter of the history of the gymnastics festival begins. Under the Nazi regime, the *Turnfest* was transformed into an instrument for the promotion of Aryan supremacy and militaristic values, Jewish members were excluded from the clubs and gymnastics events were used to demonstrate physical perfection, especially the increase in the military strength of German men, and obedience (DOSB, 2010).

TURNFEST AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR – REORIENTATION AND THE CONCEPT OF GYMNASTICS FOR ALL IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

The period from 1945 to 1989 marks another change in the gymnastics festivals. After the end of the Second World War, Germany was almost destroyed economically and infrastructurally, occupied by the Allies and divided into four occupation zones, from which two German states later emerged. A parliamentary democracy was established in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) forcing sport, gymnastics and *Turnfeste* to take a comprehensive new direction. With the founding of the Deutscher Turner-Bund (DTB), German Gymnastics Federation, in 1950, the tradition of gymnastics was resumed with new goals, with the focus of "gymnastics as a leisure activity for everyone" and "youth education" (Dieckert, 2011, p.127). In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), on the other hand, a socialist state emerged under Soviet control, in which *Turn- und Sportfeste*, gymnastics and sports festivals, increasingly developed into a propagandistic exhibition of state-sponsored sports programmes, which were about demonstrating the unity of recreational and top-class sports (Götze, 2011).

The idea of this popular gymnastics festival, where many people come together to do sports, gymnastics, celebrate and meet each other, played a role on both sides of the Wall. In both German states, new trends from sports, gymnastics and fitness movements, as well as health aspects were included in the programme, but their implementation varied. The new beginning after the end of the Second World War was marked in West Germany by the so-called *Frankfurter Turnfest* in 1948 and the first official *Deutsche Turnfest* in Hamburg in 1953. In East Germany the first *Turn- und Sportfest* (Gymnastics and Sports Festival) was held in Leipzig in 1954.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r15l4NDNI4>

REUNIFICATION – PROFESSIONALISATION – DEUTSCHES TURNFEST FÜR ALLE



1989 represents another significant turning point in the development of the *Deutsche Turnfest*. On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall came down, which led to German reunification and the end of the GDR. This event also meant enormous changes for sports in general and the *Sport-und Turnfest*, especially for the former citizens of the GDR, because state subsidies for sports were reduced there, and sports and gymnastics clubs had to reorient themselves politically and in terms of content. As early as 1989 it came to a union of the German Gymnastics Federation (DTB) and the gymnastics organizations of the GDR. In 1990, the *Deutsche Turnfest* in Bochum and

Dortmund had about 10,000 gymnasts from the former GDR. And in 2002 the *Deutsche Turnfest* in Leipzig gained great historical significance. It took place in the city that played a central role in the peaceful revolution in the GDR, and the city that had hosted many festivals before. The [pictures](#) of this festival give a good impression of this event.

INTERNATIONALIZATION – INTERNATIONALES DEUTSCHES TURNFEST IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In 2005, for the first time an *Internationales Deutsches Turnfest*, International German Gymnastics Festival, was held in Berlin, the city that was divided into an eastern and western part during the Cold War. It was intended to draw attention to a united Europe and to include groups from abroad. It was the second gymnastics festival after reunification and attracted about 100,000 participants. The concept of Gymnastics for All was evident in the entire programme, from children's gymnastics to fitness and health sports in all its facets, as well as gymnastics and offers for the older generation. In addition, there was the Gymnastics Festival Academy with its educational programme and more than 10,000 workshops (DTB, 2005).

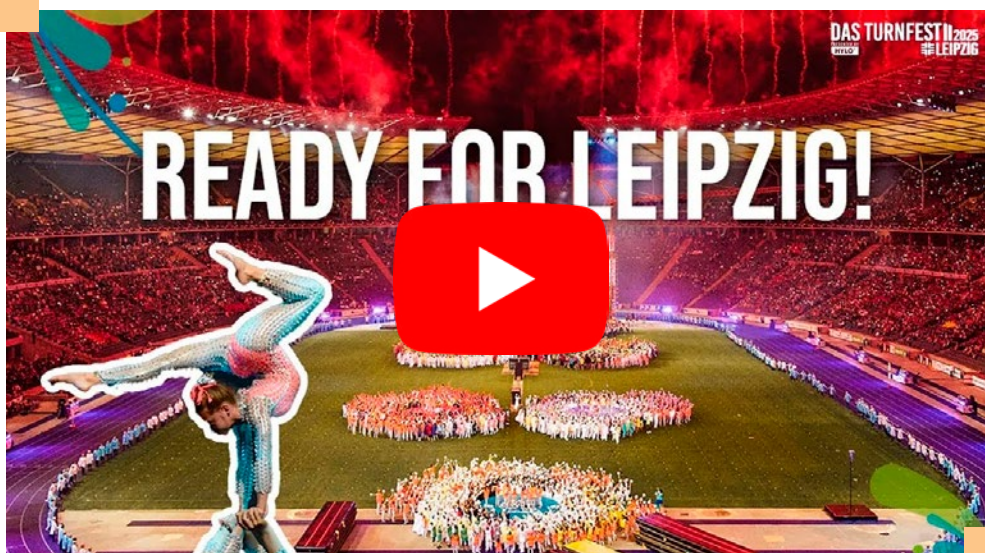
The *Internationale Deutsche Turnfest* 2009 in Frankfurt was another highlight and represented the modern orientation of the festival. Girls and women made up 67.5 percent of the 65,000 gymnastics festival participants, almost a third were between 11 and 18 years old, there were 20,000 volunteers and the evening show, laser programme and the so-called river mile attracted 2.6 million spectators (DOSB, 2010).

One year later, in 2010, the 150th anniversary of the Turnfest was celebrated in Coburg and a few other cities like Frankfurt and Main.



Parade Internationales Deutsches Turnfest in Frankfurt 2009, Archiv DTB

From May 28 to June 01, [2025](#), Leipzig will host for the 13th time a German Gymnastics Festival. About 80,000 athletes, 5000 of them from abroad, 5000 volunteers and 750,000 visitors are expected to attend this international event. 70 percent of the participants are female and about 40 percent are children and young people, of which 35,000 people will sleep in 150 schools. Competitions in 23 sports will be held over 5 days, there will be stage programmes, galas and a professional show programme with 5000 participants from Germany, Europe and the world. The Gymnastics Festival Academy offers more than 400 practical and theoretical courses, and a public supporting programme with over 100 hands-on activities for all age groups.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3e2bCCrFOU>

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE DEUTSCHE TURNFEST IN THE FUTURE

The principles of participation, accessibility, inclusion and social integration play an important role in the *Turnfest*. The *Turnfest* presents an imagined community (Pfister, 2011) that helps to create cultural identity. Performing and doing physical activities and sports together are perceived as an experience. Through the joint actions, competitions, performances and mass participation events, bonds are created within groups, which often come from different social classes or age groups. Therefore, German Gymnastics Festivals contribute to the promotion of social integration and inclusion. In addition to physical activities, competitions and shows, the programme of the *Turnfest* includes many educational activities (academy and workshops), health promotion and mental well-being, that support physical and mental learning. By integrating new sports and physical activities, picking up on trends and adapting to the changing needs and interests of society, the *Turnfest* continues to attract people and is open for [innovation](#).

The German Gymnastics Festival Programme allows aesthetic movement experiences with the variety of galas, shows, performances and competitions in which one can participate as a spectator or active person. In addition, the events of the supporting programme, such as concerts, theatre plays and historical exhibitions, which celebrate German culture and the heritage of the *Turnfest* offer further opportunities to enjoy and gain artistic and cultural experiences.

In general, the programme of the *Turnfest* shows great overlap with the FIG' Gymnastics for All events concept and many participants taking part in the German Gymnastics Festival also participate in the [World Gymnaestrada](#) or the World Gym for Life Challenge. So here might be another factor for the exchange of the idea of Gymnastics for All.

But there are also great challenges for the future of the *Turnfest*. It is important to promote an active lifestyle, integrate new technological developments and consider issues of sustainability and environmental impact. This includes, among other things, the reduction of waste, the promotion of public transport, and the implementation of an energy-efficient [infrastructure](#).

THE TURNFEST AS PART OF THE CULTURAL IMPACT ON GERMAN GYMNASTICS FOR ALL

Germany can look back on a long tradition of German Gymnastics Festivals. These gymnastics festivals have undergone countless changes in the course of history, but the cultural significance of *Turnen* and the *Turnfest* has been preserved and constantly developed, but it also serves as a platform for innovations in gymnastics and related fields (DTB, 2022).

(Internationale) Deutsche Turnfeste

Coburg 1860 | Berlin 1861 | [Leipzig 1863](#) | Bonn 1872 | Frankfurt am Main 1880 | Dresden 1885 | München 1889 | Breslau 1894 | Hamburg 1898 | Nürnberg 1903 | Frankfurt am Main 1908 | [Leipzig 1913](#) | [Leipzig 1922](#) | [München 1923](#) | [Köln 1928](#) | Nürnberg 1929 | [Stuttgart 1933](#) | [Breslau 1938](#) | Northeim 1947 | [Frankfurt am Main 1948](#) | [Hamburg 1953](#) | [München 1958](#) | [Essen 1963](#) | Leipzig 1963 | Berlin 1968 | [Leipzig 1969](#) | Stuttgart 1973 | Leipzig 1977 | Hannover 1978 | Frankfurt am Main 1983 | Leipzig 1983 | Berlin 1987 | Leipzig 1987 | Dortmund/Bochum 1990 | Hamburg 1994 | [München 1998](#) | Leipzig 2002 | Berlin 2005 | Frankfurt am Main 2009 | [Metropolregion Rhein-Neckar 2013](#) | [Berlin 2017](#) | Leipzig 2021, Leipzig 2025, München 2029

■ Deutsche Turnfeste, Deutsches Turnfest - [Wikipedia](#)

In the list shown above, only the so-called German Gymnastics Festivals are mentioned, those that nowadays take place every four years. In addition, in Germany, with its federal structure, there are also the annual *Landes-Turnfeste* (federal state gymnastics festivals), held by the 22 federal state gymnastics associations and their many regional *Turnvereine*, gymnastics and sports associations or clubs. The *Turnvereine* on the other hand, with their concept of "self-administered sport", can be described as the supporting pillar of sport in the Federal Republic of Germany. Structurally, the German Gymnastics Federation (DTB) stands above these associations and clubs with its guiding principles and mission statement.

This historically grown structure of the German Gymnastics Federation with its subordinate organizations differs from the club structure in other countries, because there is a close interlocking between the various institutions responsible for general gymnastics in Germany. Also, the German Gymnastics Federation has always been open to developments in other European countries and those in the FIG, so this might be another source for implementing the idea of Gymnastics for All in Germany.

The question of whether the *Turnfest* had an impact on the idea of Gymnastics for All in Germany or whether it was a more complex interaction, cannot be answered easily. More significant seems to be the fact that the concept of the German Gymnastics Festivals and the German gymnastics clubs have taken this historically positive development and that the philosophy of Gymnastics for All is firmly anchored.

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Source of the Images:

Deutscher Turner-Bund (DTB). (German Gymnastics Federation)





2024 USA GYMNASTICS FOR ALL GYM FEST

Integrating GfA into a National Gymnastics week and the benefits of combining GfA with other disciplines

Lori Laznovsky

USA GYMNASTICS FOR ALL GYM FEST 2024: A CELEBRATION OF GYMNASTICS IN MINNEAPOLIS

The USA Gymnastics for All [GymFest](#) is an annual event that celebrates the inclusivity and wide-reaching scope of gymnastics across the United States. In 2024, this event took on an even greater significance, as it became part of Gymnastics City USA—an unprecedented collaboration that brought together high-profile gymnastics events and celebrated the full spectrum of the sport.



**U.S. OLYMPIC
TEAM TRIALS**
GYMNASTICS
JUNE 27-30, 2024 • MINNEAPOLIS, MN



USA Gymnastics
**National Congress
Trade Show**
Minneapolis, MN
2024

GYMNASTICS CITY USA 2024: A NEW VISION

The idea behind Gymnastics City USA was simple yet powerful: to spotlight all gymnastics disciplines in one central location. With everything from the U.S. Olympic Team Trials to the USA Gymnastics Championships, Gymnastics City USA showcased all levels of gymnastics, offering an immersive experience for fans and athletes alike. The event was held in Minneapolis, with GymFest serving as a major highlight among several prestigious events hosted throughout the week.

- **U.S. Olympic Team Trials for Gymnastics (Trials):** Top men's and women's gymnasts competed for the chance to represent the U.S. at the Olympic Games.
- **USA Gymnastics Championships (USA Gym Champs):** This five-day competition featured the best rhythmic, acrobatic, and trampoline & tumbling gymnasts in the country. With approximately 2,000 athletes, it also named national teams, Olympians and crowned champions across all three disciplines.
- **National Congress & Tradeshow:** With over 2,000 gymnastics professionals gathering for educational workshops and lectures, the National Congress provided valuable learning opportunities for coaches and athletes alike.

The GymFest itself remained as diverse as ever, drawing 700 participants from all over the country to participate in Group Performances, compete in the TeamGym National Championships, compete in the Acrobatics and Tumbling National Championships, the USA Wheel Invitational, and the USA Gym for Life Challenge. With a commitment to making gymnastics accessible for everyone, GymFest welcomed participants ranging in age from under one year old to 85.



All photos by Rosa Poetschke.

A WEEK OF EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCES

Gymnastics City USA was not just a celebration of elite athletes but a festival that demonstrated the power of gymnastics to bring people together. GymFest participants helped kick off the festivities with the Promenade du Nord—a Parisian-style market in downtown Minneapolis. This included a grand opening performance featuring over 1,000 performers including GfA participants, local gym clubs, and dance groups, setting the celebratory tone for the week. Choreography for the mass performance was created by three local reality TV stars and social media influencers which brought yet another interesting collaboration for the GfA community.



The GymFest Opening Ceremonies at the Minneapolis Convention Center introduced the participating clubs and featured international performances, including a dazzling display by Sweden's [Malmoflickorna](#) and the popular U.S. group, [Chattooga](#). The grand finale saw all the participants performing on stage and in the audience, embodying the spirit of unity that Gymnastics for All promotes.



ELEVATING EDUCATION AND COLLABORATION

In 2024, GymFest and the National Congress, which took place within the same convention center, provided an opportunity for cross-disciplinary learning. With over 2,000 professionals gathered for educational workshops, lectures, and networking, the event featured notable sessions led by Gymnastics for All experts. All Congress participants were invited to observe GymFest performances and competitions, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The FIG GfA Committee added an international perspective to the event by providing a practical session, deepening the global reach of Gymnastics for All.

CITY PERFORMANCES: TAKING GYMNASTICS TO THE STREETS

Gymnastics City USA was not confined to traditional venues. GFA groups took their performances to the heart of Minneapolis, with two major public performances staged at the Promenade du Nord and outside the Target Center, where the Olympic Trials were taking place. These open-air performances brought gymnastics directly to the people, introducing the local community to the excitement and inclusivity of Gymnastics for All.

In addition, the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden served as a stunning venue for two international groups, including Malmöflickorna from Sweden and the Swiss Swinging Rings team. These performances provided exceptional media exposure and added another level of cultural richness to the festivities.





HIGHLIGHTING INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY

A key theme of GymFest was inclusivity, and this year's event truly embraced it. In addition to the TeamGym National Championships, which featured athletes of all levels, including those with special needs through the HUGS ([Hope Unites Gymnasts with Special Athletes](#)) teams, the USA Wheel Federation also played a prominent role. They offered competitions and workshops to all participants, integrating another gymnastics discipline into the event.





The Acrobatics and Tumbling National Championships also took center stage at GymFest, where teams competed in five exciting events: toss, pyramid, acro, tumbling, and group floor routines.

The Group Performance Showcase, organized by Paula Lord, included over 400 participants and was a beautiful testament to the collaborative spirit of Gymnastics for All.



INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION: A GLOBAL GATHERING

The 2024 GymFest saw significant international participation, with teams from Switzerland, Sweden, and Australia joining the event. This international exchange enriched the event, with the [Swiss Gymnastics Federation](#) debuting their Swinging Rings team in the U.S. for the first time. Malmöflickorna from Sweden added their unique flair with performances at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, the City Performance Stages and the Target Center. Additionally, Australia sent two TeamGym teams to compete, marking a significant milestone for both the U.S. and Australian gymnastics communities as they continue to develop the TeamGym discipline.



A HISTORIC FIRST FOR THE FIG GfA COMMITTEE

For the first time, the FIG GfA Committee held an official meeting in the United States during Gymnastics City USA. This landmark event showcased the growing importance of Gymnastics for All on the international stage, with the Committee serving as evaluators for the USA Gym for Life Challenge and participating in various workshops.



THE POWER OF LIVE STREAMING

A major innovation in 2024 was the live streaming of all performances and activities, which allowed family, friends, and gymnastics fans around the world to experience the excitement of the GymFest in real-time. This expanded the event's reach beyond the physical venue, bringing the Gymnastics for All community closer together than ever before.

LASTING IMPACT ON THE GFA COMMUNITY

Gymnastics City USA had a lasting impact both on the gymnastics community and the local Minneapolis community. The event attracted over 200,000 visitors and generated more than \$75 million in economic impact for the region.

For GfA participants, the opportunity to perform, compete and engage in workshops with athletes from around the world was a transformative experience. They not only showcased their talents but also took part in global gymnastics conversation, learning from experts and peers alike.

GfA participants also got to serve as spectators for all the other activities that were happening. This opportunity to experience and witness so many aspects of gymnastics has reinforced lasting interest.



A UNIFYING SUCCESS



GymnasticsCityUSA2024wasamonumental success, serving as both a celebration of gymnastics and a platform for the values of Gymnastics for All. The event demonstrated the power of gymnastics to unite athletes and communities, from elite competitors to recreational participants. The collaboration between national and international athletes, coaches, and fans has left a lasting legacy on the gymnastics community and the city of Minneapolis. With its innovative programming, educational opportunities, and diverse performances, Gymnastics City USA showcased how gymnastics can inspire and unite people across the globe.

As Gymnastics for All continues to grow in the United States, the 2024 GymFest will be remembered as a milestone event, reinforcing the mission to make gymnastics accessible, enjoyable, and impactful for everyone—regardless of age, ability, or background. We look forward to next year’s event and the continued celebration of this beautiful sport.





RISE GYMNASTICS COMPETITION FRAMEWORK

Kayla Hardman

WHAT IS THE RISE GYMNASTICS COMPETITION FRAMEWORK?

The Rise Gymnastics competition framework by [British Gymnastics](#) is a multi-disciplinary framework, allowing gymnasts to experience the breadth of gymnastics. Split into 4 strands: Core Skills, Large Apparatus, Small Apparatus and Working Together, gymnasts can take part in as many strands as they'd like at the appropriate level for their ability, so that they can showcase their maximum potential on each rotation.



The framework focuses on: Gymnast Experience, Inclusivity, and Positivity.

PROVIDING GYMNASTICS FOR ALL

The Rise Gymnastics competition framework allows gymnasts to choose what strands they want to compete in, and what level they want to compete for each one. This is integral for allowing the framework to really be for each and every gymnast, giving them the opportunity to shine.

Positive scoring is used throughout the framework, rewarding gymnasts points rather than deducting them. This encourages and empowers gymnasts, and with each gymnast competing against themselves, their confidence and determination grows.

By providing an adaptable framework, suitable to all environments and not dependent on specific equipment, it allows all gymnasts, whether in a school or fully dedicated gymnastics club, to take part. This is what allows gymnastics to be experienced by all, and be for all, no matter where you are taking part.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The remainder of this chapter goes into detail on the framework, but you can also find out more by watching our video [here!](#)

THE IMPACT

IMPLEMENTATION

Since its launch in 2023:

- 27 leisure centre Rise Gymnastics competitions.
- 36 club Rise Gymnastics competitions.
- Over 30 school Rise Gymnastics competitions.
- 2 federation Rise Gymnastics competition.
- 2 home nation (Northern Ireland) Rise Gymnastics competitions.
- Over 6800 gymnasts and children had an uplifting experience!
- 594 clubs, partners and schools using the Programme and Award Scheme.
- Over 500,000 Programme and Award Scheme medals and certificates awarded to gymnasts.
- Over 215,000 gymnasts on Rise Hub (our digital platform for award scheme assessments and skill library).



WHAT ORGANISERS SAY

“We had 120 children take part and they really enjoyed the event. It was lovely and relaxed, and parents feedback that it was a lovely introduction to competitions – particularly when children may have competition anxiety. We had a couple of children with cerebral palsy taking part and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves.”

British Gymnastics Member Club

“We hosted our Rise competition yesterday and it was another fabulous event!”

British Gymnastics Member Club

“We were so pleased with how the competition went, and we have had lovely feedback as well.”

Everyone Active Leisure Centre Site

“All participants enjoyed the day, and everyone left with a medal and certificate. The competition provided a goal for the children in our gymnastics lessons to work toward over the past eight weeks, and it will continue to serve as a valuable benchmark for their progress.”

GLL Leisure Centre Site

We had great feedback from our gymnasts’ families who said they enjoyed it and really liked the idea of the positive scoring system and how their children can progress through Rise Gymnastics Explore. We really enjoyed watching children step out of their comfort zone and see the pride on their faces when they received their medals.

British Gymnastics Member Club

It was the first year introducing Rise Gymnastics to primary schools within the district and I’m pleased to announce it was a huge success! Providing schools with the opportunity to select their advanced and beginner gymnasts and bring them to the same event was a highlight of mine.

British Gymnastics School Partner

WHAT GYMNASTS SAY

“I love today, I love having fun on all the equipment, today is the best day ever”

Participant at the Rise Gymnastics competition hosted by British Gymnastics

“This has been an amazing experience, I would love to come again”

Participant at the Rise Gymnastics competition hosted by British Gymnastics

“I liked that everyone was kind to me”

Participant at the Rise Gymnastics competition hosted by British Gymnastics

“I felt safe doing gymnastics here. I love it here and would like to come back next year. The Rise competition is amazing.”

Participant at the Rise Gymnastics competition hosted by British Gymnastics

1. GYMNAST EXPERIENCE

Rise Gymnastics gives every child the opportunity to shine, and at British Gymnastics, we believe competitions should also reflect this. They should be safe, full of fun and positivity, providing the opportunity for every gymnast to amaze themselves.



CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

All Rise Gymnastics competitions should be held in a friendly, open, and engaging environment. For [Rise Gymnastics](#) competitions, 'judges' will be referred to as 'scorers' to give gymnasts the most positive experience. Here are some suggestions to support the creation of a positive environment:

Scoring

Remove/reduce use of tables to enable scorers to move around the space and positively interact with gymnasts. Provide clipboards so scorers can score from anywhere.

Encourage scorers to wear bright coloured t-shirts/ clothing to reduce the formality of uniforms.

Suggest different methods of presenting to the scorer before and at the end of routines such as: a wave, thumbs up, high fives, or a gymnast's own variation of a present.

Atmosphere

Utilise spaces in the venue to create an exciting area for the gymnasts, coaches, and spectators.

Encourage gymnasts to decorate their own gymnast number.

Enhance downtime between routines by creating an area where gymnasts can get involved with gymnastics challenges, colouring activities, or games.

Include spectators as much as possible. Distribute a programme with all the competition information included, detailing how gymnasts are rewarded through a positive scoring method.

Depending on the venue and equipment set up and if space allows, move spectators with the rotations. By moving with the gymnasts, this allows spectators to watch their own child perform all routines.

Appoint a competition host to keep the crowd engaged by playing games, setting challenges, and playing music with dance moves to join in with.

Confidence

Enable gymnasts from the same club/leisure centre to be grouped together, regardless of their age or the level they have entered. Their coach can then stay with them throughout the competition to build their confidence and provide encouragement and feedback.

Encourage gymnasts to support everyone taking part.

2. COMPETITION FORMAT AND EQUIPMENT

The competition framework is split into ability levels and strands that align with the Rise Gymnastics Programme and Award Scheme. The competition organisers select which strands they will offer within their competition and communicate this with coaches beforehand. This could be based on the equipment and space you have available.

Gymnasts are not required to participate in all strands offered at a competition – we recommend that gymnasts select which ones they would like to enter.

AGE/ABILITY LEVEL

Gymnasts should participate at the level that most appropriately reflects their progress through the skills within the Rise Gymnastics Award Scheme. Alternatively, if not working towards the Rise Gymnastics Award Scheme, coaches should select the level considered most appropriate based on the gymnast's physical, social, and emotional development. Rise Gymnastics competitions are for any gymnast from age six upwards.

Gymnasts can compete in any strand regardless of gender.

All routines can be adapted where necessary to suit the gymnast. For more information about how to adapt your sessions, routines or the competition, please visit our [Inclusive Gymnastics page](#).



3. INCLUSIVITY

Below are some example methods to ensure your Rise Gymnastics competition can be adaptable and accessible:

A 'quiet competition'

Find a time in the competition day for those who need a quiet space with a reduced number of people in the venue and for those who may need reduced noise to hear their routine music.

Adapt

Adapt the strands to suit. For example:

- Small Apparatus: a rotary competition for wheelchair users to perform with hand apparatus
- Large Apparatus: use supporting blocks where required for physical impairment to help to perform a bar routine
- Working Together: support from parent/carer/sibling/friend/coach to perform with them rather than another gymnast

Use imagery

Use imagery in all areas of the competition:

- Images of the skills
- Images of the equipment to show where the gymnast is heading to next

Additional time and space

Additional time and space to get an understanding of the layout of the venue and plan routes.

4. POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

STAGGERED ARRIVALS

Organisers are encouraged to use a staggered approach to the delivery of the competition where gymnast groups arrive every 15 minutes. This ensures a smooth transition of registration times, warmups, and routine rotations. It has been proven through a substantial amount of testing that this method of competition delivery has improved the competition experience for gymnasts, coaches and spectators.

POSITIVE SCORING

Scorers will use a tariff sheet for each gymnast that has been completed by the coach. Each skill a gymnast performs within a routine will be scored out of five with the addition of an 'overall achievement' score (out of five) and the option for bonus points (maximum of two additional points).

Final scores will then fall into a score band which will reflect either a bronze, silver, or gold. This is awarded for each strand a gymnast chooses to take part in. Once the gymnast has completed all their strands, a scorer will average all the bronze, silver, or gold score bands to provide an 'overall' bronze, silver, or gold award.



AWARDING

Scorers will use stickers to reward gymnasts on an 'achievement certificate' after each routine. Once all gymnasts in a group have taken part, the scorer may choose to do a mini presentation for the gymnasts before they move onto the next strand. When all strands have been completed the organiser may choose to hold a presentation ceremony to celebrate the gymnasts' achievements and to provide them with their certificates and participation medals.

This method enables all gymnasts to be recognised for their achievements and creates a positive experience for all. The award the gymnast is given is based on their achievement alone, rather than against fellow competitors.

*There will be no deductions for special requirements or support for participants with additional requirements.





A NEW GYMNASTICS EVENT IN MOTION

Lessons and learnings behind the 1st National GfA Festival in Mexico

Carmen Gómez Alcalá

BACKGROUND: WHERE TO START? WELL, BY INTRODUCING MYSELF.

Have you ever tried talking about yourself without sounding boring? It's tricky, but here we go. My experience in organizing the National "Gymnastics for All" Festivals in Mexico, began as a huge challenge: creating something from scratch and making it shine in a country where this gymnastics discipline was just taking off.

I am a sports lover (especially gymnastics), and although I was an artistic gymnastics competitor in my childhood, I represented my country in some international events, then I was an international judge in WAG, but I still consider my most significant achievement in gymnastics was my role in introducing and promoting "Gymnastics for All" in Mexico. Oh, and not only that! I also had the opportunity to organize the first Mexican delegation of 125 people to participate in the World Gymnaestrada in Lisbon in 2003. Since then, this project has grown like a perfectly executed leap: Mexico now has its annual [National Festival](#), has participated in six [World Gymnaestradas](#), and has even produced performances combining participants from different countries in the Americas under the "National Night" format, presenting "The PAGU Night" on five different occasions at these major global gymnastics event.



When I'm not busy with gymnastics, I am an entrepreneur. I founded and currently manage a chain of fitness clubs in Mexico City (4), where more than 8,000 people work out every day. I am adventurous, restless, creative, and passionate about innovation and change. If something bores me, I look for a new way to do it, and that's it! So, if someone asks you how to start developing a major gymnastics event, the answer is simple: with passion, leadership, hard work, perseverance, and yes! ... a bit of boldness too!



THE PERFECT PROFILE FOR A NEW PROJECT

What does it take to start a project from scratch, like a National Gymnastics Festival? As I mentioned above, a mix of vision, leadership, creativity, persistence, and, of course, a touch of flexibility and patience. First, you must be able to dream big and figure out how to sell your idea, connecting with key people: leaders, coaches, volunteers, allies, sponsors, and more. And don't forget the essential trustworthiness factor—you need to build credibility so that everyone believes in you, and in the fact that what you propose will truly happen!

Speaking of leadership, which I consider the main ingredient, your past achievements and profile must earn you the reputation of being a "good leader," with an impeccable reputation in your sports community; someone who enjoys working with young people and knows how to coordinate multidisciplinary teams. You also need to have a high tolerance for frustration and the ability to navigate ambiguity, because things never go exactly as planned. In this regard, you must also develop conflict resolution skills while staying calm, as that will be a key part of your job.

Now, regarding the "how," let me share an important detail: leading a new project requires a structured, almost "square" mindset, that organizes everything through methods and processes. It is also essential to know how to train and guide your teams, so they can carry out the countless necessary tasks with quality, documenting everything along the way. Why? Because improving and simplifying is the path to success. And, on top of that, teamwork is your best ally.

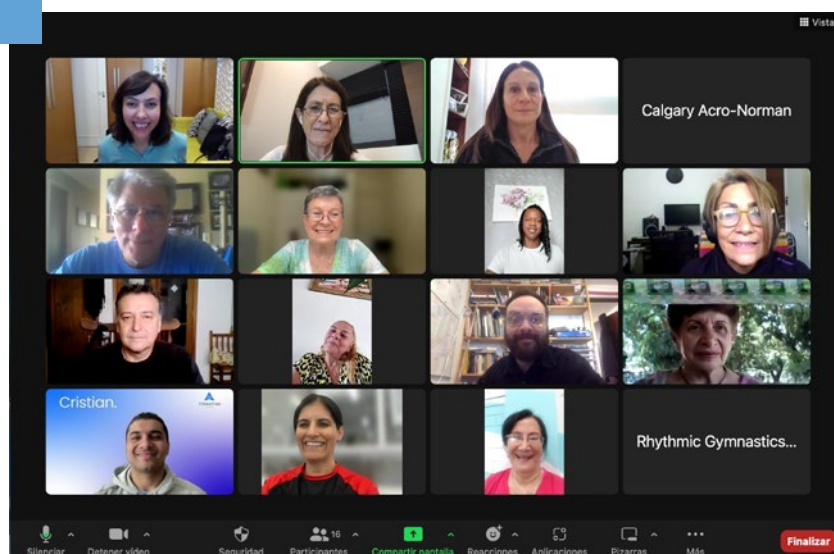
Don't be scared! Organizing a gymnastics festival is not an impossible somersault. On the contrary, with the right tools and support, you can make it a reality! And I say this from experience, thanks to those who trusted me and supported me in my first steps:

from great international mentors like Karl Heinz, Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist, Flemming Knudsen, Ruedi Steuri, Rogério Valério, Tatsuo Araki, from whom I learned a lot by observing, allowing myself to be guided, and, above all, listening and asking questions, to the leaders of the Mexican Gymnastics Federation, who believed in my project and in what we have built together since then, Naomi Valenzo, Gustavo Salazar, Lorena Galán, Cristina Desentis and Carolina Murillo, among others. Their support has been crucial for the development of "Gymnastics for All," and without them, none of this would have been possible. For that, I will always be grateful.

If you are organizing your first event, keep this in mind: "listen to others," learn to "read the environment," faces, silences, etc. People have great ideas you might not have considered, and if you don't listen, you'll miss them.

Be prepared for the unexpected, allow room for unforeseen circumstances, and always have a Plan B. One of the most important things is to be patient because, as a leader, your job will be to stay calm in difficult moments, clarify doubts, resolve conflicts so that no one stops working, and guide the team toward the established goal.

Remember, don't seek perfection—aim to create something meaningful for everyone. The experience of having done it will be your greatest reward. Trust yourself, surround yourself with productive and hardworking people, and learn and adapt along the way, because at the end of the day, organizing events is not about knowing everything, but about being willing to take the leap with courage and solve challenges as they arise. So, I say to you: Cheer up, you can do it!



THE PERFECT PROFILE FOR A NEW PROJECT

What is a festival? More than just an event, for me it is a celebration that brings people together to enjoy, learn, and participate in activities centered around a common theme. In our case, sports and entertainment take center stage. A festival can last from a single day to several days and, beyond being a party, it can reflect traditions, values, and customs of a community or even an entire society.

Some of the most common types of festivals include:

- **Cultural and traditional festivals:** A burst of identity and cultural heritage, such as the famous "Carnival of Brazil", or the vibrant "Day of the Dead" in Mexico.
- **Music festivals:** Where melodies take the spotlight. Think of "[Coachella](#)" in the United States, or the iconic "Glastonbury Festival" in England.
- **Film or art festivals:** A showcase of creativity that promotes visual, literary, or artistic works. Notable examples include the "Cannes Film Festival" and the "Guadalajara Book Fair."
- **Sports or themed festivals—our favorites!** Where everything revolves around sports and physical activity. This is where our beloved "World Gymnaestrada" shines, taking its place as one of the largest sports events in the world.

WHAT MAKES THEM SO SPECIAL?

Festivals are more than just fun; they are meeting points where people come together, interact, and celebrate something meaningful. They include artistic, social, and cultural expressions and they are a reflection of the values and beliefs of those who organize them.

In summary, sports festivals are an incredible way to connect people through sports while preserving the cultural, artistic, and athletic richness of a community. They are the perfect place where a passion for sports and the joy of [social connection come together!](#)



THE MASTER PLAN FOR A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

Organizing a large-scale event like this is no easy task. It requires creativity, coordination, and a lot of determination. These were the pillars that defined our planning, when we first planned the Mexican festival the 1st time:

Step 1. Define the objective and scope of the festival.

If you don't know where you are going, how will you know when you have arrived? Setting clear objectives and scope is the first step in bringing your festival to life. This will help you establish a clear purpose, guide decisions, and keep everyone aligned.

What is your goal? It could be promoting gymnastics, advancing training initiatives, showcasing achievements of the year, providing a platform for artistic expression, or simply creating a space that encourages participants to care for their health and well-being through gymnastics activities. You decide the "why" of your festival!

Know your target audience: Think beyond the participants. Who are the coaches, spectators, suppliers, sponsors, or collaborators you want to involve in this dream? Clearly identifying them and understanding what you expect from them is key to aligning efforts and expectations.

Objetivos SMART



Step 2. Define the style, focus, and size of your event.

A recreational, inclusive, and 100% gymnastics-based festival but without competition or medals? For many in the Mexican gymnastics' community in 2004, this sounded like an idea from another planet. Convincing everyone that this festival was meant only for enjoyment and celebration of gymnastics, without the pressure of winning or losing, was one of the biggest challenges we faced.

To overcome this obstacle, we designed a strategy that united key figures in gymnastics in our country:

- **Support from our Federation:** Having official backing gave us credibility and helped us reach more people within the gymnastics community.
- **Renowned athletes and coaches:** Even those on their way to the Olympic Games joined the cause. Their participation was key to legitimizing the event and increasing its visibility.
- **Commitment from “friendly” clubs:** Several clubs committed to participating from the beginning, which helped generate trust and ensured a solid number of attendees.

Thanks to this combination of efforts, we established a festival that broke with competitive traditions and opened the doors to a different experience, focused on enjoyment, inclusion, and the love of gymnastics.

Step 3. General Planning.

If you don't want to overlook something important, a detailed schedule of activities is your best ally. This timeline will serve as a roadmap guiding the entire process, from preparation to the big day of the festival.

Resources: human, financial, material, and technical

Before moving forward, you need to answer crucial questions:

- What resources will you need?
- Where will they come from?
- How will you organize them?

If you forget to include a key aspect (for example, financial planning), that small oversight can become a big problem. Your sponsors, promoters, and even your own team will ask questions that you won't be able to answer without proper planning that takes everything into account.

The Budget: The Heart of the Project

Be mindful of the numbers! A well-prepared budget can mean the difference between success and disaster. Make sure to include:

- **Income:** Consider sponsorships, registration fees, ticket sales, services, or products you can offer—anything that generates revenue to support your festival.
- **Expenses:** Don't forget to include costs like venue rental, personnel, promotion and marketing, logistics, materials, operations, licenses, taxes, etc.

The goal is to reach the famous “break-even point,” which essentially answers this question: How many people need to attend your event for it to pay for itself? Calculate these figures to avoid ending up in the red and paying out of pocket.

Step 4. Venue Management.

The place you choose will be the stage for everything you envision for your festival, so don't take this decision lightly!

Find the Perfect Venue

The venue should meet the following criteria:

- **Safety regulations compliance**
- **Accessibility for all participants**
- **Sufficient capacity** to accommodate participants, guests, medical staff, collaborators, sponsors, and allies without overcrowding.
- **Everything in Order**

Make sure to obtain the necessary permits and legal licenses well in advance. Ensuring that everything is approved will help you avoid unpleasant surprises.

Space Design

Before committing to a location, define how you will use it:

- Where will the warm-up areas be?
- What space will the main performances take up?
- Where will spectators, food vendors, and other key areas be located?

This initial design will not only facilitate logistics but also allow you to anticipate and resolve potential issues before they arise.





Step 5. Activity Scheduling.

The event's content and activities are its soul, so make sure they are exciting, well-organized, and memorable.

Event Content Design

Here are some ideas we have successfully used in Mexico:

- **Exhibitions and performances:** Gymnastics routines, additional shows, galas, and special performances endorsed by your federation.
- **Workshops or courses:** Learning activities for attendees and training sessions for coaches.
- **Cultural and folkloric presentations:** Add a unique touch that connects with local traditions.
- **Additional activities:** Games, interactive experiences, and other participation opportunities.

Program Organization

- Set the order and duration of each activity.
- Assign responsibilities for each segment.
- Plan logistics to ensure a smooth and uninterrupted experience.
- Organize transitions between activities to move attendees efficiently and without confusion.

Key Ceremonies and Moments

Consider including:

- **Opening and closing ceremonies** that set the tone and bring the event to a stylish conclusion.
- **Recognition and appreciation segments** for teams, participants, and special collaborators.

These additions provide extra value and make the event more memorable.

Click here to watch: Club Neza Hip Hop at Amsterdam 2023 WG - UPAG Gala.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_tZmpMZ_Tc

PROGRAM

*Wellcome to PanAmerican
Gymnastics Night!*

The best and most beautiful thing in the World
can't be seen or even touched.
They must be felt with the heart

Hellen Keller

*An unique journey
to share our souls
with you!*

Celebrate with us!

We want to celebrate!

Our differences, our particularities,
our expresion,
our joy, in few words...

Our way to celebrate life

*Don't cry because it's over
smile because it happened*



Step 6. Team and Volunteer Management.

The team you choose will be the backbone of the event. Without them, nothing would be possible.

Recruitment and Training

Identify key areas and make sure to have:

- Coordinators for each area.
- Coaches and technical staff.
- Volunteers.
- Medical and security personnel, as well as press representatives.

Offer clear training sessions so that everyone knows exactly what they need to do.

Roles and Responsibilities

Assign specific tasks to each team member and ensure they have clear and measurable goals.

A well-defined structure will make event operations more efficient.

Internal and External Communication

Establish a solid communication plan to ensure everyone is aware of developments. This will help coordinate the team and quickly resolve any unforeseen issues.



Step 7. Logistics Planning.

Logistics ensure that everything runs smoothly, and you must design it so that all necessary actions take place correctly, on time, and in the right sequence. There is no room for error here!

Essential Services

Secure essential services such as:

- **Professional sound and lighting** to bring the event to life.
- **Stages and screens** to enhance performances and presentations.
- **Transportation** to ensure all necessary materials and supplies arrive on time and in good condition.

Materials and Equipment

Make sure to secure:

- Rental or purchase of gymnastics equipment, as well as signage, tents, tables, chairs, etc.
- Everything should be available in advance to avoid last-minute complications.

Crowd Flow Management

Organize and design in advance how people will move through different areas of the event:

- Clear entrances and exits for all facilities.
- Comfortable and accessible waiting areas, including rest zones and food courts.
- Well-defined and marked evacuation routes to ensure the safety of all attendees.

Step 8. Safety and Well-being.

No event can be successful if it is not safe! Here's where you put on the firefighter's helmet, the doctor's coat, and even the security vest.

Emergency Plan

Design a plan that covers everything from first aid to fire safety:

- It will help you obtain the necessary legal permits.
- It will ensure that everyone can enjoy the event without concerns.
- Don't forget to include medical personnel ready for any emergency, as well as staff prepared to handle incidents like heavy rain, fires, etc.
- Make sure all evacuation routes are clearly marked in all event areas.

Work with Experts

If the event is large-scale, coordinate with local security forces. Police, firefighters, and emergency responders will be your best allies. Prevention is always better than regret.

Inclusivity Matters

Today, inclusion is not an option—it's an obligation. Ensure your event is accessible to people with disabilities, young children, the elderly, and anyone needing special attention. Taking care of these details shows that your event has heart.

Step 9. Participant Management.

It's time to welcome the gymnasts as "the stars of your event"!

Make the registration process easy and exciting. Be sure to:

- Establish clear participation criteria.
- Inform participants about what the payment (if required) includes - whether it's access to workshops, souvenirs or other perks.
- Create informative newsletters and compelling announcements to keep everyone up to date.
- Create engaging newsletters and calls for participation to keep everyone informed.
- Registration will not only help you stay organized but also provide essential resources and data to fund the event.

Professional-Level Communication

To ensure your participants know you have everything under control, share detailed information about:

- Schedules and timelines.
- Rules and logistics.
- Rehearsals, dress codes, and any other details they need to know.

A well-informed participant is a happy participant!

Comfortable and Functional Spaces

Don't forget to design exclusive areas for them, such as:

- Preparation zones (because no one wants to change in a hallway or feel uncomfortable while doing so).
- Entertainment areas to relax between activities.
- Rest spaces where they can recharge.

Also, make sure they can easily navigate the event without feeling lost. An organized and well-signposted flow is key to creating an optimal experience.



Step 10. Sustainability.

Taking care of the planet never goes out of style! If you want your event to shine not only for its organization but also for its ecological awareness, keep these tips in mind.

Being Green is the Way to Go

Implement sustainable practices to reduce environmental impact. How? Here are some ideas:

- Waste recycling: Say goodbye to uncontrolled trash—sort it out!
- Reduce single-use plastics: Use eco-friendly alternatives whenever possible.
- Promote the use of public and eco-friendly transportation.

More and more attendees value environmentally responsible events, giving your festival a special touch. Plus, educating your audience on the importance of sustainability is always a great idea.

Event Evaluation

The show doesn't end with the last round of applause! What comes next is the analysis to improve and ensure that each future edition is even better, allowing you to capitalize on the experience.

• What Did We Learn?

Once the event is over, gather feedback from: Participants, attendees and your team of collaborators. This will help you understand what worked perfectly, what needs refining, and what you could do differently in future editions. It's the perfect time to learn and improve!

• Measuring Success

Evaluate how well the event's objectives were met. If the strategies were effective—fantastic! If not, it's time to adjust the course for the next festival.

- **Documenting for the Future**

Keeping a record of everything learned is always a good idea. Create manuals for each role, making future editions of your event easier to manage and improve. This way, future work will be a breeze!

The Administrative Wrap-Up

The final step, but no less important, is a solid administrative closure, which will put the perfect finishing touch on your event.

- **Settling Accounts**

Ensure that all pending payments to suppliers, collaborators, and any other involved parties are settled. This is crucial for maintaining excellent business relationships and leaving everything in order.

- **Generating Reports**

Create financial and operational reports that will serve as a foundation for the next edition. You don't want to repeat the same mistakes, and it's essential for someone else to take over the project with ease!

- **Expressing gratitude in style**

Never forget to thank those who made the event possible. Do it in at least three different ways: On social media, at a closing event, and with small gifts, letters, cards, or personalized mentions. A well-closed event leaves a lasting impression—and what better way to wrap things up than by leaving everyone with a smile!





FINAL REFLECTIONS

Planning and organizing a gymnastics festival is surprisingly like entrepreneurship; both require a clear vision and a strategic approach to achieve specific and diverse objectives in an environment full of ambiguity that constantly challenges and tests you.

From my experience in planning and executing various processes—both in festival organization and entrepreneurial projects—it is essential to know your audience. In the case of a festival, it means understanding the expectations of participants and spectators, while in entrepreneurship, it's about knowing the needs and desires of customers to offer products or services that truly resonate with them. That's why detailed planning is crucial.

The more details you can anticipate, the better prepared you'll be to handle setbacks, because they will happen. It's like carrying an umbrella on a cloudy day: it saves you from unexpected downpours! So always keep in mind that you must prepare for the unexpected.

Remember, teamwork is key. Organizing and executing your event will often feel like conducting an orchestra, where every member must play their instrument flawlessly. Assign clear roles so nothing is left up in the air—from logistics so precise it would make a Swiss watch blush, to marketing that captivates the hearts of attendees.

In short, don't forget your audience. Listening to them is like having the golden key to the heart of the event. Conduct surveys or research like a true "Sherlock Holmes" to uncover what they truly want. Once you have that information, personalize the experience and make everyone feel like they're walking the red carpet at your event.

Today, technology can be your greatest ally, making your job much easier—it's like a magic wand that optimizes everything. Use online registration platforms and management software as if you were performing digital wizardry, and measure results like a true mad scientist.

Don't forget that flexibility is essential, so get ready to dance a little! Unexpected situations are like uninvited guests at a party—they can show up at any moment! That's why you should always have a Plan B. Stay proactive and calm, because your attitude will be the star of the show in critical moments.

Although it might be tempting to organize a monstrously big event, remember that sometimes less is more. A successful event isn't always the one that dazzles the most, but the one that leaves a lasting impression on attendees' hearts! Pay attention to every detail, from the layout of the space to the punctuality of each activity—these are the secrets that create memorable experiences.

And don't forget to build long-term relationships with your strategic allies. Foster trust with sponsors and suppliers—their support is like having a squad of superheroes by your side! Look for collaborators who share your values, so teamwork flows like a perfectly choreographed dance, enriching the experience for everyone.

After the show, take a moment to reflect. Evaluate what went well and what needs improvement. Document the entire process as if you were writing your own success biography — this way, you'll always have a guide for future events.

Finally, take care of your team and yourself! Being an organizer is like riding a roller coaster, so maintain a positive work environment and don't demand the impossible.

In the end, celebrate your achievements and thank everyone involved. These gestures not only motivate, but also foster a spirit of camaraderie that will have everyone ready for the next big project!

Now, go and conquer the world of events! Good luck!



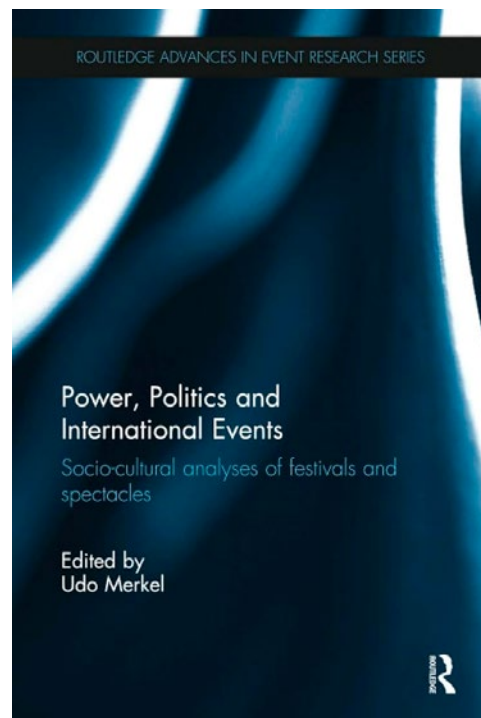
POLITICS, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE PEOPLE:

The multi-layered significance of modern sport events, festivals and spectacles

Udo Merkel

INTRODUCTION

International sports events, such as the Olympics, Football World Cup and the World Gymnaestrada are of local, regional, national and global significance (Roche 2000). Over the last few decades, many have become highly prized commodities, important forums for the articulation of politics, a vehicle for the exercise of power, important public relations and advertising tools, and a platform for the construction, modification and expression of people's collective identities (Merkel 2014 and 2015). It is these three complex themes – politics, public relations and the people – that this chapter intends to explore with particular reference to competitive and non-competitive sports events and, occasionally, cultural festivals and high-profile spectacles.



Systematic and structured research into these issues is more recent, although the history of many events clearly shows that these links between political interests and interference, publicity and propaganda, people's identity discourses and events, festivals and spectacles have been existing for a very long time, as the following examples show:

The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, also known as the Nazi Olympics, are a prime example for the politicization of sports events in the early 20th century and the blatant use of international events as a political, in particular propagandist, tool by Hitler's regime. For them the Olympics provided a symbolically important resource to display the supremacy of the Aryan race (Mandell 1971, pp. 65-95), to promote an image of a new, united, efficient and strong Germany and to camouflage its militarism aspirations. Although the four gold medals of the black American athlete, Jesse Owens, questioned the Nazi ideology of racial superiority, most contemporary commentators consider the 1936 Olympics to be "one of the great public relations coups of all time" (Coe et. al. 1992, p. 127). Houlihan highlights that

“Hitler and the Nazi Olympics showed just how pliable sport was during the Berlin Games where almost every aspect of the Games was manipulated to enhance the prestige of the Third Reich and national socialism” (1994, p. 11). Almost half a century later, during the ‘Big Freeze’ of the Cold War, the Olympic Games were scheduled to take place in Moscow in 1980. The first Games to be held in a communist country are usually remembered for the largest boycott of an Olympics in its history as only 80 nations travelled to Moscow. The boycott was initiated by the US president Jimmy Carter as a central part of a package of actions to protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 (Hill 1996, pp. 120-155).

Long before the take-off of the modern Olympics, the national gymnastics movement (*Turnbewegung*) in 19th century Germany - under the leadership of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) - made significant contributions to the process of state formation in - what was later to become - Germany (Krüger 1996, pp. 409-417). German gymnasts were actively involved in spreading a sense of national awareness and mobilising resistance to the Napoleonic hegemony in fragmented Germany. General educational considerations were only of peripheral interest to Jahn. His primary concern was linking physical exercises with German nationalism. He rejected formalised and disciplined physical exercises and preferred free movements and wild, violent and often war-like games. After all, his proclaimed aim was to physically and morally strengthen the German youth for the liberation from French suppression. The regular participation in physical exercise, involvement in social events organised by the *Turnvereine* (gymnastics clubs) and interaction with other *Turner* (gymnasts) provided the members of this movement with a sense of belonging in a rapidly changing society. It commenced as a simple group identity and developed into a sense of national awareness. **“The annual national gymnastic festivals became an important expression of this new identity and helped to confirm, strengthen and diffuse the desire for national unity through rituals, ceremonies, speeches, flags and other symbols and symbolic displays” (Merkel 2000, p. 191).**





The first German gymnastics festival (*Allgemeines Deutsches Turnfest*) took place in Coburg in 1860. A year later it was held in Berlin, before, in 1863, Leipzig hosted this five-day event which incorporated gymnastic performances, athletic competitions, parades, choir and orchestral performances, feasts, fireworks, various speeches and public exercises of the city's fire brigade that largely comprised local *Turner*. While 14,000 of the 16,000 gymnasts who came from further away were housed individually, the other 2,000 participants were accommodated in large groups in public buildings. These celebrations of physical culture were not pure sport events but highly political occasions as they were explicitly underpinned by and expressed the desire for German unity. Although the name of this event stressed the Germanness of its nature and core values, it is noteworthy that, for example, in 1863 in Leipzig, the 20,000 participants and guests came from 14 countries. However, it took the organisers almost 150 years to rename the event. Since 2005 it has been called the International German Gymnastics Festival (*Internationales Deutsches Turnfest*).

In 2025, Leipzig once again is the host of a large-scale, international gymnastics festival and welcomes athletes, sports enthusiasts, spectators and volunteers. The 5-day programme appears to be a modernized and updated version of the activities the city had organised 162 years ago. It contained a wide variety of sporting competitions, spectacular shows, physical theatre, hands-on activities, public performances, taster sessions, workshops and seminars. As before, and also typical for the World Gymnaestrada, thousands of participants will stay in communal accommodations such as in local schools. While a

small number of people are paid to look after the logistics of this large-scale event, it is the thousands of unpaid volunteers that make events like these special. True to its original philosophy, in particular the non-competitive and inclusive nature of this event, the World Gymnaestrada offers a fascinating and colourful glimpse into the expressive world of aesthetically pleasing choreographed movements of individuals and groups while at the same time promoting the fitness, health and active lifestyles, as well as encouraging international encounters and contacts between the participants. Furthermore, taking part in festivals such as the [Turnfest](#) in Leipzig and the World Gymnaestrada offers a wide variety of opportunities to learn and develop, mix, mingle and connect with like-minded people from all over the world, confirm one's membership in the global gymnastics community, enrich and polish one's sense of collective identity. Despite its relatively short life-span, the [World Gymnaestrada](#) has grown into an event of considerable size that produces multi-layered impacts. Almost 20,000 people from all five continents participated in the last edition in Amsterdam in 2023. That constitutes a fourfold increase compared to the first festival (see [Vienna, Austria, 1965](#)) of this kind in Rotterdam in 1953.

For host cities such as the above-mentioned Leipzig and Amsterdam, sport events, in particular high-profile mediated competitions, help to achieve a large number of socio-political, economic and cultural objectives. Such events are ideal marketing and branding tools, tend to contribute to a city's image, improve its reputation, promote (sports) tourism, create job opportunities, particularly in the travel, tourism and hospitality industries, are good for local businesses and frequently a catalyst for urban renewal and development (Smith 2012). The latter applies particularly to events that are not linked to a specific location, do not have a fixed home, and move around like a circus. The hosting of sports events in urban environments helps cities to develop a distinctive, unique and recognisable identity, which is nowadays considered to be one of the most important assets and a precondition for the communication of a city's image and core values in order to achieve a competitive advantage, for example, to attract tourists. For this purpose, a large number of traditional and, previously, local rituals, events, festivals and spectacles have been repackaged over the last few decades and integrated in the entertainment industry that tourists are happy to pay for (Picard and Robinson 2006).

All the above-mentioned examples have touched upon the key themes of this chapter, that is politics, public relations and the people, in particular participants and spectators. Although there are obviously considerable overlaps, intersections and even interdependencies between these fields, for analytical reasons, they will be dealt with in separate sections. Eventually, this chapter will also address a number of tensions and conflicts between different stakeholders in the events industry.

POLITICS: EVENTS AS A MULTI-PURPOSE TOOL

In 1945, George Orwell got it fairly right describing international sport events bluntly as “war minus the shooting” suggesting that “serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence” (Orwell 1945). In the late 1960s, Philip Goodhart and Christopher Chataway offered a more systematic and detailed account of the problematic relationship between international sport events and politics. They suggested that the increased interest in international sport in the 20th century was closely linked to the rise of nationalism and the growing involvement of states in sport.

“Over recent decades the Communist countries have invested generously in sport, primarily in order to demonstrate their own people and to the world the superiority of their political system. In Western democracies, governments may have been slower to look at sport in this light, but attitudes are changing with the growing belief that a country’s prestige is involved on the sports field.” (Goodhart and Chataway 1968, p. 157)

All three, Orwell, Goodhart and Chataway, were somehow right but also wrong in two respects. First, they did not seem to be aware of the politicization of sport and physical exercises in the previous centuries. After the French Revolution (1789-99) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-15) the European continent was marked by a high degree of geographical fragmentation and political instability which resulted in the steady growth of powerful forces that challenged the existing order. Several socio-political movements pursued national unification and liberation from foreign rule.

“In this context, various gymnastics movements and their festivals played a significant role in the development and spread of distinctive collective, national identities, hence undermining the existing political power structures. By combining mass participation in gymnastics with social, cultural and political activities, these festivals had a distinct political agenda that went far beyond physical fitness, health and recreation.” (Wichmann 2015, p. 229)

This approach of politically using gymnastics, for example, for the promotion of distinct national identities can still be observed in India (McDonald 1999) and, most pronounced, in the context of North Korea’s breath-taking mass games that are meant to demonstrate the uniqueness and success of the country’s political system, the popularity of its rulers, foster an alternative discourse about the impoverished and isolated nation, gain international recognition and generate a positive reputation. Second, Orwell, Goodhart and Chataway completely underestimated the extent and enormity of the politicization of sport, in general, and sport events, in particular. Furthermore, the reality of the politicization of international sport spectacles has become much more complex as not only states and governments but also individuals, groups, social movements, political parties and terrorist organizations have used such events as a stage to convey their political messages, and/or express their dissent. It is particularly states and governments that have developed a keen appetite for hosting, and participating in, mega sports events. That is usually driven by a specific set of political objectives. Particularly as hosts, states and governments hope to achieve several positive impacts. At the same time, there is little doubt that the involvement of states, governments and politicians is hardly ever motivated by a genuine interest in the event, the performances of the sportsmen and women, the display of athletic excellence, or driven by a hedonistic rationale. Instead, their interest in, and support for, sports events is usually linked to a long list of politically desirable outcomes. Although these positive impacts vary across the world, they can be organized in two broad categories: a domestic and an international agenda.

With reference to the domestic political agenda attached to the hosting of, and participation in, international sports events, key objectives are to promote nation-building processes, system maintenance, social cohesion, income generation, social, educational and cultural

policies, and offer short-lived diversion and distraction. Key items on the international political agenda are the striving for international recognition, fostering of a positive image, the creation of propaganda and public relations opportunities, and engagement in foreign policy and/or diplomatic activities (Merkel 2014, p.15). **“While the extent of long-term change attributed to mega-events remains open to debate, it is widely acknowledged that events on the scale of the Summer Olympic Games can transform entire nations and act as a catalyst for change” (Foley et. al. 2012, p. 3).**

It would be beyond the scope of this chapter to offer detailed accounts of all of these desirable impacts, as all of them are quite complex phenomena. However, a few examples demonstrating the close relationship between sports events and international politics (Levermore and Budd 2004) may be useful in order to illustrate the multi-dimensional political nature of international sports events. A few of the other issues, for example the construction of various identities and the accumulation of soft power, will be addressed in different contexts in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

The use and importance of international sports events as a foreign policy tool grew considerably in the 20th century. The 1936 Olympic Games have already been mentioned. In 1978, the Football World Cup in Argentina served a similar function as the hosts were keen to boost the image of this troubled South-American state abroad and to legitimize General Videla's totalitarian regime domestically. During the Videla's dictatorship (1976-83) 30,000 men and women disappeared. Many were kidnapped, tortured and executed. Prior to the start of the tournament, a number of countries expressed concern about playing in Argentina due to the junta's dismal human rights record. However, as the junta guaranteed that there would be no violence during the tournament the widespread call to boycott the event did not materialize and all of the top soccer playing nations attended, provided they qualified (Kuper 1996, pp. 208-221).

Both Hitler and Videla have in common that their regimes did not apply to host the Olympics and the World Cup respectively. The IOC awarded the 1936 Summer Olympics to Berlin already before Hitler came to power. The politicians of the Weimar Republic (1918-33) had hoped to celebrate the emergence of a democratic and progressive German state and its re-admittance to the European community of nations after its isolation in the aftermath of World War I (Merkel, 2002). In Argentina, the situation was very similar since FIFA had awarded the right to host the World Cup already in the early 1970s. Both dictators, however, made good use of their 'inheritance' by improving their reputation abroad through staging an impressive international sport event.

The history of the post-World War II mega sports events is one of several sporting embargos that commenced in the 1950s and, more or less, ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Boycotts as a form of political protest and resistance have, historically, proved popular. The 1956 Melbourne Olympics were boycotted by the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland because of the repression of the Hungarian uprising by the Warsaw Pact. Cambodia, Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon refused to compete in reaction to the Suez Crises. Twenty years later, the apartheid system in South Africa became the focus of international political attention with the 1976 Olympic Games suffering from a massive boycott of African states after New Zealand's rugby team had toured South Africa and severely undermined the Gleneagles agreement of the former Commonwealth countries. The 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow have been mentioned above. Four years later, Los Angeles hosted the Olympic Games. The Soviet Union and 14 of her political allies boycotted the event, citing grave concerns over the safety of their athletes in what they perceived to be an anti-communist environment. They also accused the American hosts of using the

Games for political purposes and stirring up anti-Soviet propaganda. It was widely regarded as a retaliatory move for the 1980 boycott. Despite the absence of the Eastern bloc, the Los Angeles Games boasted 140 nations, more than at any previous Olympics. There is little doubt that the 1980 and the 1984 boycotts were an integral part of the Cold War (1945-91) that robbed an entire generation of top-level athletes on both sides of the Iron Curtain the opportunity to compete on the world's grandest sporting stage, the Olympics.

Although the boycott of whole nations is certainly memorable, the unexpected, creative, symbolically powerful and moving actions of individuals or small groups are often more impressive. In 1968 during the Mexico Summer Olympics, one medal ceremony left its mark on Olympic history.



The photographs of two Black American sprinters, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, standing on the medal podium with their heads bowed and fists raised not only represent one of the most famous moments in Olympic history but also a milestone in America's civil rights movement. In the 200-meter race, Smith won the gold and Carlos the bronze medal. As the American flag rose and the anthem played, the two closed their eyes, bowed their heads, and began their protest which became an unforgettable scene of Olympic history (Sage 1998, pp. 117-118).

Smith later told the media that he raised his right, black-glove-covered fist in the air to represent black power in America while Carlos' left, black-glove-covered fist represented unity in black America. Together they formed an arch of unity and power. The black scarf around Smith's neck stood for black pride and their black socks (both athletes did not wear any shoes) represented black poverty in America. The actions of Smith and Carlos were met with such outrage that they were suspended from their national team, banned from the Olympic Village and stripped of their medals.

In February 2025, that is 57 years after the Mexico Olympics, the Jamaican footballer Khadija Shaw scored twice in her team's victory over Liverpool FC in the English Women's Super League. Manchester City's well-known and prolific black forward celebrated her first goal by lowering her head and raising her right fist covered in a black glove after receiving and suffering from racist and misogynistic online insults. She clearly replicated Smith and Carlos' Black Power salute from 1968 challenging the widespread discriminatory attitudes in many European football grounds (Merkel, 2025).

On the other side of our planet, in South-East Asia, North and South Korea frequently used international sport competitions to remind global audiences of the divided Korean nation stressing their commitment to reconciliation and reunification of the divided peninsula. Both countries' teams often marched together at Olympic and Asian Games opening ceremonies, used the name 'Korea' and assembled behind a white flag with the shape of the Korean peninsula embroidered in a deep blue (Merkel, 2008). Quite recently,

sportsmen and women from South and North Korea entered PyeongChang's Olympic stadium together as a unified team at the opening ceremony of the 2018 Winter Olympics. They wore the same outfit and marched behind the Korean unification flag, which was carried in tandem by a North and South Korean athlete. Later in the proceedings, two female Korean ice hockey players, one from each country, carried the torch together on its final leg to ignite the Olympic cauldron. Former South Korean president, Moon Jae-in, could not have hoped for more powerful and emotional images to his courageous approach to dealing with North Korea. Back in June 2017 he had invited North Korea to attend the Olympic Winter Games, a risky political gesture that eventually paid off.

The previous examples constitute only the tip of the (metaphorical and political) iceberg as there are dozens of other examples that could have been cited in order to demonstrate the close relationship between international politics and sport events. Particularly the opening ceremonies of mega sports events, that have increasingly become sophisticated cultural spectacles, allow the hosts to convey explicit political messages to the rest of the world. In general, Olympic extravaganzas serve two main functions: First, they provide the citizens of the host nation with a distinct sense of self and make significant contributions to their national identity and pride. Second, due to the extensive television coverage of these events they are prestigious, high-profile, global marketing opportunities allowing countries to portray themselves in the best possible light. As such they are often part of wider public relations and nation branding campaigns that will be discussed next.

PROPAGANDA, PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS: PLACE IDENTITY AND SOFT POWER

As touched upon in the previous section, the hosting of events is meant to have, and can indeed produce, a number of positive impacts for the host community. That applies particularly to those - usually international - events that attract extensive media coverage. The latter is, of course, a vital precondition for public relations campaigns, propaganda and publicity purposes. In this context, two very current phenomena and concepts stand out: the creation of place identities and the production of - what Joseph Nye (2004) has coined - soft power. The former is a relatively straight-forward modern development, while the latter is rather complex but certainly of utmost importance in contemporary international relations, except for the Trump administration in the USA and Putin's regime in Russia, who - like dinosaurs - only relish traditional sources of power such as their economic and military capabilities, respectively.

There is little doubt that most people immediately associate the Notting Hill Carnival and the Wimbledon Championships with London, the Opera Ball with Vienna, the Mardi Grass with New Orleans, the Oktoberfest with either Munich or, perhaps, Blumenau in Brazil, the Sanfermines Running of the Bulls with Pamplona in Spain, the Hogmanay New Year's Eve festival with Edinburgh, the Highland Games with Scotland, the Burning Man Festival with Nevada's desert, and the Montreux Jazz Festival with Switzerland. In a nutshell, specific, unique and renowned events are able to give places, such as towns, cities and sometimes even regions, a distinctive and lasting identity. In comparison, nomadic events such as the Olympics may help to improve a city's reputation (or not) but that is usually a short-lived phenomenon and they certainly do not contribute to the creation of a distinct identity. A

“place identity is now frequently associated (in the minds of potential visitors, investors and residents, at least) with what it sells, what it creates and what it represents in terms of aesthetic attributes” (Foley et. al. 2012, p. 77). The above-mentioned events are frequently

referred to as hallmark events (Hall 1992) as they cannot be separated from the city or region where they take place. They are defined as a major, internationally known event of limited duration that occurs regularly in the same location.

The notion, composition, construction and impact of soft power is much more complex. According to Nye, who introduced this term in the late 1980s, the concept of soft power describes the ability of a country to attract and persuade rather than coerce or use force. While hard power draws on, and utilizes, economic and military might, soft power arises from a country's attractiveness, reputation and popularity of its culture, norms and values, political ideals and policies. Nye suggests that **"seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive"** (Nye 2004, X). In addition to these assets that tend to generate attraction, favourable public opinion, credibility and even legitimacy, the flawless and creative hosting of, and successful participation in, glamorous international events provide another high-profile and visible resource of soft power. Extravagant shows, such as the Olympic opening ceremonies and royal parades (annually or in the context of coronations and weddings), offer unique and high-profile opportunities to showcase a country's wealth of soft power. The 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, the 2010 Shanghai Expo and the 2022 Winter Olympics (not really) in Beijing clearly show that China takes this task very seriously. These events repeatedly presented the country's main assets: its rich civilization, cultural heritage, desire for global harmony, its status as an athletic powerhouse, its technological advances and global aspirations.

But it is also the governments of smaller countries who view events as public relations opportunities and (try to) use them to improve their international recognition, prestige and soft power. Since 2011, Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, has annually hosted a fashion show. Instead of human rights violations by the Taliban, political repression, humanitarian crises and poverty, this event is meant to showcase a more positive, secular, progressive and brighter side of Pakistan. Holding such an event is expected to make a change to the normally negative and worrying news about the country. However, the local Islamic clergy continues to be up in arms over this display of more open-minded, liberal, Western attitudes.



North Korea's political elite has been even more innovative and creative in their strategic attempts to improve the country's image and reputation and to generate soft power. For that purpose, they have promoted a remarkably different model of physical culture. It manifests itself in the mass games, which the country has more or less regularly staged since 1946. Nowadays, these extravagant and impressive performances can best be described as a spectacular dance, gymnastic and acrobatic show involving up to 100,000 young people in Pyongyang's 150,000-capacity May Day Stadium. The 90-minute performance consists of three distinct components: First, a floorshow of complex, highly choreographed and flawless group routines executed by tens of thousands of gymnasts (with large artificial flowers, flags, hoops, balls, ropes and clubs), acrobats (with poles, ladders, springboards, trampolines and large metal wheels) and dancers. The cast also includes a military tattoo, hordes of waving, smiling children, an aerial ballet by dancers on bungee ropes and military personnel performing taekwondo routines in the centre of the stadium. Second, the backdrop, which comprises a giant human mosaic forming colourful, elaborate and detailed images of historical and contemporary scenes, landscapes, architecture, objects, slogans, cartoons, and, of course, portraits of the country's previous leaders. More than 20,000 school children hold up coloured cards, which are part of a large book, and turn them so quickly and in complete unison, that these images appear to be animated. Third, the music that provides an acoustic connection between the backdrop and the floor show (Merkel, 2013).



This mass pageant celebrates uniformity, collectivism, the important historical events and exaggerates the regime's mediocre achievements. Furthermore, it aims to generate and consolidate a sense of membership in a unique political community for all North Korean citizens. It also emphasizes fundamental political dictums, rejects modernization and bemoans the unjust political division of the Korean people. The event makes full use of the poverty-stricken nation's most valuable natural resource: the inexpensive labour of highly educated and utterly obedient young people. The sheer magnitude and exuberance of the mass games is overwhelming, and the design and choreography are impressive visual pleasures. In addition to entertainment and propaganda for local people the mass games provide the North Korean rulers with a rare and unrivalled opportunity to present the usually secretive and secluded state to the rest of the world and to exhibit the strength and vigour of its political system. Allowing a small number of western and Chinese tourists to see the mass games is also meant to demonstrate more openness and transparency.

In addition to the production of soft power, international events can also act as a general barometer of the hosts' international standing and reputation, and often reveal other countries' perceptions, anxieties and concerns. In 2006, Germany hosted the Football World Cup, which turned out to be one of the best ever as several stakeholders such as participating teams, travelling fans, sport officials, journalists as well as high-profile politicians, including Kofi Annan and Tony Blair, confirmed (Harding 2006, p. 24). This overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic feedback from around the world was not limited to the smooth organization. The event confirmed that the Germans were not only good at planning and throwing a decent party but also that the country's inhabitants could be fun-loving hedonists. Germany presented itself as a confident, creative and multicultural host, a place where visiting fans were not segregated but encouraged to mix. Fans without tickets were not treated suspiciously but were given a warm reception and invited to watch matches on giant screens that had been put up in almost every city and town centre. "Germany 2006 was the most 'fan'-oriented event in the tournament's 76-year history" (Frew and McGillivray 2008, p. 187). Germans appeared to have forgotten the country's economic challenges, at least for a short period, as the World Cup transformed Germany's own internal mood. Germany's often uninspired, dull and calculating football victories of the past had been a methodical reflection of the country's self-image and desperate attempts to not put a foot wrong. The new, more attractive and somewhat successful playing style clearly reflected wider changes, in particular the discovery of a healthy, confident and non-threatening patriotism. Millions of Germans publicly embraced the national flag and attached it to windows, balconies, cars, bicycles and prams. German wigs were as popular as flags painted on young people's faces. In the past, this spontaneous wave of national feeling and patriotism would have caused a media-orchestrated public outcry of indignation and anger abroad, reminding the Germans of their sinister Nazi past. On this occasion, British, Dutch and even Israeli media accounts were surprisingly positive, respectful and, at times, even commendable (Harding 2006, p. 8).

The above-mentioned countries, China, North Korea and Pakistan, are, of course, also known for their authoritarian regimes and dismal human rights records. So are Qatar, the host of the Football World Cup in 2022, and Russia, who staged the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi and football's most prestigious global competition in 2018. Using high profile international sports events as means to polish a country's tarnished image, for example caused by human rights violations, is called 'sportswashing'. That is also what Saudi Arabia has more recently become involved in. The country has been very keen to become recognised as a key destination for international sports events. Most recently it agreed to host the inaugural Olympic Esports Games in 2025, the Asian Winter Games in 2029

and the Football World Cup in 2034. In addition to legitimizing the country's oppressive regime and distracting from its disconcerting record of human rights violations, Saudi Arabia's keen interest in hosting sports events is caused by the country's desperate need to diversify its economy and reduce its dependency on the export of gas and oil. The country's capital, Riyadh, will also host the EXPO 2030 world fair, which is another means to improve the country's image and reputation.

Although the current shift from western to non-western countries hosting mega sports and other prominent events is certainly laudable as it reinforces and reflects a stronger emphasis on the principle of inclusion, the lack of respect for basic human rights by some of the host countries is despicable.

PEOPLE: IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY

As outlined above, events are able to provide places, such as towns, cities and regions, with a distinctive and often unique identity that plays an important role in branding, marketing and advertising campaigns to attract tourism, financial investment, new businesses, a skilled workforce, conventions and conferences. However, they do more than that as they provide people, who participate in events of all different kinds, with a heightened sense of belonging and the temporary experience of being part of a community of like-minded individuals. That means, they offer the attendees a platform for developing, consolidating, modifying and expressing their sense of who they are. That is one of the most important reasons why the events industry has grown dramatically over the last few decades. The above-mentioned increase of the number of participants in the World Gymnaestrada confirms this. So does the ticket sale for the 2025 Glastonbury Festival. The 200,000 tickets for the 5-day music event were sold out in less than 40 minutes. Therefore, this section focuses on the construction of identities and communities in the context of events, festivals and spectacle.

These processes of identity construction in the context of large gatherings of people are rather complex and multi-dimensional. Many events and festivals confirm and reinforce identities, whilst others question and challenge traditional identities; some help to modify and reshape established identities, whereas others generate new identities or intend to reposition existing identities. Identity formation processes explicitly motivate some festivals and events; for others, it is an unintended by-product. With the help of symbolic systems and signifying processes, events and festivals create and offer distinctive meanings, which help individuals to form communities and make sense of who they are. These socio-cultural processes define and shape both individual and collective identities and have done so for some time, as the following three examples will show.

The 1969 Woodstock Festival of Music and Art was a memorable gathering of around half a million young, like-minded US citizens. Most of them questioned mainstream American norms and values that were underpinned by material desires, opposed the Vietnam War (1955-75), supported the civil rights movement, which fought for justice and equality for Black Americans, wore unconventional clothes, explored alternative lifestyles, such as communal living, and experimented with sex and drugs. The festival caught the attention of the world as its essence was rooted in and combined music, social responsibility and independent, alternative forms of thinking and living. But, more importantly, Woodstock defined, shaped and expressed the identity of a new generation of young people, the Woodstock Nation (Hoffman 1993). Although the organizers of Woodstock were neither hippies nor civil rights or anti-war activists, the event brought together and united the energies of various counter-

cultural groups. Woodstock participants experienced the birth and 'christening' of a new identity that offered them a different sense of social belonging inspired by a reflective and dynamic relationship between music and citizenship.

In sharp contrast, football fans in the various European leagues tend to be more conservative and do not necessarily challenge established social and political structures. The frequent matches of their respective teams play a crucial role in their desire to express their identity, experience an intense sense of community and celebrate their distinctive local and cultural identities. For many traditional fans, attending a football match is about experiencing and expressing a sense of belonging through the emotional engagement with other like-minded fans. The uniform outward appearance of many fans provides a clear expression of their identity, displays their community membership and a sense of belonging (Finn and Giulianotti 2000; Giulianotti 2002; Merkel 1999; Ward and Williams 2010).

Cultural traditions also play a very significant role in the third example that demonstrates the close relationship and intersections between events, identity and community formation. In October 2015, the city of Palmas in the Amazon jungle of Brazil hosted the first World Indigenous Games.

“Over 2,000 athletes representing nearly 50 different ethnic groups (including 22 from Brazil alone) participated in a variety of events, from a few Western-style games to many Indigenous traditional games. Some events were competitive, such as canoeing, archery, the spear toss, and the 100-meter rustic race, while others were demonstrative events, such as the football-like game of xikunahity, in which players control the ball only with their heads” (White-Mobley 2015).

Of course, this indigenous festival is an unconventional and low-profile alternative to the sporting spectacles that Brazil hosted in 2014, the Football World Cup, and 2016, the Rio de Janeiro Summer Olympics. However, this coming together of traditional tribal cultures offered these communities – a few with limited contacts to the outside world – a rare chance to interact with each other, unite, celebrate and reflect on their identities.

This trio of examples clearly confirms that identities are social constructions. There is nothing inherent or inevitable about the identities we hold. Their formation occurs within specific socio-economic, political and cultural contexts. They are the outcomes of social interaction and can only be understood adequately in relation to the social environment, in particular in relation to other identities and communities. Jenkins argues that **“identifying ourselves, or others, is a matter of meaning, and meaning always involves interaction: agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation”** (2008, p. 17).

Academic discussions about the social significance and changing nature of identity and community can be traced back to the origins of both German and French sociology over a century ago. Some of the most influential and ground-breaking thinkers, such as Karl Marx (1818-83), Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936), had a keen interest in the way people create communities and form social identities on the basis of a strong sense of shared interests, characteristics, values and beliefs, and reinforced through a variety of cultural practices and rituals. Despite their very different approaches to the study of identity, all agreed that a collective consciousness, which defines membership in, and the solidarity of, a group, is developed through action and interaction of individuals. It creates social integration and holds these communities and, ultimately, society together.

More recently, substantial contributions to the analysis of community and identity issues have been made by Benedict Anderson (1983), Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Rangers (1983), Anthony Cohen (1985), Michel Maffesoli (1996) and Kevin Hetherington (1998) – to name just a few of those whose ideas and theories underpin the academic study of communities and identities. To give the readers a sense of what these sociological explanations look like, a quick summary of Cohen's, Maffesoli's and Hetherington's ideas are presented as they are very applicable to the world of sport events.

According to the British anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1985), a community is a meaningful system of cultural practices, patterns and values that provides its members with a sense of belonging and, ultimately, an identity. He stresses that the concept of community entails that members of a collective share a set of common characteristics that clearly distinguishes them from other groups. For Cohen, the concept of community can only be fully understood with reference to belonging and similarity, on one hand, and differences and boundaries on the other. Both sameness and differences become very visible and are reinforced through the setting of boundaries as they protect the unifying elements that define a group's identity and demarcate it from other collectives. The **“boundary encapsulates the identity of the community and, like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction”** (Cohen 1985, p. 12). Importantly, it is not the boundary as such, but what the boundary means to people, or, “more precisely, about the meanings they give to it” (Cohen 1985, p. 12) and how it is experienced that matters in this context.

The French sociologist Michel Maffesoli (1996) introduced the notion of neo-tribes in the late 1980s in the wider context of discussions about postmodernism. The term refers to social communities that people create on the basis of emotional solidarity and in response to the increasing fragmentation and individualization of social life. Whereas, traditionally, geography and kinship defined membership in tribes, nowadays tribes are more fluid and transient, and come together for the duration of rituals, performances and special occasions. Their shared emotional solidarity only exists in specific contexts, in a particular period of time and for a specific reason, such as the pursuit of a common interest or the duration of a festival.

Kevin Hetherington, a geographer and sociologist, critically interrogated the concept of neo-tribes and questioned a number of Maffesoli's ideas. He suggests that neo-tribes are intentional “communities of feeling” (Hetherington 1998, p. 49) and, as such, they offer expressive rather than rational identities. They reveal a **“troubled politics of identity in which people try to renegotiate their identities”** (p. 53). Hetherington also acknowledges that older sources of identity, such as class, gender and ethnicity, continue to influence identity discourses of neo-tribes. According to Maffesoli, however, identities are shaped and constructed through the practices that derive from the chosen focus of the neo-tribes and their emotional ties, but do not arise from the members' positions in the social structures (p. 56). Hetherington also observed that neo-tribes exhibit their collective identities through distinctive symbolisms and conspicuous styles.

Research into the relationship between sports events and national identity has been dominated by a focus on high-profile international spectacles such as the Olympic Games and the Football World Cup, often in the wider context of globalization debates (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999; Kelly and Brownell 2011; Merkel 2006; Price and Dayan 2008; Schaffer and Smith 2000; Smith and Porter 2004; Sugden and Tomlinson 1994; Tomlinson and Young 2006). Angela Wichmann's study (2015) constitutes a notable exception as her thorough and systematic qualitative research focuses on the notions of community and identity in the context of the World Gymnaestrada. She concludes that the attendees:

“interact and negotiate a specific collective identity that unfolds not only in a social but a bodily sense. Being accommodated in schools, sharing a classroom for one week, and participating in a group display all go to shape the collective World Gymnaestrada identity. The two aspects, the physical and social experience of the participants’ shared identity, are connected to each other, concertedly flowing into a particular interplay between the individual and the collective, with all this occurring in a supra-national context. At the World Gymnaestrada, the participants’ identity reveals itself dialogically and embeds the individual in a whole that transcends the self, not only socially but physically in and through the group display. There, it is the collective achievement that matters, yet each individual is needed to reach this goal.” (Wichmann 2015, p. 238)

She further observed that the construction of the participants’ collective identity commences already at the rehearsal stage. Key sources that shape and underpin this identity project are the degree of interest in, and commitment to, gymnastics, in general, and the group display at the World Gymnaestrada. While being at the event, one’s identity as a World Gymnaestrada participant is firm, fixed and stable for a short period of time, and yet it is episodic and perpetual as the event will happen again in the near future. Wichmann concludes **“that at the World Gymnaestrada, it is the strong dialogical nature, the constant interplay between the individual and the collective, on both a social and physical level, that serve as the mediating device between these binaries”** (2015, p. 239).



CONCLUSION: TENSIONS, CONTRADICTIONS AND CONFLICTS

Initially, the academic study of sport events, festivals and spectacles was dominated by scholars with a keen interest in management and business studies. Subsequently, social scientists offered a different approach and started to critically investigate the socio-historical, economic, political and cultural significance of all kinds of different events (Andrews and Leopold 2013). It goes without saying that this chapter needs to be located in the latter field of academic enquiries as it explored three prominent, far-reaching and contemporary aspects: the use of events as a political tool in national and international environments; their contributions to various kinds of public relations activities ranging from the local to the global; and their role as anchors and sources for both temporary community experiences and lasting identity narratives. There are, of course, intersections between these three major themes. These overlaps simply reflect the complexity of both large-scale sports and cultural events that this chapter addressed. Indirectly, and only fleetingly, the chapter touched upon several changes over time and historical continuities and discontinuities. So far, this chapter did not pay any attention to the large number of contradictions and tensions between different stakeholders. This will now be made up for.

The following four examples are meant to illustrate the nature, causes and scope of different conflicts:

- 1.** While the vast majority of events' attendees, in particular spectators, have a genuine interest in listening to their favourite musicians and bands live, seeing and supporting their local football team, admiring the latest works of their preferred painters or sculptors, watching colourful and exuberant carnival parades, and appreciating the creative and aesthetically pleasing performances of fellow gymnasts, local, regional and national politicians are rarely interested in the contents of the events, festivals and spectacles their city, region or country hosts. Their primary concern is the positive impacts that they wish these occasions will produce. As such they see the hosting of events as merely a means to achieve certain ends. The same quite often applies to sponsors or advertisers as they are most concerned about reaching large audiences for marketing purposes.
- 2.** In the world of professional football the tensions between fans and the powerful commercial forces such as sponsors in conjunction with the media are most obvious and frequently visible. Many traditional football supporters and fans in Europe, in particular the very outspoken and often very creative ultras, explicitly reject the increasing commercialization and bourgeoisification of football. However, their fight to preserve and maintain traditional, often very masculine, values and cultural practices is not driven by a generic anti-capitalism agenda. It is primarily about ownership, community and identity issues that are threatened by commercial forces that have repeatedly shown a total disregard for the socio-cultural roots and multifaceted significance of football clubs and teams for the local community.
- 3.** It is not only the powerful commercial forces that have little interest in the socio-economic past and cultural anchors of this sport. FIFA itself, the global governing body of this sport and Zthe right to host the World Cup to Qatar (2022) and Saudi Arabia (2034). Prior to FIFA's decisions, the two Middle-Eastern countries had no notable football history nor a suitable infrastructure, most importantly stadiums. Although Qatar completed the

construction of the football grounds ahead of schedule, there was a global outcry about the inhuman and exploitative treatment and several hundred deaths of migrant workers. Saudi Arabia will also be required to build stadiums and infrastructure. While money is unlikely an issue for the country, it is very likely to be closely watched for the treatment of the largely foreign work force and frequently be challenged on its systemic violations of basic human rights, such as the discriminatory treatment of women and the LGBTQ+ community. This increasing deterritorialization also affects other sports with, for example, several matches of the NFL, the National Football League in the USA, nowadays played in Europe.

4. Another cause for tensions and conflicts frequently derives from gender issues, in particular those rules and regulations that stipulate dress codes and, thus, the representation of female bodies. In June 2012, widespread protests greeted an exhibition match that was played by women in skimpy outfits from the US Lingerie Football League in Sydney. Nowadays operating under the name of Extreme Football League (X League), the uniforms of the female players contractually comprise shoulder, elbow and knee pads, garters, bras, and ice hockey-style helmets with transparent visors. No wonder that critics have accused the organizers of gross sexism. They argue that the set-up of this event relies heavily on the soft-pornographic images of underdressed women, promotes voyeurism and violence, is more interested in women's sexuality rather than athleticism, offers inadequate role models for female athletes and, more generally, exacerbates the negative impacts of the hyper-sexualization of women and girls in popular culture. In sharp contrast, France continues to violate the human rights of Muslim women by banning the wearing of ostensibly religious clothing and symbols, such as hijabs or headscarfs, in sport. The ban is justified by the country's strict commitment to the principle of secularism, although it contradicts the more relaxed and accommodating rules of many international sport governing bodies.

Although the World Gymnaestrada remains a largely under-researched international event – despite its magnitude of socio-cultural impacts – there is little doubt that its non-competitive nature and continuous commitment to the Gymnastics for All principle (Patricio and Carbinatto 2023) prevented this event from being appropriated, modified, instrumentalized and abused by powerful forces outside the gymnastics community. In addition to the principle of inclusion, there are, at least, two other socio-political factors that explain the growing popularity – as reflected in the steady increase of the number of participants – of the World Gymnaestrada: First, events in which there is no strict segregation between the producers and consumers of the experience – in fact, in the World Gymnaestrada producers and consumers are very much the same – have always been very popular with people due to the absence of strict (spatial and role) boundaries, their high degree of commitment and their detailed understanding of the intricacies of performances by all participants. This version of active leisure also empowers the attendees, increases their self-esteem and gives them respect. Second, an inclusive approach to the staging of an event inevitably leads to a high degree of diversity. Although women continue to vastly outnumber men in the World Gymnaestrada, there is no doubt about the diversity of the participants in terms of age, experience, social background, ethnicity and skill levels. In terms of intrinsic motivations, [Bortoleto et. al. \(2023, pp. 756 - 763\)](#) have clearly identified social interaction and affiliation with other gymnasts, skill development and healthy lifestyle management as key factors based on their largely quantitative investigation of 1024 World Gymnaestrada participants in Dornbirn in Austria in 2019.



Much like the Olympic Games, the World Gymnaestrada takes place every four years. That is, and should also remain so in the future, one of the very few characteristics these two international sport events have in common. One could even argue that the non-competitive display of physical performances in the World Gymnaestrada implicitly offers a powerful critique of the pronounced elitism and exclusive focus on top-level achievements of the Olympics. That also applies to the dichotomy of international understanding, appreciation and contacts, on one side, and the dangerous and exaggerated and divisive celebrations of nationalism accompanied by the construction of hierarchies such as undifferentiated and simplistic medal tables, on the other. I would even go so far and suggest that the obsession with top-level sports performances and breaking previous records, the hyper-commercialisation, unhealthy spectacularisation, complete politicization and lack of sustainability of the Olympics should not become a role model or template for the future of the World Gymnaestrada.

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A REPORT ON THE 6TH ASIAN GYMNAESTRADA, MONGOLIA 2024

Araki Tatsuo and Yumiko Itoh

Event: 6th Asian Gymnaestrada

Date: 13th - 15th September

Place: Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Participating countries: Mongolia, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Germany, Denmark

Participants: 1000 from 10 Mongolian teams and 9 international teams



After postponing the event due to the pandemic, the 6th Asian Gymnaestrada in Mongolia, was finally held in September 2024. Despite the high cost of post-pandemic airfares and hotel fees, nine international teams joined the ten Mongolian groups for a total of 1000 participants.

The event was held over three days in the capital Ulaanbaatar, with the first day set aside for all teams to rehearse. The Asian Gymnaestrada ran over two days with audiences of around 2000 people.



The management of the Mongolian Gymnastics Federation was excellent, offering a perfect operation from transportation to sightseeing for the 220 international team members. For the gymnastics performances, the Arena was well decorated with an excellent sound system and the integration of both participants and spectators. To reduce the impact of travelling through the traffic congestion of Ulaanbaatar it was planned for participants to have lunch and dinner in the arena. The menu options and food were well received.



On September 15th, FIG President Mr Watanabe visited the Asian Gymnaestrada to enjoy the performances.

Thanks to the flawless preparations by the Mongolian Gymnastics Federation, the event ran smoothly, on-time and with no injuries. The MC's explanations were easy to understand for both audience and gymnasts.

The participation fee included a one-day sightseeing tour and a farewell party to experience Mongolian culture.





An Asian Gym for Life Challenge is planned for the second half of 2026

Prior to the Asian Gymnaestrada, a GfA training camp was held in Ulaanbaatar in September 2023, organized by the AGU and FIG.



In May 2024, a Mongolian children's GfA contest was held so that the best teams could participate in the Asian Gymnaestrada.



These pre-events made Gymnastics for All recognized by many gymnastics leaders.



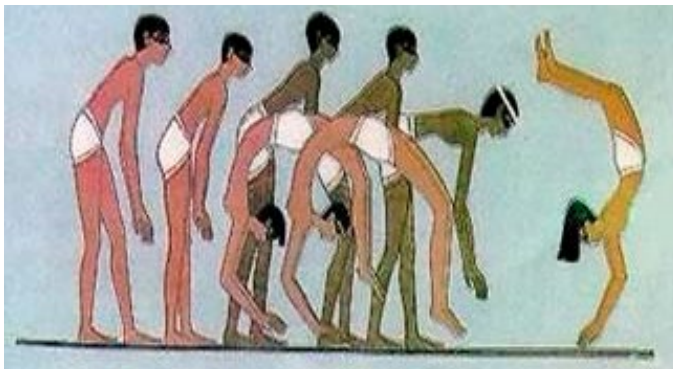


GYMNASTICS FOR ALL IN EGYPT THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Dr. Hesham El Nady

INTRODUCTION

Egypt has a long history in the sport of gymnastics, as evidenced by the archaeological inscriptions found in the tomb of "Prince Bakht" in Beni Hassan, Minya, and the inscriptions in the tomb of "Meraruka" in Saqqara, the tomb of Ptahhotep, which depict Egyptian women in athletic and dynamic postures similar to those of Artistic Gymnastics today. The ancient Egyptians did not limit these movements to a form of physical exercise; they also performed these movements as part of religious dances accompanied by music and as an important form of expression in their social and religious occasions. Through the "daily life" inscriptions that adorned the temple walls, there exists a group of girls and young men performing collective movements that combine agility and coordination.



Egyptian designers for Gymnastics for All have focused on highlighting the Pharaonic identity of gymnastics through various performances presented at both local and international levels during numerous events. They utilized clothing, music, movements, and formations that underscore the Pharaonic identity of Egyptian gymnastics.

■ [Click here to see it!](#)

EGYPTIAN PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL EVENTS FOR GYMNASTICS FOR ALL

Egypt has participated in many international events related to Gymnastics for All, with the most notable participations being as follows:

- World Gymnaestrada, Denmark 1978.
- World Gymnaestrada, Austria 2007.
- FIG GfA Colloquium, Austria, Dornbirn 2015.
- FIG GfA Colloquium, Switzerland, Lausanne 2022.
- Golden Age, Portugal 2023.
- FIG GfA Colloquium, Greece, Athens 2023.
- World Gymnaestrada, Netherlands 2023.
- FIG GfA Colloquium, Brazil, Raquju 2024.

THE EGYPTIAN GYMNASTICS FEDERATION'S TRENDS TOWARDS IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF GYMNASTICS FOR ALL IN EGYPT

Since 2017, the Egyptian Gymnastics Federation has shown increased interest in Gymnastics for All, initiating various training courses to enhance the skills of trainers and designers. These courses were held at Egyptian universities to promote the culture of Gymnastics for All among future young professionals from physical education colleges, including:

- Alexandria University, College of Physical Education, with 70 participants comprising students, trainers, and designers.
- Sadat City University, College of Physical Education, with 65 participants comprising students, trainers, and designers.
- Moreover, many courses have been conducted across various governorates in Egypt (Cairo, Alexandria, Mansoura).
- In 2019, the first foundation course for Gymnastics for All was held under the supervision of the Technical Committee for Gymnastics for All at the International Gymnastics Federation, attended by 20 participants from Egypt and the United States.

THE TRAINING COURSES FOR GYMNASTICS FOR ALL IN EGYPT AIMED TO:

First - Main Goals

1. Enhance the physical fitness and overall health of the Egyptian citizen.
2. Develop motor skills and balance.
3. Improve strength and flexibility.
4. Boost self-confidence and independence.
5. Encourage sports participation.

Second - Goals for Children

1. Develop fundamental motor skills.
2. Enhance balance and coordination.
3. Improve learning and concentration abilities.
4. Promote sportsmanship and cooperation.
5. Reduce the risk of sports injuries.

Third - Goals for Adults

1. Improve physical fitness and overall health.
2. Enhance strength and flexibility.
3. Improve balance and coordination.
4. Boost self-confidence and independence.
5. Reduce the risk of sports injuries.

Fourth - Educational Goals

1. Promote sports values such as fairness and equality.
2. Foster team spirit and cooperation.
3. Develop leadership and communication skills.
4. Boost self-confidence and independence.
5. Provide opportunities for learning and participation.

Fifth - Health Goal

1. Improve overall health and physical fitness.
2. Reduce the risk of chronic diseases.
3. Promote regular physical activity.
4. Enhance mental and physical health.

These goals aim to promote health and physical fitness, develop motor and spiritual skills, and encourage sports participation for everyone in Egypt, which is what the philosophy of Gymnastics for All emphasizes.

It is worth noting that before the start of any season for gymnastics for everyone, the Egyptian Gymnastics Federation conducts short training courses and workshops to develop the capabilities of trainers and designers, elevate their technical level, and explain the event requirements for new trainers.

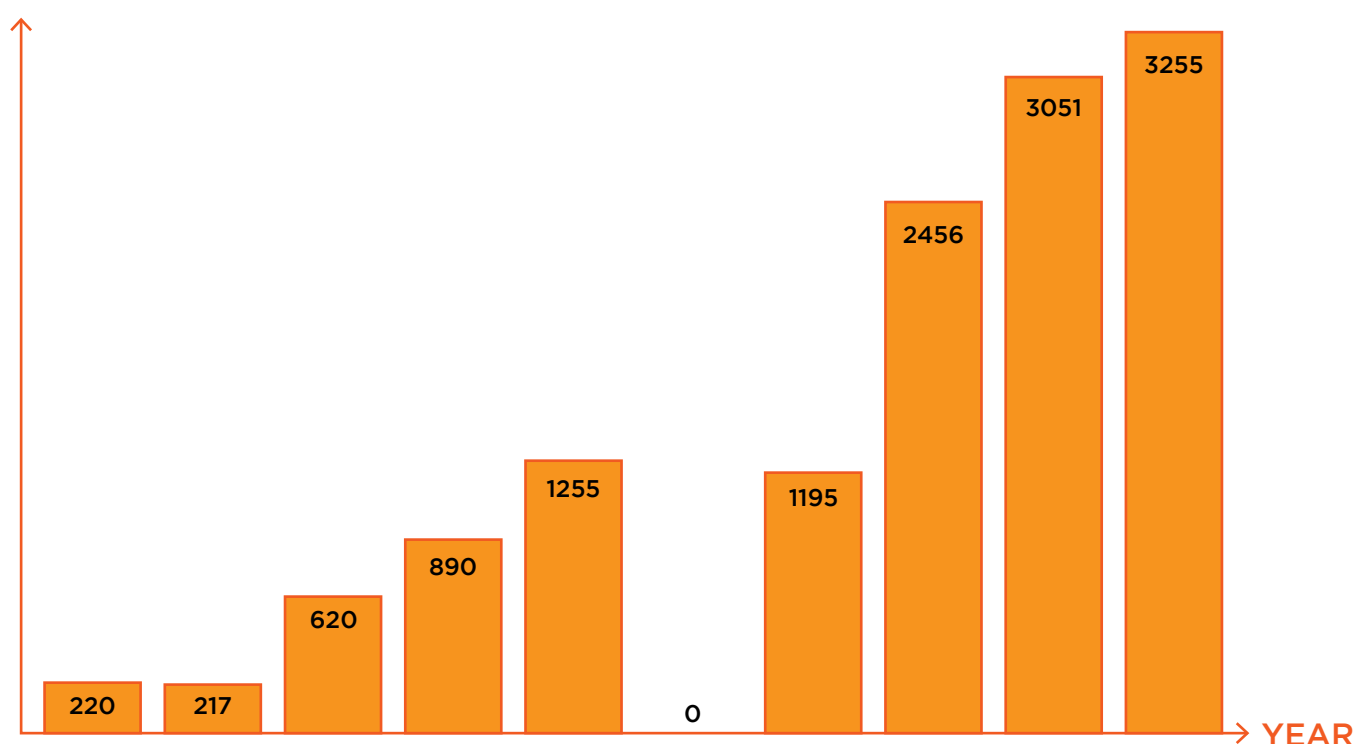
THE POLICY OF THE EGYPTIAN GYMNASTICS FEDERATION IN PROMOTING GYMNASTICS FOR ALL IN EGYPT

Before 2017, GfA competitions were held only once a year, and some participants received a medal. The remaining participating teams were not receiving any medals or any other award, which has led to a decrease in interest in practicing in the event.

After that, the Egyptian Gymnastics Federation has adopted an innovative and creative policy to attract participants to continue practicing the sport, as the evaluation methods have become more flexible, allowing many teams to receive medals and incentives that helped increase the number of participants from various age groups. This is due to the modifications made, as all participating teams in the festivals now receive medals for their participation. The evaluation is now based on levels rather than rankings, with the team achieving (75%) of the evaluation score receiving the first level, the team achieving (65%) receiving the second level, and the team achieving (50%) receiving the third level, regardless of the number of participating teams. This has motivated a larger number of individuals to participate in gymnastics activities. Additionally, instead of just one festival a year, there are now four festivals, making the activity continuous throughout the year without interruption, allowing designers to innovate and create, and enabling gymnasts to participate and train in more than one artistic work. Below, we will review the developments in the number of participants as a result of the positive policies of the Egyptian Gymnastics Federation:

Evaluation system (medals)	Number of participants	year
Only three first places	220	2015
Only three first places	217	2016
Medal for all participants	620	2017
Medal for all participants	890	2018
Medal for all participants	1255	2019
Event not happen due to the CoronaVirus epidemic		2020
Medal for all participants	1195	2021
Medal for all participants	2456	2022
Medal for all participants	3051	2023
Medal for all participants	3255	2024

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

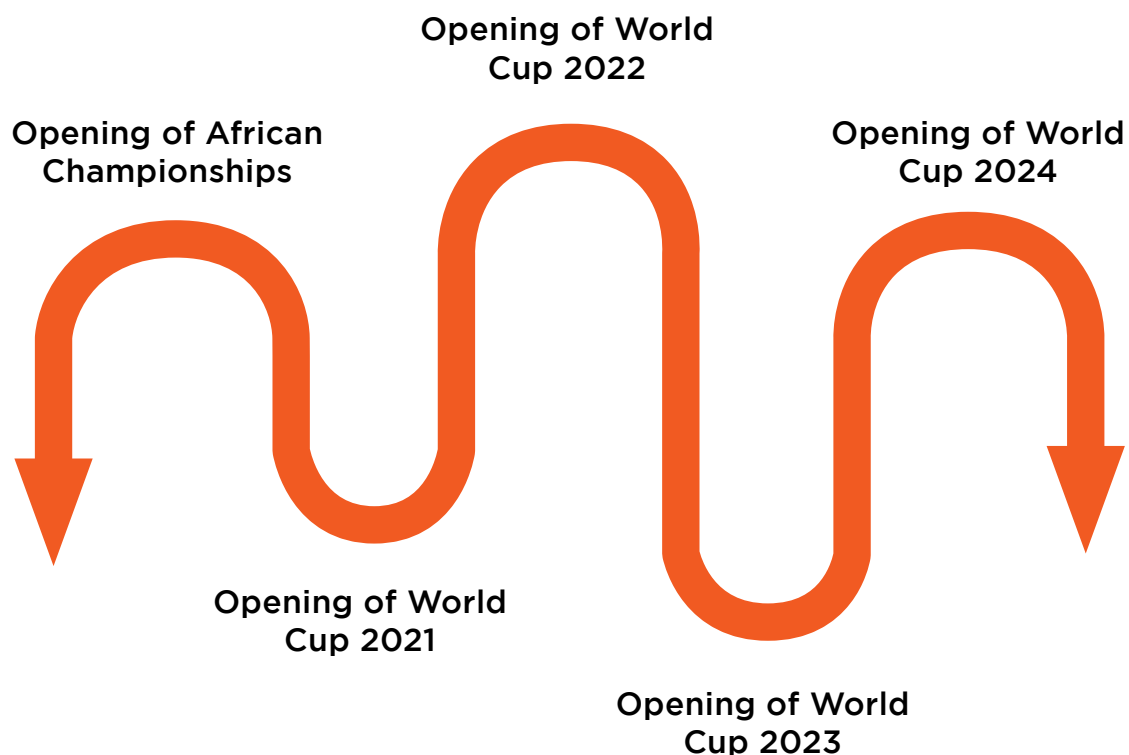


Number of Participants Over the Years

The evolution of Gymnastics for All within Egypt and the advancement of the level of performances have become very important and influential factors in all inaugurations of international events related to Egyptian gymnastics held on Egyptian soil, which has given wide recognition to this branch of gymnastics and has been one of the most important positive means of attracting participants. Below, we will present statistics on the number of participants from gymnastics participants for all in the international inaugurations on Egyptian soil:

	Event name	Organizers	Year	Participants
1	Opening of the African Rhythmic Gymnastics and Trampoline Gymnastics Championships	Egyptian Gymnastics Federation	2018	350
2	Opening of the World Cup for Artistic Gymnastics for Men and Women	Egyptian Gymnastics Federation	2021	210
3	Opening of the World Cup for Artistic Gymnastics for Men and Women	Egyptian Gymnastics Federation	2022	360
4	Opening of the World Cup for Artistic Gymnastics for Men and Women	Egyptian Gymnastics Federation	2023	560
5	Opening of the World Cup for Artistic Gymnastics for Men and Women	Egyptian Gymnastics Federation	2024	670

GYMNASTICS CHAMPIONSHIPS TIMELINE



■ [Click here to see some performances!](#)

THE ROLE OF THE EGYPTIAN GYMNASTICS FEDERATION IN PROMOTING THE CULTURE OF GYMNASTICS FOR ALL WITH EDUCATIONAL AND SPORTS INSTITUTIONS

The Egyptian Federation has a very important and effective role in promoting Gymnastics for All in Egypt through the cooperation of the Egyptian Gymnastics Federation with the Ministry of Education by supervising the activities of school students up to the high school level in gymnastics in general (Artistic Gymnastics for men and women, Rhythmic Gymnastics) and Gymnastics for All in particular, by preparing the regulations governing competitions and the technical instructions according to the age stages of the branches that take place through competitions.

As for Gymnastics for All, the Egyptian Gymnastics Federation sets the rules and regulations for gymnastics performances for all and evaluates the performances according to the pre-established criteria. It also supervises the training of coaches and designers and guides them to improve the level of the presented performances. It is worth mentioning that the gymnastics festivals for all, which are held annually by the Ministry of Education, have over 1,200 participants from various age groups.

The Egyptian Gymnastics Federation collaborates with the Egyptian Universities Sports Federation through a project proposed by the Egyptian Gymnastics Federation to promote Gymnastics for All in Egyptian universities. This project involves the necessity of forming a team consisting of 16 students from the college (boys and girls) who will perform a simple 4-minute presentation showcasing the students' physical and technical levels. They will be evaluated, and the distinguished teams will be promoted to represent the university in the Egyptian Universities Festival for Gymnastics for All, organized by the Egyptian Universities Sports Federation under the supervision of the Egyptian Gymnastics Federation. The participating students in these performances are supported with financial and moral rewards for their participation in this creative activity. It is worth noting that Egypt has 108 universities, including governmental, private, and technological ones, as well as framework and international agreements, instead of 49. In 2014, universities were distributed as follows: 27 public universities instead of 23 public universities, 32 private universities instead of 23 private universities, 20 community universities, 10 technological universities, 9 branches of foreign universities, 6 universities with international agreements, 2 universities with framework agreements, 1 university with special laws, and an academy supervised by the ministry, which highlights the importance of the role of the Egyptian Gymnastics Federation in promoting Gymnastics for All in this vital educational sector.

The Egyptian Gymnastics Federation also collaborates with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, represented by the Central Administration for Youth Development, which is concerned with children up to the age of 18, and a program has been established to cooperate with it to attract children from clubs and youth centers to participate in Gymnastics for All activities through an annual sports artistic program (Kids Show).

GYMNASTICS FOR ALL FROM EGYPT TO ARAB AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Gymnastics for All has developed in Egypt, and the number of designers, trainers, and directors has increased, and there are now experts in the sport who can transfer the culture of Gymnastics for All to Arab and African countries, as Egypt is a leading country in gymnastics in general and Gymnastics for All in particular at the Arab and African levels.

Since Egypt's presidency of the African Gymnastics Federation in 2021 until now, the African Gymnastics Federation, led by Dr. Ehab Amin, has sought to promote the sport of gymnastics in Africa and to introduce some branches that were not widespread across Africa through many training courses with experts from Africa to encourage African leadership in gymnastics.

The first training course for Gymnastics for All was held in Tunisia in February 2024, attended by nearly 50 coaches from Tunisia, and the experts were from Africa (Dr. Hisham El Nady from Egypt, Marti Harry from South Africa, and Donny Jurgens from South Africa), and of those who benefited from this course, more than 75 participants were children.

Three training courses for Gymnastics for All were held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for coaches during the year 2024. The first was an online introductory course on Gymnastics for All, attended by 125 participants, and a practical training course lasting seven days that included components of Gymnastics for All performances, how to choose clothing - tools - decorations - devices - ideas - formations - levels - production - music - problem-solving in Gymnastics for All. A workshop was held for the specific criteria for evaluating Gymnastics for All performances according to the standards of the International Gymnastics Federation, and the first festival will start in October 2024 with the participation of more than 300 participants.

THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE EGYPTIAN GYMNASTICS FEDERATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF GYMNASTICS FOR ALL IN EGYPT IN THE FUTURE:

Strategic Vision

1. Promote gymnastics as a popular and accessible sport for everyone.
2. Develop infrastructure and sports facilities.
3. Increase participation in Gymnastics for All activities.
4. Encourage Egyptian gymnasts to participate in international Gymnastics for All events.

Main Objectives

1. Increase the number of participants in gymnastics for all by 20% each year.
2. Establish advanced training centers in all governorates.
3. Enhance training programs for coaches and evaluators.
4. Organize international festivals for Gymnastics for All.
5. Enhance funding and sponsorship for local and international Gymnastics for All activities.

Development Goals

1. Develop Gymnastics for All programs for children and youth.
2. Establish Gymnastics for All programs (males, females, seniors, people with disabilities).
3. Promote Gymnastics for All in schools and universities.
4. Enhance cooperation with international federations concerned with Gymnastics for All.

Technological Goals

1. Create an electronic platform to update the conditions and dates of international Gymnastics for All events.
2. Use technology in training and analysis.
3. Establishing a database for participants, coaches, and designers for Gymnastics for All.
4. Enhancing social communication and collaboration with the media to promote and document Gymnastics for All events in Egypt.

Financial Goals

1. Increasing government and private funding for Gymnastics for All.
2. Attracting sponsors and contributors.

Timeline

1. In the next six years: Establishing 15 new training centers in the governorates.
2. In three years: Organizing an event or festival for African countries for Gymnastics for All.
3. In one year: Launching a Gymnastics for All program for stage performances.
4. In six months: Creating an electronic platform dedicated to Gymnastics for All activities through the Egyptian Gymnastics Federation.

Strategic Partners

1. The Egyptian Ministry of Youth and Sports.
2. The International Gymnastics Federation.
3. Private sponsors and contributors.
4. Egyptian sports associations.
5. Local and international media.

These aspirations aim to promote Gymnastics for All in Egypt, increase the number of participants, and improve the technical performance of Gymnastics for All shows.





HOW IS GYMNASTICS FOR ALL IMPLEMENTED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LAUSANNE

and what impact does its teaching have on society and the dissemination of its values?

Cedric Bovey

Gymnastics has played a central role in Physical Education in Switzerland since the 19th century. Its gradual integration into school and university curricula is the result of a political and educational desire to develop health, discipline and national cohesion through sport.¹

The introduction of gymnastics in Switzerland dates back to the early 19th century, under the influence of German and Swedish models. [Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi](#), a renowned Swiss pedagogue, played a decisive role in establishing physical education based on the harmonious development of body and mind. The first gymnastics associations were founded in the 1830s, marking the start of a national movement in favour of gymnastics.²

In the second half of the 19th century, the Swiss Confederation recognised the importance of gymnastics in the education of young people. In 1874, a federal law introduced gymnastics as a school subject to prepare young Swiss physically for military service. Gradually, this discipline was extended to the entire school system under the impetus of gymnastics societies and cantonal authorities. As a result, training programmes for the supervision of pupils were set up. Overtime gymnastics became one of the most popular sports in Switzerland, and still is today.³

Sport	Citations (% de la population)
Swimming	34%
Skiing	31%
Football	7,7%
Gymnastics	7,3%
Tennis	5,3%
Volleyball	2,3%
Basketball	2%

(Sports participation of the Swiss population 2020, percentage of the population, average of the 3 linguistic regions)

¹ Mayencourt Gil (2025), [Faire nation en faisant de la gymnastique](#), Une histoire culturelle et sociale de la Société fédérale de gymnastique (1853-1914) : Ed. Alphil, presses universitaires suisses.

² Martin Jean-François (2008), Histoire illustrée de la gymnastique vaudoise : ACVG (p.4 à 7)

³ Lamprecht, Markus, Bürgi, Rahel et Stamm, Hanspeter (2020): Sport Suisse 2020. Activité et consommation sportives de la population suisse. Macolin: Office fédéral du sport OFSPO. (p.29)

Today, gymnastics remains a cornerstone of physical education programmes in Switzerland. Integrated into the cantonal curricula, it takes a variety of forms, including gymnastics for all: apparatus gymnastics, gymnastics to music, acrobatic gymnastics and parkour. Teacher training makes it a point of honour to pass on essential gymnastics skills, while adapting the content to changes in society and teaching methods.

Gymnastics for All is therefore a central pillar of Switzerland's sporting offering. It is practised by thousands of athletes, from amateurs to those taking part in international events such as the World Gymnaestrada. Switzerland is also a key player on the international stage, with its clubs and universities taking an active part in major events such as the World Gymnaestrada.

This enthusiasm begins at an early age, at school, under the impetus of physical education teachers trained at the country's universities. Particular attention is paid to training in this discipline so that future teachers know how to practise the movements and how to teach them, whether with or without apparatus.



THE INTEGRATION OF GYM FOR ALL AT THE UNIVERSITY

The curriculum at the University of Lausanne assigns a large part of its training to 'practice', whatever the sport. Indeed, movement is the basis of sports science training, and to understand how it works, you have to experience it. The university plays a central role in the development of Gym for All in the region in which it is located. Apparatus gymnastics (GfA with apparatus and also with music) prepares students for fundamental skills such as strength, flexibility, relaxation, coordination and courage. And above all, it allows the transfer of skills to other sports disciplines. (For example, a forward salto on the minitrampoline can be used directly in diving). Since then, a number of academic programmes and initiatives have been set up to strengthen the place of this discipline in the university environment:

Sports science training programmes: Sports science students have the opportunity to explore the practical, pedagogical and social aspects of apparatus gymnastics with three semesters of courses in the basic curriculum (Bachelor - Master) as part of their training. In addition, two semesters are also set aside for gymnastics with music. This makes a total of 140 hours of training.⁴

⁴ [Baccalauréat universitaire ès Sciences en sciences du mouvement et du sport - Université de Lausanne 2025](#)

Academic research: Events such as colloquia between universities in the country or abroad enable an exchange of knowledge between researchers and practitioners. Master's theses and dissertations can also be carried out in the field of gymnastics.

Collaboration with clubs and associations: As gymnastics training requires hours of practice to meet the necessary requirements, many students join gymnastics clubs to practise. In this way, they participate in the community life of the place where they practice, and some of them remain members of the gymnastics societies.

Promotion of voluntary work: As the Olympic capital, Lausanne hosts many national and international sporting events. This gives students the opportunity to get involved in organising gymnastics events, giving them valuable experience in the sporting field.



Photo by Fabrice Ducrest.

EDUCATION CONTENT

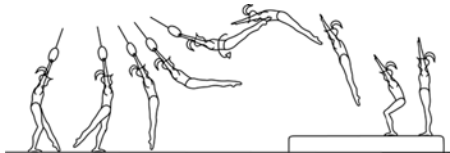
All students studying sports science at the University of Lausanne must master basic routines on each gymnastics apparatus. First of all, they must take an admission exam. This consists of a sequence of basic movements. Then, once they have been admitted to the university, they will have access to the various education courses.



Over the years, the evolution of course content has led to a change from requirements based on 'Artistic Gymnastics' to basic requirements in Gymnastics for All on apparatus. The ultimate aim is to provide students with technical training in preparation for compulsory exams and also to train them in methodologies to prepare them for their profession. The aim is not to train elite gymnasts, but to enable them to master and use the basic knowledge of gymnastics to make it available to society through their future teaching profession. Accident prevention and spotting are also an important part of the education programmes.

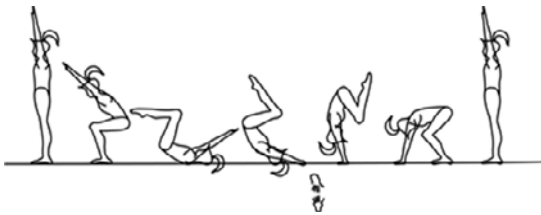
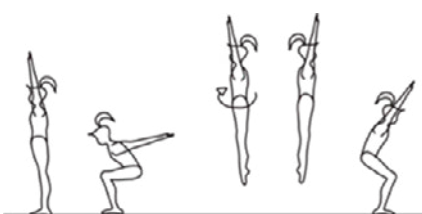
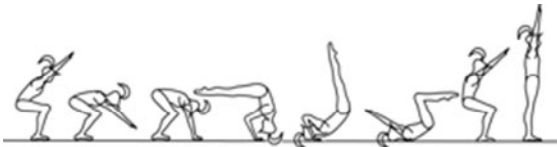
The course content for levels 1 and 2 consists of performing sequences on different apparatus. Each movement is assessed. Below is an example of a movement to be performed on the swinging rings and on the floor. There is an image describing the movement, a text description as well as the faults not to make and their evaluation.

Example on the swinging rings

Front swing with half turn on the left or on the right, Front swing with half turn on the left or on the right (other direction) 	3 pts	• The back is too open during the turn • Arms are bent • Bad timing during the turn	1.5 pts 1 pt 2.5 pts
Front swing with half turn to the stand (landing) 	2 pts	• Bad timing for the landing • No Courbette (C+/C-) Passive	1.5 pts 1.5 pts

⁴ Programmes de l'examen d'admission en gymnastique aux agrès

Example on floor

From stand, roll backward 	2 pts	- The backward roll does not lead to the stand (end on the knees) - The backward roll is out of alignment (leaning on the elbows)	1.5 pts
Jump with half turn 	1 pts	Lack of amplitude and hold in the t.	1 pts
Roll forward to the station without hand support. 	2 pts	- The legs are bent - Getting up from the front roll with the hands - The front roll is jerky	1.5 pts 1.5 pts 1.5 pts

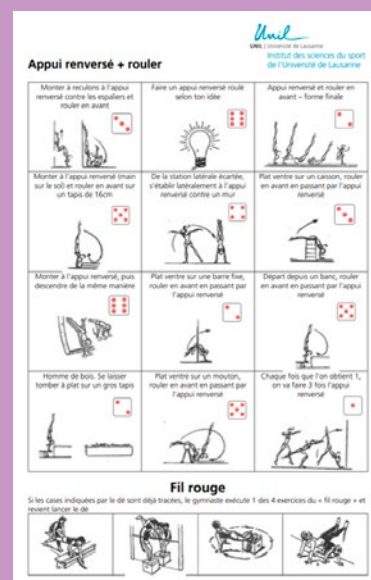
The movements chosen are taken from national school physical education manuals⁶. They are also taken from the manuals produced by the [Swiss Gymnastics Federation](#) for the youth categories. In this way, national consistency is established in the learning sequences offered to students. As can be seen above, the aim is to ensure that all course participants master basic exercises.

In the third level, students are encouraged to acquire notions of trampoline, airfloor and the fun aspects of gymnastics. The acrobatic dimension is emphasised. They are given a dedicated booklet and assessed on its content. They will learn how to create gymnastics choreography on the apparatuses and how to make it interesting. For the exam they have to prepare a choreography and to teach it to the other students to be in the situation of being a gymnastics teacher.

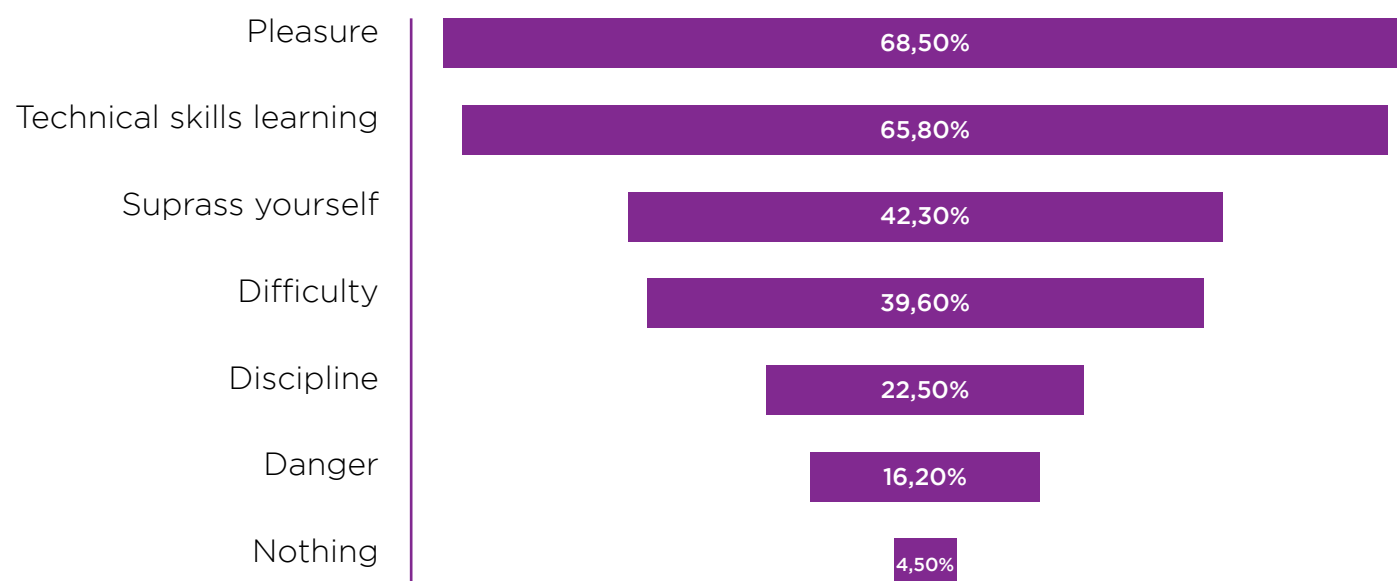
⁶ [Swiss PE Manuals for teachers](#)

Offering a fun approach to learning gymnastics has a number of advantages, both in terms of teaching and the development of young gymnasts. It captures the attention of the participants and encourages them to participate actively. Play helps to maintain a high level of motivation, which is essential for learning. Students need to experiment with and acquire these concepts, which will enable their pupils to reduce apprehension and stress, develop their coordination and creativity, reinforce technical learning without monotony, adapt learning to all levels and, above all, establish a culture of pleasure and well-being.

Example opposite: A game of dice with implements on the theme of Handstand.



Finally, 'pleasure' is the aspect most emphasised by physical education teachers at the end of their studies (68.5%), as shown by a study that asked 'What values are retained at the end of Gymnastics for All courses at the University of Lausanne?'⁷



Nearly 82% of women cite this response. This pleasure is generated by several factors, including the fact of succeeding in a movement that may seem difficult and requires a lot of investment. As luck has little impact on learning in apparatus gymnastics, the return on investment that comes from successfully completing a complex movement is more than welcome.

⁷ Bovey C., Vuffray R. et al. (2016), « Formation des enseignants EPS aux agrès et pratique de la gymnastique aux agrès en milieu scolaire » : Université de Lausanne: Service de l'éducation physique et du sport du canton de Vaud.

THE IMPACT OF GYM FOR ALL ON SOCIETY AND ITS CONNECTIONS WITH UNIVERSITIES

Physical education teachers face many challenges. Among these, the teaching of a branch as accessible to all as gymnastics plays a fundamental role. There are three main areas that can be developed through the practice of this sport: social integration, education and training, and voluntary work and commitment to society.

- Many gymnastics clubs play a key role in the integration of migrant populations, facilitating their inclusion through a shared sporting activity. Thanks to their knowledge, the students will be able to get all the children at school practising together and create a shared experience of pleasure and joy through gymnastics.
- The University of Lausanne and other institutions are integrating Gym for All into their academic curricula, creating links between research and the practice of sport. The developments brought about by research enable the practices on offer to be constantly improved.
- A large proportion of gymnastics activities rely on the work of volunteers, whose profile needs to be better understood in order to optimise their commitment. By setting an example through their involvement in sporting events, the students show that this aspect is important and that individual commitment is an important aspect of the world of gymnastics. In all cases, the aim of the curriculum is to spread gymnastics throughout society, through education by combining the skills acquired at university and the implementation of movement for a lifetime.



■ Joy and fun while learning the basics of gymnastics / Photo by Cédric Bovey.

RESEARCH WORK

As in all universities, students are encouraged to take a reflective approach to their practice. Each year, the apparatus gymnastics department proposes different themes to the students. The aim is to link practice and theory, but also to show the ongoing connection between gymnastics and everyday life. Themes to choose from include :

- Biomechanics for performance: The example of the backward dislocation on the swinging rings
- The gymnast's effort diary
- Emotional parameters (management of emotions) in the acquisition of movement in gymnastics for all
- Gymnastics clubs: a key factor in the integration of foreigners
- Volunteers in gymnastics clubs: What profiles?
- Gymnastics in the canton of Vaud 1968-2018: changing practices or status quo?
- Evaluation in group gymnastics: Are specialised judges indispensable?
- The Swiss at the World Gymnaestrada: Choreographic developments over the last 30 years 1995 – 2025
- Gym for life World Challenge: What future for a sport for all contest?
- Gymnastics and music: The place of music and songs in the history of Swiss gymnasts

These themes could be addressed in the future by students from the University of Lausanne or taken up by others.

PARTICIPATION IN EVENTS

Sports science students at the University of Lausanne (UNIL) can derive several benefits from their involvement in gymnastics events, whether as gymnasts, volunteers or coaches.

As a gymnast, the practical application of their knowledge enables them to take an active part in a sporting discipline that combines coordination, strength and flexibility, with a direct link to the lessons on movement and performance. Meeting other athletes, coaches and sports leaders in Switzerland and abroad develops their network and facilitates future professional opportunities.

As a volunteer, acquiring skills in sports event management (logistics, judging, welcoming gymnasts and spectators, communication) is an undeniable asset. As mentioned above, it is an opportunity to gain exposure to sports federations, clubs and institutions and to develop cross-disciplinary skills such as teamwork, leadership and problem-solving in real-life situations.

As a supervisor, a role as sports manager is a first step into working life. They have the opportunity to put pedagogical and methodological theories into practice, and to experiment with training and coaching strategies learned in class.

They make a direct contribution to the development of young gymnasts and to the structuring of the sport in the Lausanne region and throughout Switzerland.

The University of Lausanne has taken part with groups in several World Gymnaestradas. In Amsterdam in 1991 and, of course, in Lausanne in 2011. These experiences remain forever engraved in the students' memories and have encouraged them to motivate their students to take part in this exceptional event. There was a marked interest in international events such as the World Gymnaestrada.

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

The university is a field of experimentation, research and innovation. For the future, a number of exciting challenges lie ahead. These include, for example, the quality of practical training and how to maintain it. The evolution of Gym for All will also depend on the development of appropriate training for coaches and instructors. To achieve this, an exchange between the universities is desirable. In Switzerland, an association brings together the various universities that have gymnastics education as part of their curriculum. These exchanges are always privileged moments and help to advance training in this field.



Association des enseignants en gymnastique aux agrès
et sports acrobatiques des hautes écoles suisses

Associazione degli insegnanti di ginnastica agli attrezzi
e sport acrobatici delle scuole universitarie svizzere

Dozentenverband Geräteturnen und Akrospport der
Schweizer Hochschulen

Similarly, innovation and the integration of new practices and technologies will need to be addressed. New forms of training could attract a wider audience. Also, broadening academic programmes and integrating a more interdisciplinary approach would help to strengthen the place of Gym for All in higher education.

CONCLUSION

Gymnastics for All in Switzerland is a dynamic discipline that contributes to collective well-being and social cohesion. The inclusion of gymnastics in Swiss physical education curricula reflects a tradition rooted in the country's history. Its evolution reflects a constant adaptation to educational and social needs, making gymnastics an essential vehicle for the physical and moral development of young people around the world. The university plays a full role in training and, thanks to its students, has the opportunity to spread gymnastics and its values throughout society.

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EXPANDING HORIZONS IN GYMNASTICS FOR ALL: SCIENCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

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INTRODUCTION

Brazilian gymnastics history was strongly influenced by European methods, especially the German, Swedish, and French systems, which were implemented in schools, clubs, and universities with few adaptations to the local context (Soares & Moreno, 2015). This pattern was also observed in Latin America (Pfister, 2010) through the arrival of foreign coaches, international exchanges, and the translation of gymnastics manuals.

Those actions followed a traditional paradigm when thinking about coach and teacher education in sports: the instructors were often former gymnasts themselves. The ability to demonstrate movements and have students replicate them seemed essential to establish oneself as a coach. As a consequence, the first curricula in the field were grounded in positivism, privileging an education based on technical expertise; and gymnastic disciplines in universities, often defined as technical practices, were organized based on military, technical and competitive (sports-oriented) principles, favouring former athletes.

A crucial point here is that while previous experience in a given discipline can be valuable, it is not a requirement to engage later as a coach. This experience must be complemented with tactical, technical, and other theoretical knowledge. In addition, coach education programs should prioritize equal opportunities for all students, not just those who have prior experience in the discipline.

Researchers in the field of coach and Physical Education teacher education are unanimous in revealing that the competencies required to work in the sports field, and obviously in gymnastics, are shaped by knowledge acquired from various sources, whether formal, non-formal, or informal (Nelson et al., 2006).

In Brazil, we recognized that these principles were already present in an approach to teaching Gymnastics for All (GfA), which was known as General Gymnastics (GG) at the time. This approach appeared to be different from the European trajectory, particularly regarding competitive gymnastics disciplines (Toledo, 2017). Furthermore, since the mid-1950s, GfA has been developing in the country and bringing with it new contours, with a very unique

movement, which today constitutes a gymnastic discipline with technical, cultural, artistic and scientific traits.

The chapter presents some highlights of the Brazilian trajectory in GfA, aiming to share experiences which can be resized and reconstituted for other initiatives, and even inspire new GfA movements in the most different countries. It also focus on the role of science and universities in educating coaches and teachers, in developing new concepts, applying pedagogical practices and successful institutional partnerships (including gymnastics federations).

EXPANDING LEARNING PATHWAYS IN COACH AND TEACHER EDUCATION IN GYMNASTICS FOR ALL: BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

Although Physical Education and Sports programs in Brazil originated under the influence of European models, which were shaped by a functional and utilitarian view of health and physical training based on a biological framework, the goal should be to go beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge. The process of coach and teacher education must encourage Physical Education graduates to reconnect with the human aspects of the profession, understanding the individual in their entirety and historical context. This shift aims to foster a student-centered approach that offers a critical view of reality, promoting the emergence of new paradigms (Moreira & Nista-Piccolo, 2010).

In the Brazilian context, particularly after the military dictatorship and alongside the growth of social and human sciences, the education of coaches and Physical Education teachers in universities began advocating for a broader range of opportunities. These opportunities aim to enhance professional development through the university's foundational tripod. The "university tripod" refers to the three fundamental pillars that support a university's mission: **teaching, research, and extension**. These three pillars are not merely separate functions but complement each other, enriching the university experience and strengthening the institution's role as a transformative social agent and a leader in knowledge advancement. The idea is to foster a learning environment that is deeply connected to real-world contexts.

In Brazil, a university degree is a mandatory requirement (Brasil, 2002) for working as a GfA coach (Bento-Soares & Schiavon, 2023). As a result, universities play a fundamental role in providing and promoting learning and certification processes for these professionals. In this regard, the integration of Teaching, Research, and Extension initiatives is essential for constructing the knowledge necessary for professional practice, particularly in relation to the Pedagogy of Gymnastics (Schiavon et al., 2017).

Although this structured approach to knowledge production in GfA is not yet a reality in many universities across Brazil—mainly due to the lack of faculty specialists in gymnastics (Bento-Soares et al., 2024; Menegaldo et al., 2022)—it has been increasingly supported and encouraged by national policies. A recent milestone was the establishment of a national requirement that 10% of the total workload of all higher education programs be dedicated to extension activities, as stipulated in the National Education Plan (PNE) and formalized in Resolution No. 7 of the Ministry of Education (MEC) on December 18, 2018 (Brasil, 2018).

Since the 1950s, GG has been present in some way at the universities, especially considering that during this period, gymnastics coaches were also university professors, and commonly members/leaders of gymnastics federations, as can be seen in some of the following examples:

Table 1 – University gymnastics scholars and their partnerships with Gymnastics Federations (1950 – 1990)

SCHOLAR/ PERIOD	UNIVERSITY/ REGION	GYMNASTICS FEDERATION	ACTING IN FAVOR OF GfA
Ilona Peuker (1950s and 1960s)	Courses in the School of Physical Education and Sports of the University of Brazil (UB - actual UFRJ - Rio de Janeiro city-RJ)	Brazilian Sports Confederation partnership	Responsible for the subject of Modern Gymnastics and author of books, from the perspective of GG. In the field of extension, with courses throughout Brazil.
Antônio Boaventura da Silva (1950s and 1960s)	University of São Paulo (USP - São Paulo city-SP)	President of the São Paulo Gymnastics Federation, Representative and coach of the Brazilian group of Gymnastics that participated in the Lingíada (1951)	Responsible for the gymnastics subject, taking part in the gymnastics teachers and coaches education. Manager of large group performances (Toledo, 2017) and big events in stadiums, such as festivals on civic dates and the opening of championships and sports games (national and international).
Fernando Brochado (1980s)	Department of Physical Education, Institute of Biosciences, São Paulo State University - UNESP (Rio Claro-SP)	President of PAGU - Pan American Gymnastics Union, President of the Brazilian Gymnastics Confederation and President of the GG Committee (CBG)	Manager of the first international GG course, the first international GG festival, and author of the first book about GG, at the national level.
Monica Brochado (1980s)	Department of Physical Education, Institute of Biosciences, São Paulo State University - UNESP (Rio Claro - SP)	Member of the Brazilian Gymnastics Confederation	Co-manager of the first international General Gymnastics (GG) course, the first international GG festival. Co-author of the first book about GG, at the national level.

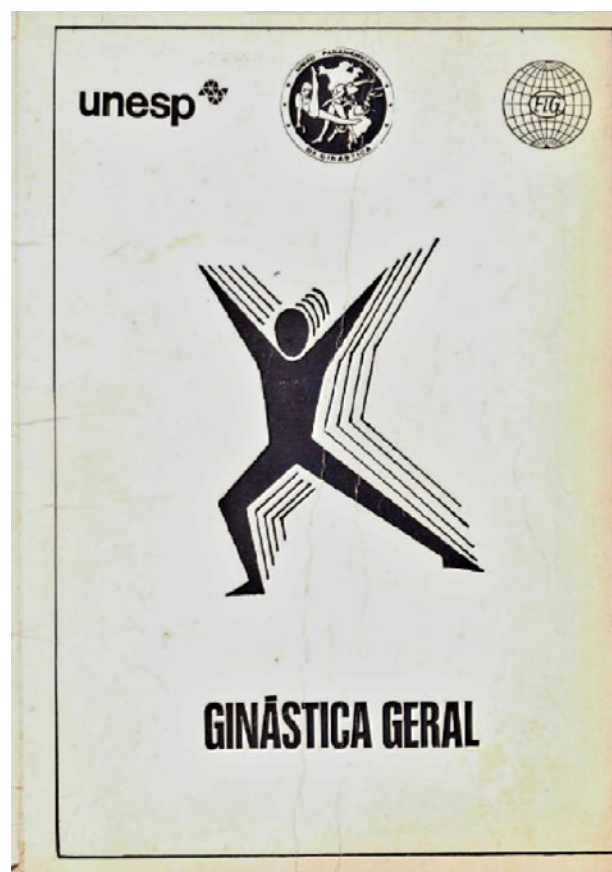
Source: Toledo (2017; 2020); Locci et al. (2023)

These relationships between university faculty and sports management supported the publication of the first manuals and books on Gymnastics for All, as well as the organization of the first events aimed at coach and teacher education in the field. For example, Figure 1 shows one of the first festivals held in Brazil, recognized by PAGU and FIG, while Figure 2 presents the first GfA book published.

Figure 1 - Cover of the international General Gymnastics (GfA) course and festival report to FIG (1988)



Figure 2 - Cover of the first General Gymnastics (GfA) book in Brazil (1989), with partnership with Unesp, UPAG and FIG



Source: Fernando Brochado personal archive

Already in the 1990s, the development of GfA has been strongly influenced by public universities, with one of the leading institutions in this process being the Faculty of Physical Education at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), which has been a driving force for over 35 years. A key example of its impact is the articulation between extension conducted by the [Unicamp Gymnastics Group](#) (which operated from 1989 to 2019), the [Gymnastics Research Group](#) (since 1993) and both undergraduate and graduate courses on Gymnastics—specifically GfA—within Unicamp’s [Physical Education program](#).

In this context of knowledge production, PhD. Elizabeth Paoliello Machado de Souza and PhD. Jorge Sergio Pérez Gallardo developed a particular concept of GG/GfA, which has been widely adopted by the Brazilian community and remains influential. This concept integrates elements of Brazilian identity and culture, shaping the practice and endowing it with unique characteristics.



General Gymnastics [Gymnastics for All] is an expression of **body language** that combines various **interpretations** of Gymnastics (natural, standardized, artistic, rhythmic, aerobics etc) and **can blend them** with **other practices** (dance, folklore, games, theatre, mimicry etc), in a **free and creative** way, according to the **characteristics of the social group**, promoting **social interaction** among participants.

Over the years, this conceptualization has fostered discussions and practices related to Gymnastics for All (GfA) in Brazil. Its scope has been further expanded through the development of studies incorporating decolonial, philosophical, and pedagogical approaches (e.g., Carbinatto & Furtado, 2019; Toledo, 2020; Antualpa et al., 2022; Patricio et al., 2024) across diverse contexts.

Professor Elizabeth Paoliello and Professor Jorge Sergio Pérez Gallardo.
Source: Perez-Gallardo & Souza (1995, p.292)

TEACHING

Gymnastics content has been part of the teaching axis in Brazilian universities since the creation of the first Physical Education courses in the country. These subjects, sometimes aimed at addressing gymnastics from European methods, have remained strongly present in the curricula due to the sportive bias adopted in the country, with great emphasis on competitive gymnastics practices, especially Artistic and Rhythmic Gymnastics. At the same time, in recent decades, there has been a strengthening of gymnastics content in its health aspect, with an emphasis on Physical Conditioning gymnastics, following the growth of wellness proposals in Brazil, as well as worldwide.

The inclusion of GfA in the university context has been observed, especially but not exclusively in Brazilian public universities. This growth is closely related to the work developed at Unicamp, as previously mentioned, which has been offering courses about GfA since the late 1980s. Currently, at the Unicamp's Faculty of Physical Education, there are two GfA courses, a situation also observed in the curriculum of the Sports Sciences course offered at Applied Sciences Faculty. In fact, Unicamp's undergraduate PE course currently offers 210 hours in gymnastics, with 75 specifically dedicated to GfA. At the Graduate level, mostly PhD students, there is also a "Research in gymnastics" subject where GfA is discussed in depth.

RESEARCH

Among the 14 gymnastics research groups registered in the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) Research Group Directory, only two have no direct or indirect ties (i.e., apprenticeship under a Unicamp graduate) to Unicamp's undergraduate or graduate programs.

Many of these groups have played a significant role in the development of GfA in Brazil, and the majority of them also participate in major events such as the Gym Brasil Festival (Carbinatto et al., 2016) and the World Gymnaestrada (Paoliello et al, 2016; Schiavon & Toledo, 2022). The university gymnastics research groups have contributed to the GfA growing, publishing an important number of articles, chapters and books about GfA and consolidating a better understanding on this practice.

Additionally, it is important to highlight that Unicamp initiated a pioneering movement in Undergraduate, Master and Doctoral research related to GfA, which is now also developed in other higher education institutions in the country. At undergraduate level, the first research was realized by the student Eliana de Toledo (Toledo, 1995), also GGU member at that time. And, the first doctoral thesis on the subject in the country was published by researcher Elizabeth Paoliello Machado de Souza (Souza, 1997), whose reverberations conceptualized this practice in Brazil.

EXTENSION

Experiences in university—whether as practitioners in GfA groups or as coaches delivering gymnastics classes to the community—are inseparably linked to the knowledge gained in undergraduate gymnastics subjects, as well as to the research produced on these activities.

The Unicamp Gymnastics Group (GGU) was a GfA group composed of undergraduate and graduate students from various courses at Unicamp, as well as members of the surrounding community. Its primary objectives were to develop, perform, and promote a gymnastics practice rooted in principles of collectivity, human development, and multidisciplinary knowledge in gymnastics (Paoliello et al., 2014). The group's establishment in 1989 motivated its members to deepen GfA's theoretical and practical understanding, which led to the creation of the Gymnastics Research Group in 1993.

Taking part in [GGU](#) embraced those aspects: by delivering gymnastics classes, teaching-learning situations were discussed with the professor and peers; problem-based situations were studied with mentor and peers (Menegaldo & Bortoleto, 2021); by being a gymnast, informal knowledge was gained by going to sporting events – GGU represented Brazil in the FIG GALA at the 15th World Gymnaestrada; during a choreographed composition, being heard and stimulated to give opinion and ideas; by organizing events, getting to know a wide range of functions when delivering an artistic-drive sporting event, as well as, scientific characteristic of an event; when attending an event, doing networking.

This successful model of education continues to influence other Brazilian universities, where the integration of Teaching, Research, and Extension has contributed to coach and Physical Education teacher education.

COMBINING EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND EXTENSION IN GFA PROMOTING: THE EXAMPLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON GYMNASTICS FOR ALL

The International Forum on Gymnastics for All (FIGPT) is a partnership between the Unicamp and Sesc (Social Service of Commerce). This partnership began in 1999, based on institutional dialogue between Sesc Campinas and the Gymnastics Research Group of the School of Physical Education, to hold the Brazilian Forum on General Gymnastics. Since its first international edition in 2001, this [event](#) has aimed to create a space for encounters, the exchange of experiences and academic knowledge, the education of teachers and coaches, and the showcasing of group performances, all with the objective of advancing and promoting Gymnastics for All (GfA).



Objetivo Cosmópolis PSTFA School, GGU Ânima Unicamp Group and PRODAGIN Group (FORUMGPT, 2016; 2022)



Round-table Conference (FORUMGPT, 2024)

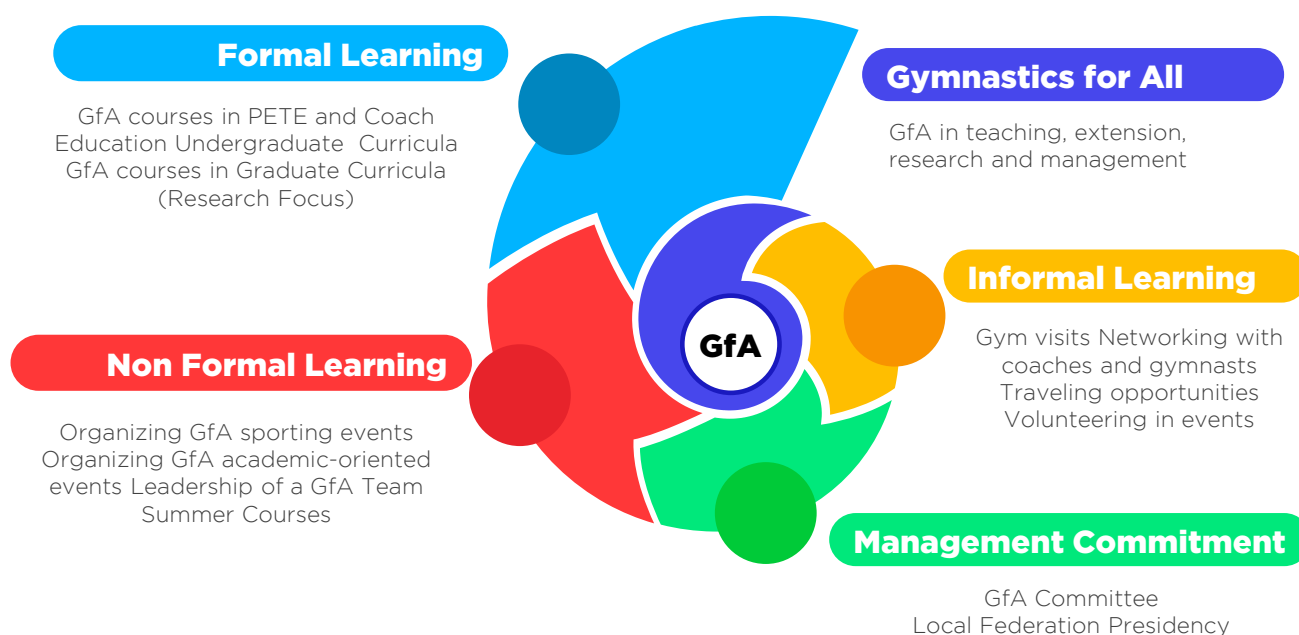
Since 2018, general coordination has been carried out by the Sports Sciences Course, in [Applied Sciences School – Unicamp](#), through the Laboratory of Researches and Experiences in Gymnastics (LAPEGI), together with the [Faculty of Physical Education](#), through the Gymnastics Research Group (GPG), and with the [Sesc](#) partnership. [Twelve editions](#) have been held since 2001, with the most recent one in 2024. The [Proceedings](#) of these editions, including research and experience abstracts, are open access and available in three languages (Portuguese, Spanish, and English), contributing to the development of GfA in other countries worldwide.

All the research groups analyzed, from Brazil's five geographic regions, are actively involved in the [International Forum of Gymnastics for All](#) - whether through performances by their GfA teams, course instruction, lectures, event organization, or simply attending the forum to learn, teach, exchange experiences, and renew their ideas. They return to their institutions as key disseminators of the principles of Teaching, Research, and University Extension in Gymnastics.

SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES AND LEGACIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GfA FROM BRAZIL TO THE WORLD

Since the 1950s, GG in Brazil has evolved into a unique practice, giving rise to GfA, a discipline shaped by Brazilian cultural and scientific influences. Today, GfA resonates globally, inspiring Latin American countries and fostering new perspectives on the practice and scientific study of gymnastics worldwide.

Figure 6 – Pathways for University Enrollment in GfA



Professors who are at the same time federation members have significantly contributed to sports management at various levels, highlighting the success of projects linking universities with federations mentioned before. From USP, Michele Vivienne Carbinatto coordinated the GfA Committee at the Brazilian Gymnastics Confederation for twelve years and is currently a member of the FIG's GfA Committee. From Unicamp, Marco Antonio Coelho Bortoleto served as a member of the FIG's GfA Committee for twelve years, as well as member and president of the FIG Education Commission, and became an honorary member of the FIG. Eliana de Toledo was also a GfA Committee Coordinator at the São Paulo Gymnastics Federation (FPG) for eight years. From Unesp, Daniela Bento-Soares has served as a GfA Committee member at the FPG for six years.

In other states, similar contributions have been made (Schiavon & Toledo, 2020; Patricio et al., 2020), such as Artemis Soares (University of Amazonas) in the development of Rhythmic Gymnastics and GfA, serving as president of the federation for several years; Vinícius and Margareth Ambrósio (Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais) with their ongoing work in Acrobatic Gymnastics and GfA; Lorena Nabanete dos Reis-Furtado (Federal University of Ceara) as president of the Ceará Gymnastics Federation and Michelle Ferreira de Oliveira (State University of Goiás) as vice president of the Goiás Gymnastics Federation.

As a result, these professors have played a key role in the systematic production of manuals, books, chapters, and events focused on coach education and preserving the historical memory of gymnastics. Their academic expertise allows them to effectively design and write projects that secure funding from agencies, enabling them to organize events and publish research—capabilities that administrators may lack. These contributions have been instrumental in shaping sports management in gymnastics.

Indeed, such programs encourage an interdisciplinary and collective approach to knowledge construction, as they promote collaboration, allowing for the exchange of ideas that bridge common sense and systematic knowledge. Scientific events and workshops, in particular, create spaces for dialogue, critical reflection, and continuous learning, where coaches can reevaluate and refine their understanding based on shared experiences and new perspectives.

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Marco is a member of the Gymnastics Research Group at FEF-Unicamp, and has been actively involved in the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG), serving on the Gymnastics for All Committee from 2012 to 2024 and as President of the Education Commission from 2017 to 2024.

PETRINA HUTCHINSON

Petrina Hutchinson has spent the last 40 years motivating, cajoling and encouraging people to get fit and co-ordinated, and over that time, she has taught countless cartwheels to people of all ages. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Dance and Physical Education, as well as gymnastics coaching accreditations. Petrina has led movement workshops at national and international events, directed Australian gymnastics galas and performances, presented the FIG Foundations of Gymnastics course and was part of the FIG GfA Committee (2022-2024).

She has previously worked at Gymnastics Australia as Participation Manager, authored GfA coaching resources and has managed the Australian team at four World Gymnaestradas. Petrina is the Director of Circus and the National Circus Festival Training Program at Spaghetti Circus in Mullumbimby.

ROGÉRIO VALÉRIO

Rogério Valério has a lifelong dedication to gymnastics. He started training as a gymnast at a very young age, later becoming a coach and his country's national GfA technical director. During his mandate, he developed new events and educational initiatives and served as the head of delegation to international events. Rogerio also acted as World Gymnaestrada 2003 LOC vice-president.

As a member of the UEG GFA committee, Rogerio developed the concept for the Golden Age Festival event, designed for participants aged 50 and above. He has been a member of FIG GFA committee since January 2005 with a deep involvement in all committee projects, particularly the creation, development and teaching of the FIG Academy - Foundations of Gymnastics Course.

Rogerio was the President of the National Olympic Committee - Sports for All Commission from 2013 to 2016 and is the President of the FIG GfA Committee since January 2022.

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Aimi Baker works for the National Gymnastics Federation of Ireland and has recently been promoted to Director of Participation, Inclusion and Club Support. She has been involved in gymnastics since she was six years old, when her mum (a PE teacher) set up the first gymnastics club in their local town. From there, Aimi progressed to competing for Ireland in the discipline of Acrobatics, travelling around the world, then moving into coaching and coach development, and finally continuing her passion for gymnastics by working for Gymnastics Ireland.

Aimi holds a Master's Degree in Nutritional Science and worked in nutrition and health promotion before taking up her position as Participation Manager at Gymnastics Ireland in 2009.

Aimi currently lives in County Wicklow, Ireland. This area is widely known as the "Garden of Ireland" due to its picturesque scenery, including mountains, lakes, forests, and coastal areas. This is where Aimi enjoys her second passion (after gymnastics) – mountain biking and hiking!

ARAKI TATSUO

Araki Tatsuo holds the title of Professor Emeritus at Nippon Sport Science University (NITTAIDAI) where he taught GfA from 1977 to 2022. He serves as the President of the JGA International Committee and occupies the position of President of the AGU GfA Committee. Araki was a member of the FIG GfA Committee from 2004 to 2024.

ANGELA GRIFFIN

Angela Griffin holds a Master of Applied Sports Coaching from the University of Limerick. She is a committed educator who works as a tutor for Sport Ireland, Gymnastics Ireland, and Special Olympics.

Since 2021, Angela has been involved in numerous initiatives with Gymnastics Ireland aimed at increasing female participation and developing the GymAble program to promote inclusivity in the sport. She is also responsible for the national and international growth of Gymnastics Ireland's GfA, programme and managing team logistics for international GfA Events and Festivals.

Angela has coached the Irish Team at the Special Olympics World Games in 2019 and 2023 and is a qualified dance professional with a background in choreography and stage production. Currently, Angela is the Participation Manager at Gymnastics Ireland.

CARMEN GÓMEZ

Carmen Gómez holds a Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Design and is a Master of Business Administration. She has over 30 years of experience managing gymnastics, sports, and health fitness institutions. Carmen is the co-founder and CEO of Club Deportivo C+, a chain of four sports and fitness clubs in Mexico.

Her leadership roles include serving on the Board of the Mexican Gymnastics Federation and as Technical President of the Gymnastics for All Committee of the Pan American Gymnastics Union (PAGU). She has led Mexican delegations to several World Gymnaestradas since 2003 and was responsible for producing the Pan American Night (PAGU Night) in the last five editions of the World Gymnaestrada.

As a gymnast, Carmen was a member of the Mexican national team and a Central and Pan American medalist. She is an expert for the FIG Foundations of Gymnastics, a speaker in her country on Olympic Solidarity, and the lead instructor in diploma programs at some of Mexico's most prestigious universities.

CEDRIC BOVEY

Cedric Bovey has been a gymnast in apparatus gymnastics (GfA), a judge and a coach. In Switzerland he taught Physical Education at the College and at the University of Lausanne, where he also served as head of the department. He has also chaired the Vaud Gymnastics Association and the organizing committee of the Lausanne 2025 Federal Gymnastics Festival, which gathered more than 65,000 gymnasts.

He is the Head of Sports for the State of Vaud, responsible for school sports, sports infrastructure and events, international sports relations, and societal themes such as inclusion and accessibility to sports.

On the international level, Cedric has been an expert for the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) and European Gymnastics for over 15 years, contributing to the training of coaches and evaluating performances at major events.

CHRIS MUCHATUTA

Chris Muchatuta was a national gymnast in Zimbabwe until the age of 20 and has been a gymnastics coach since 2004. He serves as the Athlete's Representative to Zimbabwe Gymnastics and holds an educational background in Clinical Psychology and Sports Management. Since 2012, Chris has been a member of the Gymnastics for All Committee in Zimbabwe.

He has been serving as President of Gymnastics Zimbabwe since 2020 and as President of the Southern African Gymnastics Association, Region 5, Zone 3, since 2018. Additionally, Chris is a member of the FIG GfA Committee for the period 2025–2028.

DANIELA BENTO-SOARES, PHD

Daniela Bento-Soares has been passionate about Gymnastics for All since her childhood. Currently she is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Bioscience of the São Paulo State University (Unesp), where she has worked since 2023, co-ordinating the Gymnastics and Rhythmic Activities Research Group (AGIR). She is also the president of the Gymnastics for All Committee of the São Paulo State Gymnastics Federation.

ELIANA DE TOLEDO, PHD

Eliana de Toledo has been performing as a gymnast, coach, teacher, and researcher of Gymnastics for All (GfA) for over 30 years, with a robust GfA production (books, manuscripts, manuals, lives, etc.). She chaired the GfA committee of the Gymnastics Federation of São Paulo (Brazil) for 10 years (2014-2024) and has been chairing the International Forum of Gymnastics for All (www.forumgpt.com) since 2018. Since 2012, she has been a gymnastics professor at the Sports Science Course (FCA-Unicamp), where she teaches at both undergraduate and graduate levels (Master's and PhD) and is the leader of LAPEGI - Laboratory of Research and Experiences in Gymnastics.

EMILIANA POLINI

Emiliana Polini practised artistic gymnastics until the age of 19. In 1989, she graduated in Physical Education from the University (ISEF) of Naples and now works as a primary school teacher. She has held the role of National Technical Director for Gymnastics for All in Italy since 2012, and since 2023, she has also been a member of the GfA Technical Committee of European Gymnastics. She has been an Italian National WAG Judge since 2006.

Since 1999, Emiliana has participated in all the international events organized by the International Gymnastics Federation and European Gymnastics. She was an evaluator at World Gym for Life in Vestfold (NOR) in 2017, at European Gym for Life in Neuchâtel (SWI) in 2022, and a feedbacker at European Gym for Life in Liège (BEL) in 2018.

She has also served as a director in choreographic shows for Gymnastics for All in Italy and for the Italian delegation at international events.

FERNANDA RAFFI MENEGALDO, PHD

Fernanda Raffi Menegaldo holds a PhD in Physical Education from the School of Physical Education at the University of Campinas (FEF/Unicamp), which included a research exchange at the National Institute of Physical Education of Catalonia (INEFC), University of Barcelona. She also earned a Master's Degree in Physical Education from FEF/Unicamp and holds a postgraduate diploma (lato sensu) in Social Sciences: Sociology, History, and Philosophy from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul. She is a member of the Gymnastics Research Group (Unicamp) and the Praxeological Studies Group (Federal University of Santa Maria). Formerly, she was part of the Unicamp Gymnastics Group (GGU), participating in several national and international gymnastics festivals. Her background includes experience as a rhythmic gymnast, judge, and coach. Her research focuses on gymnastics, drawing upon theoretical frameworks from Motor Praxeology and Sociology. She has also lectured on undergraduate Physical Education programmes at private higher education institutions.

GABRIELE POSTUWKA, PHD

Gabriele Postuwka retired from Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, in 2020 and has been a board member of the German Gymnastics Federation (DTB) since 2021, focusing on Gymnastics for All, Choreography, and Dance. She studied at the University of Heidelberg, received a Fulbright Scholarship in the US, and holds the 1st and 2nd Degrees of Teachers' Examination, as well as a Master of Arts in Physical Education. Gabriele served as an assistant professor at various universities, and from 2001 to 2020 within the Institute of Sport Sciences at Goethe University Frankfurt. Her dissertation was titled "Modern Dance and Dance Education".

HESHAM EL-NADY, PHD.

Hesham El-Nady holds a PhD in Sports for All from Helwan University, where he has taught at the Sports for All - Sports Performances program. He has served as the President of the Technical Committee for Gymnastics for All at the Egyptian Gymnastics Federation from 2015 to 2025 and as a member of the Technical Committee for Gymnastics for All in the Arab and African Gymnastics Unions.

An expert and lecturer in the field of Gymnastics for All, he has taught and trained in the Gymnastics for All courses in Tunisia, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Hesham designed and directed the opening ceremonies of international gymnastics events in Egypt and was the coach of the Egyptian team at the World Gymnaestrada 2007 in Dornbirn, Austria.

KAYLA HARDMAN

Kayla Hardman is the Recreational Competitions and Festivals Partner at British Gymnastics. Throughout her life, Kayla has been involved in gymnastics, both as a gymnast and a coach. Experiencing the sport's positive impact firsthand, she joined British Gymnastics after graduating from Loughborough University, aiming to help more people experience the benefits of sport and gymnastics. In her role as Recreational Competitions and Festivals Partner, Kayla collaborates with her team to provide opportunities for all recreational gymnasts. This work reflects the principle of Gymnastics for All, with the belief that every gymnast should have access to opportunities.

Outside of her professional capacity at British Gymnastics, Kayla is a National Youth Board member for Access Sport. This UK-based charity trains, equips and supports community sports clubs, organisations, and volunteers to provide inclusive programs.

KEITH RUSSELL, PHD

Keith Russell was a competitive gymnast in Artistic, Trampoline, and Tumbling, and participated in the 1961 Gymnaestrada in Stuttgart, Germany. He performed a trampoline clown act for several years and coached in New Zealand and Australia for three years during the 1970s. He and his wife coached MAG and WAG gold medalists at Canadian Championships. Keith was the Canadian Men's Artistic National Coach for four years and served as a university professor for 36 years.

He coached the university team, which included two Olympians, and authored the Canadian Level 1 Coach Education textbook. He co-authored the Levels 2, 3, and 4 courses and trained course leaders across Canada. Keith served as president of the FIG Scientific Commission for nine years and was a co-author, course leader, and expert presenter for FIG Coach Education Levels 1, 2, and 3 Academies in five gymnastic disciplines, presenting at over 60 international courses. He was also co-editor of the IOC Handbook of Sports Medicine (Gymnastics) and creator and author of Ruschkin Publishing's 'Up Down All-Around' Gymnastics Lesson Plans for schools.

Keith is Professor Emeritus at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada.

LAURITA MARCONI SCHIAVON, PHD

Laurita Marconi Schiavon is a Brazilian academic and researcher specializing in gymnastics and sports pedagogy. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Physical Education, a Master's Degree in Physical Education with a focus on gymnastics in schools, and a Ph.D. in Physical Education with an emphasis on sports pedagogy, all from the University of Campinas (UNICAMP). She is a faculty member at UNICAMP's Faculty of Physical Education (FEF), where she teaches and supervises research in the areas of gymnastics and sports pedagogy. She is also the head of the Gymnastics Research Group at FEF and has been involved in organising the International Gymnastics for All Forum in Campinas and the International Seminar of Artistic and Rhythmic Gymnastics.

Laurita's academic interests include artistic gymnastics, gymnastics programs, coach education and training methodologies.

LORI LAZNOVSKY

Lori Laznovsky is the Director of Gymnastics for All and Emerging Disciplines for USA Gymnastics, a member of the Pan American Gymnastics for All Committee and a member of the FIG Gymnastics for All Committee (2025-2028). She started participating in Gymnastics at the age of three, through the American Sokol Organization. Lori was a founding member of USA's Gymnastics for All Committee and helped develop TeamGym in the United States. She has participated in eight World Gymnaestradas and all World Gym for Life Challenges to date. Lori is constantly looking for opportunities for ALL participants to experience the joy, community and friendship that gymnastics can provide!

MICHELE VIVIENE CARBINATTO, PHD

Michele Vivienne Carbinatto is a member of the Gymnastics for All Committee (2025-2028) of the International Gymnastics Federation and works as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sport of the University of São Paulo (USP) since 2015, where she teaches at both undergraduate and graduate levels (Master's and PhD) and has published extensively on GfA. She is also a member of the Gymnastics for All Committee (2023-2026) of the Pan American Gymnastics Union and currently serves as the President of the Gymnastics for All Committee of the Brazilian Gymnastics Federation (2013-2025).

SERGE VAN POELVOORDE

Serge Van Poelvoorde is a highly respected figure in the international gymnastics community, with decades of experience in coaching, development, and sports administration. He served as the National Coach for the Belgian Men's Artistic Gymnastics Junior Team until 2001, playing a key role in shaping the next generation of elite gymnasts.

In 2001, he relocated to Qatar to support the creation and development of the Qatar Gymnastics Federation. Since then, he has been instrumental in establishing and expanding all gymnastics disciplines in the country, including Men's and Women's Artistic Gymnastics, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Trampoline, and Gymnastics for All.

As project manager for the Qatar delegation to every World Gymnaestrada since 2003, Serge has consistently demonstrated leadership and a deep commitment to promoting gymnastics on a global scale. Currently, he serves as the Executive Manager of the Qatar Gymnastics Federation and as the Technical Manager for the Asian Gymnastics Union, where he continues to contribute to the growth and governance of the sport across the region.

UDO MERKEL, PHD

Udo Merkel is a German social scientist who spent most of his life working at universities in England. He has a keen interest in the political economy of football, politics and sociology of mega sports events as a foreign policy and diplomatic tool, globalisation, comparative European sport studies and fan cultures. He has published widely in these areas. Due to BREXIT, he left the UK and is now based in Barcelona, Spain. He continues to work as a consultant and independent critical scholar. His latest book (2025) is about Racism, Xenophobia, Antisemitism and Islamophobia in European football.

YUMIKO ITOH

Yumiko Itoh is a member of the FIG Gymnastics for All Committee (2025-2028) and president of the Japan Gymnastics Association Gymnastics for All Committee. Yumiko works for Nippon Sport Science University (NITTAIDAI) as an associate professor, teaching Gymnastics for All - Theory and Practical skills.



“Gymnastics for all has the power to build bridges across cultures, generations and borders. Whenever I visit the World Gymnaestrada or our German Gymnastics Festival, I can feel how everyone is united by a shared passion for movement and expression. Gymnastics for All is about inclusion, creativity and community. Everyone is welcome - regardless of age, skin colour, gender or nationality. My aim is to show that the gymnastics movement is the global provider of physical activity, helping millions of people of all generations to lead a more active and healthy lifestyle. Our work promotes a lifelong sporting career and well-being at any age.”

Dr. Alfons Hölzl, President of the German Gymnastics Federation

Developed by:

International Gymnastics Federation (FIG)
Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique

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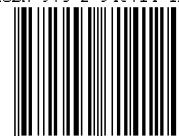
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