

GYMNASTICS FOR ALL

Worldwide Experiences



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FIG Gymnastics for All Committee





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PRESENTATION

Dear Reader,

I believe that one of the most beautiful aspects of sports is its power to unite people in the spirit of friendship and fraternity. Gymnastics for All is a perfect example of this. It shows how Gymnastics is the foundation of all sports and how it can be practiced by anyone. It inspires people from all age groups, all around the world, to come together and perform, in a celebration of sport and creativity.

Additionally, Gymnastics for All encourages the development of the sport, as it has an impact on such a diverse audience worldwide. Anyone can practice Gymnastics, anywhere, anytime, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity and ability. It can serve as an introduction to Gymnastics for younger generations, and, at the same time, it gives older generations the opportunity to keep engaging in a physical activity, which is beneficial for their health and well-being. It also promotes an inclusive society, as it allows for gymnasts with different levels of abilities to practise together – there is simply no distinction between the members of a group. They all equally contribute to the quality of a performance, and having the opportunity to perform is highly motivating. This is what is truly amazing about this discipline.

The magic of Gymnastics for All reaches its pinnacle at its two major events, the World Gymnaestrada and the World Gym for Life Challenge. The atmosphere at these events is truly unique, and it is the best illustration of the five Fs that define the discipline: fun, fitness, fundamentals, friendship and forever. It is a festival of joy that unites all kinds of people coming from all over the world, sharing the same goal: practising Gymnastics and having a good time. The friendships that the participants build will live on forever, and the memories that they make will always be by their side.

The above is only a small preview of the beauty of Gymnastics for All. I invite you to learn more about this unique discipline by reading on. You will be inspired!



Morinari Watanabe

International Gymnastics Federation President



INTRODUCTION

As one of the oldest sports, Gymnastics has had an important influence on the development of modern society. In times of so many social, economic and political transformations, Gymnastics remains globally present, connecting with the community in a myriad of ways. This book refreshes our view of gymnastics, bringing valuable information about the massive practice of Gymnastics around the globe.

In the wide family of FIG Gymnastics, we accommodate many disciplines. The majority are oriented to competition and guided by a code of points that orientates its development. On the other hand, Gymnastics for All opens up space for endless possibilities of practice, showing the strength of Gymnastics performed in a group. GfA provides opportunities for all ages, abilities, genders, races, religions, cultures and economic support. The differences offer the possibility of being stronger and seeking further development by working together. GfA is an inclusive sports practice, as seen in the following chapters.

This book offers insight into the history and development of Gymnastics for All events, education and committees across continents and gymnastic unions. The social impact and benefits of being involved in GfA are investigated for individuals and groups and the positive legacy of participation is evident.

As we can see in this book, there are many ways of practising Gymnastics for All and demonstrates worldwide diversity. Being involved in the Gymnastics for All family allows us to learn from each of these practices. Every single GfA experience is equally valuable and inspires all of us to develop our involvement and for each community to create an original interpretation of GfA.

The book enables us to navigate into some worldwide experiences as well as reflect on relevant aspects of this practice. We are sure many more stories could also be part of this book. The FIG will continue to work towards sharing other experiences in the future, in pursuit of the sustainable development of the GfA and increasing its international promotion.

Welcome to the “GfA Worldwide Experiences”. Enjoy your reading.



Rogério Valério

FIG GfA C President



12th WORLD GYMNAESTRADA[®]
LISBOA 20-26 JUL.
2003



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FIG GYMNASTICS FOR ALL COMMITTEE

40 years back in time

Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist

Our sport. Gymnastics – much older than 40 years

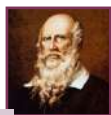
I was asked the question: “How did the work of the FIG Gymnastics for All committee develop during the last 40 years?” Well, a lot has happened, but I would like to start with going a bit further back in time. Our sport, Gymnastics, has developed for the last 300 years in a very interesting way and we could go further back in time to find out how physical activities always had a big impact on human beings. The word, “gymnastics” is derived from the Antique Greek language and physical activities were an important part of the Antique Greek culture. Where people lived there has always been physical activities and I am sure kids have always loved to be upside down, just like kids today. Another reason was of course the need to have strong, brave and successful soldiers. Drawings found in Greece but also in Mexico and Egypt, are dated thousands of years back, and it shows athletic exercises, rhythmic and acrobatics. For us, Gymnastics.

If we go back to the 18th century, we will find what we call ***“The Great Masters of Gymnastics”***. They were inspired by different philosophers from the Age of Enlightenment.

Who were they? Below I have listed some of them:



Johann Christoph Friedrich Guts Muths (1759-1839) Pedagogue and educator. Known as the Grandfather of Gymnastics. He wrote “Gymnastik für die Jugend” (Gymnastics for Youth).



Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) Educator. Known as the Father of Gymnastics. He wrote “Die Deutsche Turnkunst” (The German Art of Gymnastics). Jahn invented the word “Turnen” and introduced different gymnastics apparatus like bars and pommel horse.



Per Henrik Ling (1776-1839) Gymnastic pedagogue, poet and founder of Ling Gymnastics. Known as the Father of Swedish Gymnastics. His son, Hjalmar Ling, wrote after that his father passed away, “Gymnastikens allmänna grunder” (General basics of gymnastics).

Photos source: [Swedish School of Sport and Health Science](#)

I could mention many more but have chosen the most famous ones and their ideas about gymnastics were spread around the world. To be noticed is that it was only European men, and they were all connected to physical activities in schools. Good to know though, they saw gymnastics as an important activity also for women. Both Jahn and Ling also had specific gymnastics activities intended for military practice.

With their gymnastics activities they inspired people to get organised in teams, clubs and national organisations. The first known Gymnastic National Federations were born, and the oldest one, Switzerland is from 1832. Eight European National Federations were founded before 1881, the official founding year of the FIG.

In the beginning this was not a worldwide organisation, it was the European Gymnastics Federation, founded in Belgium 1881 by the National Federations President Nicolas J. Cuperus. He became the founding President of this International Organisation (which I will in the following text call the FIG even if it was the EGF until 1921) and he stayed in that position for 43 years, until 1924. Cuperus believed that the main reason to practise gymnastics was to gain good health, strength, agility and endurance. He also believed that the gymnastics festivals, national and international, that were organised in Europe long before the FIG was founded, were important. Even more important than the gymnastics competitions that also were organised in the national federations. The first known international competition was organised 1903 during a gymnastics festival in Belgium and four national teams participated.



FIG is growing and needs Technical Committees

In the beginning the FIG grew very slowly and it was first at the Congress 1921 that the name of the Federation changed into FIG (Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique). At this time the FIG had 10 National Member Federations representing three Continents, Europe, Africa and the Americas.

Through the years gymnastics has had a strong position within the worldwide school system and most of the National Gymnastics Federations have given importance to gymnastics as a basic activity. With this the number of gymnasts grew and the activity became very popular.

The FIG has always been responsible for the competitive World Championships and from 1953 also for the festival “Gymnaestrada”. It was necessary to appoint Technical Committees for Men’s and Women’s “Artistic Gymnastics” and that was done in the beginning of 1930. The competition in 1903, I mentioned earlier, is seen as the first World Championship.

Later the discipline “Gymnastique Moderne/Rhythmic Gymnastics” was introduced, and their first World Championship was organised 1963. This third Technical Committee (TC) within the FIG, was officially included in 1976.

It would take another eight years before the fourth FIG Technical Committee (TC) was established and it was in 1984 that the TC General Gymnastics was included. The name within the FIG was from the beginning General Gymnastics but in 2006 changed to Gymnastics for All.

Trampoline, Acrobatics and Aerobics had their own international federations/ organisations before they became part of the FIG. The same goes for our latest activity, Parkour. Opening up the FIG and bringing in more gymnastics disciplines has been a natural way of developing our sport.

Where did the Gymnaestrada idea come from?

Gymnastic festivals had been organised already since the beginning of the 19th century. The first known one took place in Aarau, SUI 1832. We know about European National Festivals in Austria, Estonia, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. But also, the Czech Republic with their Sokol Gymnastics festival. In the beginning, it was national festivals with mass performances and thousands of gymnasts participating. Later international groups were invited. One important festival took place in Stockholm Sweden 1939 and that was in memory and honour of PH Ling, the father of Swedish Gymnastics, who lived 1776-1839.

The festival was named “**Lingiaden**” and organised by the Swedish Gymnastics Federation. 7,399 gymnasts from 37 countries participated. The non-competitive style of Ling gymnastics had been spread around the world since the 19th century and was well known. Lingiaden, with participants from the whole world became a big success. Gymnasts, individual or in group, performed both outdoors and indoors. The participants had school accommodation, where also the meals were served.



You can see a Swedish film from the Lingiaden 1939

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFf8cjHUEoU>

A strong wish to repeat the event

As the event was so successful it was decided to repeat the event 10 years later. Lingiaden 1949 was an even bigger event with many successful performances. 14 000 gymnasts from 62 countries participated. Together with the Gymnastic performances a big Sports exhibition was organised. Unfortunately, it rained during the whole week which resulted in not enough paying audience and the event became a financial disaster.

During the week the FIG held its Congress in Stockholm, and the Authorities and Delegates could attend the successful performances. They enjoyed the event and especially one of the FIG Vice Presidents, Johannes Heinrich François Sommer from the Netherlands was very enthusiastic. After the event he contacted the Swedish Gymnastics Federation and asked if the FIG could take over the idea to organise an International Gymnastics Festival and he got a positive answer from Sweden. The idea about the Gymnaestrada was born. It was Mr. Sommer who invented the name “Gymnaestrada” where *Gymna* stood for Gymnastics, *Estrada* for Elevated stage for the recreational sport and *Strada* the long road already laid down and still being followed by the gymnastics clubs.

The proposal was presented and discussed at the FIG Congress 1950 and at the Congress 1951 the final decision was taken to organise the first Gymnaestrada 1953 in Rotterdam NED. That year the FIG had 33 National Member Federations and 14 of them participated in the first Gymnaestrada.

In the preparation of the 9th Gymnaestrada in Amsterdam 1991 the FIG and the Dutch Gymnastics Federation discussed the fact that more Federations were organising their own National Gymnaestrada. For that reason, the name of the international event changed to the “World Gymnaestrada” and National Member Federations were invited to use the name Gymnaestrada for their competition-free National Gymnastics Festivals.

Responsibilities in the beginning

From the beginning of the FIG, it was the Executive Committee and the Secretariat who organised everything. The Technical Committees (TC's) came later. For that reason, it was the EC, the Secretariat and the TC Men and Women who cooperated with the first five organisers of the Gymnaestrada that were held every fourth year.

1953.....	Rotterdam, NED
1957.....	Zagreb, YOU
1961.....	Stuttgart, GER
1965.....	Vienna, AUT
1969.....	Basel, SUI

Difficult period within the FIG

The seventies became a difficult period within the FIG and the Gymnaestrada was affected by this mainly political crisis. The event in 1973 was to take place in Barcelona ESP but they handed back the event and the same year, 1973 it was awarded to West-Berlin, GER, to be organised in 1975. All of this happened during the Cold War and did not respect the “Four Power Agreement on Berlin” saying not to hold any world events in Berlin. East European Gymnastics Federations therefore boycotted the Gymnaestrada 1975. South Africa was one of the participating Federations and that caused demonstrations during the event against their apartheid. In total 20 National Member Federations participated, 13 from Western Europe and 7 from overseas.

FIG had the three Technical Committees (TC's) Men, Women and Gymnastique Moderne/Rhythmic Gymnastics attending the 1975 event to observe and report back to the EC. They had many critical remarks on the arrangement and character of the event and the message was clear: “too much show – too little gymnastics”.

The Gymnaestrada was discussed on the two following Congresses, 1977 and 1978. In Strasbourg, SUI 1978 it was a positive discussion after a strong push from representatives from BEL, DEN, GER, SUI and SWE and three important resolutions were passed by the Congress:

- The Gymnaestrada as a FIG world event in General Gymnastics remains an official event on the FIG's programme.
- The 7th Gymnaestrada will take place in Zurich, SUI in 1982.
- The FIG Executive Committee is given the assignment of appointing a Gymnaestrada Commission.

The Executive Committee decided in 1979 to change the name to “Gymnaestrada and General Gymnastics Commission” and in 1980 the following people were appointed members for the period 1980-1984:

From the Executive Committee (EC):

Mr. Nicola Vieru – ROM, Mr. Sigfried Fischer – BRA, Ms. Marian Balcerzak, POL.

Appointed by EC:

Mr. Karl-Heinz Schwirtz – GER, Mr. Jean Willizegger – SUI, Mr. Olof Kihlmark – SWE.

During this period the 7th Gymnaestrada was organised 1982 in Zürich, SUI with 14 200 participants from 22 National Member Federations.



Check it out the FIG Matine: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZOFQ4KY2A4>

The development of the objectives, name and election procedure

In the beginning the Gymnaestrada was the only task for the new Commission and the members were appointed by the Executive Committee. When the Congress in Los Angeles 1984 decided to establish its fourth Committee, it was named the “General Gymnastics Technical Committee” and with this Committee the objectives were defined:

“Worldwide development of General Gymnastics and promotion of the Worldwide Gymnaestrada”.

Like the other TC’s the new Committee had its own Technical Assembly. As long as the FIG had Technical Assemblies, it was there the TC Members were elected. The last Technical Assembly took place at the Congress in Atlanta 1996. After this, the election was held at the Congress General Assembly every fourth year. At the Congress 2000 the name of the Committee was officially changed to the “General Gymnastics Committee”. The word “Technical” was deleted as the areas of responsibility were not technical, but sport political. The latest change of the name of the Committee happened at the Congress 2006 when FIG was celebrating its 125th anniversary. To connect the FIG activity to the IOC activity, where the term “Sports for All” was used, our name was now the “Gymnastics for All Committee” (GfA C). Interestingly President Grandi had already proposed to change the name in 2004, but the Committee was against the idea with the motivation that “Gymnastics for All was a slogan, not a name. For that reason, the EC voted no, and the name change had to wait another two years.

Committee members through the years

Period	President	Vice Presidents
1984-1988	Mr Jean Willisegger, SUI	Mr. Olof Kihlmark, SWE and Mr. Karl-Heinz Swirtz, GER
1988-1992	Mr Jean Willisegger, SUI	Mr. Karl-Heinz Swirtz, GER and Mr. Olof Kihlmark, SWE
1992-1996	Mr Jean Willisegger, SUI	Mr. Giorgio Garufi, ITA and Mr.Niels Peter Nielsen, DEN
1996-2000	Ms. Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist, SWE	Mr. Giorgio Garufi, ITA and Mr.Ruedi Steuri, SUI
2000-2004	Ms. Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist, SWE	Mr. Giorgio Garufi, ITA and Mr.Ruedi Steuri, SUI
2004-2008	Ms.Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist, SWE	Mr. Tatsuo Araki, JPN and Ms. Jenny Collins, AUS
2008-2012	Ms.Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist, SWE	Mr. Ruedi Steuri, SUI and Mr. Tatsuo Araki, JPN
2012-2016	Ms.Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist, SWE	Mr. Rogério Valério, POR and Mr. Tatsuo Araki, JPN
2016-2021*	Ms.Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist, SWE	Ms. Monika Siskova, SVK and Mr. Rogério Valério, POR
2021-2024	Mr. Rogério Valério, POR	Ms. Monika Siskova, SVK and Mr. Tatsuo Araki, JPN

Regulation

One big difference between the Technical Committees and the GfA Committee is that there is no Code of Points within GfA and there never was. But as the Gymnaestrada has been organised since 1953 some kind of Regulation was necessary. From the beginning this document described the philosophy of the event and expectation on the different performances. This has been updated through the years and today we have our “Gymnastics for All Manual”. This is comparable to the other Committees’ Technical Regulations and therefore also approved by the FIG Council. The GfA Manual is divided into three parts:

- **Gymnastics for All Regulation**
- **World Gymnaestrada Regulation**
- **World Gym for Life Challenge Regulation**

In the GfA Regulation you find the Definition of Gymnastics for All, the Strategic Principles together with the Policy and Mandate of the Committee.

The two other Regulations you find everything worth knowing about the World Gymnaestrada and the World Gym for Life Challenge.

Members

Mr. Niels Peter Nielsen, DEN, Mr. Giorgio Garufi, ITA, Mr. Lance Otto, AUS and Mr. Gerald George, USA

Mr. Giorgio Garufi, ITA, Mr. Niels Peter Nielsen, DEN, Mr. Lance Otto, AUS and Ms. Inger-Marie Holte, NOR

Ms. Inger Marie Holte, NOR, Ms. Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist, SWE, Mr. Herbert Hartman, GER, Mr. Henri Doue Tai, CIV

Ms. Inger Marie Holte, NOR, Mr. Niels Peter Nielsen, DEN, Mr. Herbert Hartman, GER and Mr. Hugo Olivier RSA

Mr. Flemming Knudsen, DEN, Ms. Jenny Collins, AUS, Ms. Inger Marie Holte, NOR and Mr. Herbert Hartman, GER

Mr. Flemming Knudsen, DEN, Ms. Bodil Mickels, FIN, Mr. Rogério Valério, POR and Ms. Monika Siskova, SVK

Mr. Rogério, Valerio, POR, Mr. Flemming Knudsen, DEN, Ms. Monika Siskova, SVK and Mr. Mohammed Khalil Alloush, PLE

Mr. Ruedi Steuri, SUI, Mr. Flemming Knudsen, DEN, Ms. Monika Siskova, SVK and Mr. Marco Bortoleto, BRA

Mr. Tatsuo Araki, JPN, Mr. Marco Bortoleto, BRA, Mr. Ruedi Steuri, SUI and Mr. Flemming Knudsen, DEN

Ms. Gemma Barton, GBR, Mr. Marco Bortoleto, BRA, Mr. Jérôme Hübscher, SUI and Ms. Petrina Hutchinson, AUS

Co-opted Member

Mr. Karl-Heinz Scwartz, GER

Mr. Karl-Heinz Scwartz, GER

Mr. Karl-Heinz Scwartz, GER

World Gym for Life Challenge was organised for the first time in 2009. After many discussions with the National Member Federations, a clear wish was to organise an international event with the possibility to have the Group Performances evaluated and receive feedback from Experts. The GfA Committee developed this new event based on the GfA Philosophy and introduced an alternative way to evaluate. This was based on already existing Regulations in different National Member Federations.



Gym for Life Challenge 2009: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=G36gOEWYcS4>



Both events are being organised every four years, as described in the FIG GfA Manual:

<https://www.gymnastics.sport/site/rules/#6>

Definition

From the beginning and until today there is always a question: What is Gymnastics for All? It has always been a struggle to give a clear answer as gymnastics around the world varies depending on national, social and cultural differences. But for sure it is the basis of gymnastics. A handstand is taught the same way, no matter the discipline. The Definition has always been discussed between the National Member Federations and the Committee. The text has continuously been updated and today the Definition is the following:

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 well-being – physical, social, intellectual and psychological.

The focus of Gymnastics for All activities is Fun, Fitness, Fundamentals, and Friendship and 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 competitive team events (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.

Disability Gymnastics

With our name, Gymnastics for All the message is clear, Gymnastics is for everyone. We have National Member Federations being very active offering gymnastics for people with different kind of disabilities and have done so for many years.

In 1999 the FIG Executive Committee gave GBR the "Lead Nation" status as they had worked since the mid-80's to establish a fully inclusive programme in MAG, WAG, RG and Acro. Their goal was to get gymnastics into the Paralympic Programme. But GBR had also since 1987 participated with Disability teams at the Gymnaestrada and there were more National Member Federations who had done the same. This connected the activity to the General Gymnastics Committee who were given the responsibility for further development. A working group under the leadership of John Atkinson, GBR was established and named "Gymnastics and Movement for people with a disability" (GMPD) The working group organised the first Symposium and International Open Competition under the authority of the FIG in Belfast in 2002.

- Through the years the GfA C has worked to integrate Disability across all work areas, rather than isolating it.
- 2014 the GfA C organised a Symposium, "Disability Gymnastics" in Lilleshall, GBR.
- 2018 the GfA C organised a Symposium, "FIG Gymnastics for All Project – Alliance of Federations" in London GBR.
- There are many good ideas how to develop the activity and how it can be integrated into the National Member Federations programme.
- More Federations are getting active and the GfA C notice more participation at both the World Gymnaestrada and the World Gym for Life Challenge.
- We notice also here the change of name where it starts with "Gymnastics and Movement for people with a disability", GMPD, goes to "Disability Gymnastics" and now some Federations call it "Para Gymnastics".

What important measures have been taken by the GfA Committee since 1984?

The Committee established officially in 1984 with the objectives of “Promoting the Gymnaestrada and the worldwide promotion of General Gymnastics”.

The Committee developed the Gymnaestrada Regulation and had ideas how to promote the activities worldwide. To be able to finance these activities the FIG Congress in Seoul 1988 approved the Committees proposal to use 10% of the Gymnaestrada participant fee for this. At the Congress in Atlanta 1996 this was increased to 12%. This is still happening today and has been very important for the worldwide development of Gymnastics for All.

Activities organised by the General Gymnastics/Gymnastics for All Committee

Expert conferences with discussions, workshops and practical sessions

- 1986.....Lillsved, SWE
- 1988.....Innsbruck, AUT
- 1990.....Lamego, POR

Practical Courses with different target groups

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1989.....Lillsved, SWE | Gymnastics for children and adults |
| 1989.....Geneva, SUI | Gymnastics for women and men |
| 1989.....Frankfurt, GER | Gymnastics for seniors |

Symposium with discussions

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1989.....Herning, DEN | The Gymnaestrada as a culture event |
| 2002.....Belfast, GBR | Gymnastics and Movement for people with a disability (GMPD) |
| 2014.....Lilleshall, GBR | Disability Gymnastics |
| 2018.....London, GBR | FIG Gymnastics for All Disability Project – Alliance of Federations |

Seminars, General Gymnastics - theoretical and practical

1991.....**Fort Worth**, USA, **Indianapolis**, USA and **Gold Cost**, AUS
1992.....**Harare**, ZIM, **Prague**, CZE, **Budapest**, HUN and **Algiers**, ALG
1993.....**Hamilton**, NZL, **Quito**, ECU and **Riga**, LAT
1994.....**Vilnius**, LTU and **Tallin**, EST
1995.....**Riga**, LAT

Course for representatives from National Member Federations (Educators, Managers) to be certified to organise FIG Certificate Course on the National level.

1996.....**Beekbergen**, NED
1997.....**Tirrenia**, ITA
2000.....**Bangkok**, THA

In total 25 National Member Federations participated in these courses.

Course to be a FIG certified instructor in General Gymnastics

1994.....**Kuala Lumpur**, MAS
1995.....**Dacca**, BAN
1996.....**Kuala Lumpur**, MAS and **Dacca**, BAN
1997.....**Las Palmas**, ESP, **Tirrenia**, ITA, **Durban**, RSA and **Mexico City**, MEX
1999.....**Johannesburg**, RSA, and **San Fernando**, TTO were BAR also participated
2000..**Bangkok** THA, were also INA, JPN, KUW, MAS, NEP, NZL and PAK participated
2002.....**Las Palmas**, ESP
2003.....**Cape Town**, RSA, were also LES, NAM, ZIM and Malawi participated
2005.....**Durban**, RSA were also LES and MOZ

FIG General Gymnastics Certificate Course 1992-2005 (later replaced with the Foundations of Gymnastics Course)

1997.....ESP	1999.....TTG
1997.....RSA	1999.....RSA
1997.....MEX	2005.....RSA
1997.....ITA	

Seminar and Forums on Structures of activities, organization and education

1999.....Vienna, AUT, **Johannesburg**, RSA, **Miami**, USA and **São Paulo**, BRA
2000.....**Prague**, CZE, and **Bali**, INA
2003.....**Curitiba**, BRA and **Kuala Lumpur**, MAS

Symposiums in preparation for the World Gymnaestrada

From 1990-1993 five symposiums were organized in Frankfurt and as the event 1995 was moved to Berlin the Symposium 1994 was organised there. Each symposium had a different topic.

After this the FIG GfA C together with the LOC's of the World Gymnaestrada has invited all National Member Federations to Information Meetings before the events.

Join the Gymnaestrada Course (new name from 2017 Join the GfA activities)

This course was organised to promote participation at the World Gymnaestrada and later also the World Gym for Life.

Year	Place	Year	Place
1995	Berlin , GER	2008	Cancun , MEX
1997	Orlando , USA	2010	Seoul , KOR
1998	Brisbane , AUS	2013	Singapore , SGP
2002	Houston , USA	2014	Cancun , MEX
2004	Houston , USA	2017	Rosarium , ARG
2004	Kuala Lumpur , MAS	2017	Negombo , SRI
2005	Berlin , GER	2018	Cotonou , BEN
2006	Chang Mai , THA	2019	Novi Sad , SRB
2006	MEX		

Workshops

2005.....**Berlin**, GER, **Apparatus Gymnastics**
2006.....**RSA**, **Gymnastics for All**

Group Performance Course

1997.....	USA
1998.....	AUS
2007.....	NED

Course to be a certified FIG Foundations of Gymnastics Course expert

2008.....	DEN
2009.....	UZB
2018.....	MEX
2022.....	RSA

FIG Foundations of Gymnastics Course (replaced the FIG General Gymnastics Certificate Course organized from 1992)

When the FIG started to develop the Academies for the Technical disciplines it became obvious that a basic course for all disciplines was necessary. Together with Hardy Fink and Keith Russell the GfA Committee selected experts to develop the content for the FIG Foundations Course Manual. **The first edition was ready to be used at the first pilot course* 2007, delivering 28 courses until the end of 2022.**

Year	Place	Year	Place
2007	NAM*	2015	PUR
2008	SEN	2015	NEP
2009	TTO	2016	RSA
2010	CZE	2016	TTO
2010	SVK	2017	DOM
2010	GUA	2018	CHI
2010	RSA	2018	RSA
2011	COL	2018	MEX
2012	TTO	2019	BAR
2012	RSA	2019	EGY
2012	MEX	2021	NCA
2014	RSA	2022	KWA
2014	RSA	2022	VEN
2014	POR	2022	RSA

Colloquiums

Year	Place	Theme
1995 2000	Copenhagen, DEN Wildhaus, SUI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sport Policy Concerns in General Gymnastics• Perspective of General Gymnastics- World Gymnaestrada philosophy- Education- Future tasks
2001 2001	Lillsved, SWE Tokyo, JPN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competitions in General Gymnastics• Education in General Gymnastics
2002	Cape Town, RSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structural development and education
2004	Mexico City, MEX	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulation of the World Gymnaestrada
2004	Sydney, AUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wellness, Fitness and Health

Year	Place	Theme
2008	Singapore, SGP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gymnastics – a healthy way of life
2009	Lausanne, SUI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety in Group Performances, focusing on Apparatus Gymnastics – Gymnastics for All
2010	Lisbon, POR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contest and Competitions within Gymnastics for All
2011	Cape Town, RSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The World Gymnaestrada in the future and World Gym for Life Challenge 2013
2012	Helsinki, FIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gymnastics – add quality to the second part of your life Exhibition of resources from National Gymnastics Federations Presentation of research on Health promotion Online message from President Grandi on GfA within FIG Online presentation and discussion on social media and the FIG website
2014	Orlando, AUT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to create a Gymnastics Show The future of World Gym for Life Challenge GfA guiding principles: Quality and Safety at all levels
2015	Tønsberg, NOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Gym for Life Challenge 2017 Creating Gymnastics Displays with quality and safe technique Everyone can take part, Ideas how to integrate all ages and gymnasts with a disability in our Gymnastics Displays Presentation of Scientific Research within Gymnastics for All
2016	Dornbirn, AUT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Gymnastics for All activities The World Gymnaestrada The World Gym for Life Challenge
2017	Tallin, EST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GfA within the FIG, Continental Unions and the National Federations 2017-2020 The FIG GfA C Business Plan How to use social media for communication, promotion and education How to make it more attractive to organise big events Cooperation FIG – IOC and National Federations – NOC's
2018	Ottawa, CAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking into the future of gymnastics World Gym for Life Challenge- evaluation of 2017 and ideas for the future World Gymnaestrada 2019 – News from the LOC Inclusive gymnastics

Year	Place	Theme
2019	Lisbon, POR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our GfA events – World Gymnaestrada 2019 and 2023, World Gym for Life Challenge 2021 • National and Continental GfA events – Sharing of good practice and experience • Gymnastics for All – Strategies for development of different age groups, different abilities and new trends • Group Choreography – How can we be more creative? • FIG Foundations Course – Updated Manual
2020	Cancelled because of the pandemic Covid-19, transformed in a Virtual Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Gym for Life Challenge – Lisbon (POR) 2021 • World Gymnaestrada - Amsterdam (NED) 2023 • Education online seminars
2021	Colloquium organised online via Zoom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our GfA events – World Gymnaestrada 2019 and 2023, World Gym for Life Challenge 2021 • National and Continental GfA events – Sharing of good practice and experience • Gymnastics for All – Strategies for development of different age groups, different abilities and new trends • Group Choreography – How can we be more creative? • FIG Foundations Course – Updated Manual
2022	Lausanne, SUI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gymnastics a life adventure • Safeguarding • Aging in Gymnastics • World Gymnaestrada 2023 • Gym Festivals all over the World • Gymnastics with all abilities
2023	Athens, GRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gymnastics for All Events • Why to organize a GfA event or festival? • How can it be a development tool? • Can it be sustainable & also “Green”? • How can GfA events leave a lasting legacy?

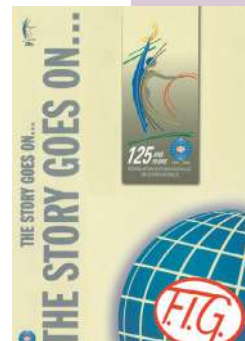
Final words

The Committee has through the years, been very active worldwide and we have seen an amazing development of Gymnastics for All. There have been many courses, symposiums, and other events activating thousands of people and even under the pandemic Covid-19 the Committee was active through social media. The continued cooperation with the National Member Federations is important and contributes to continuous development of Gymnastics for All. Together we create a world of Movement Opportunities.

Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist

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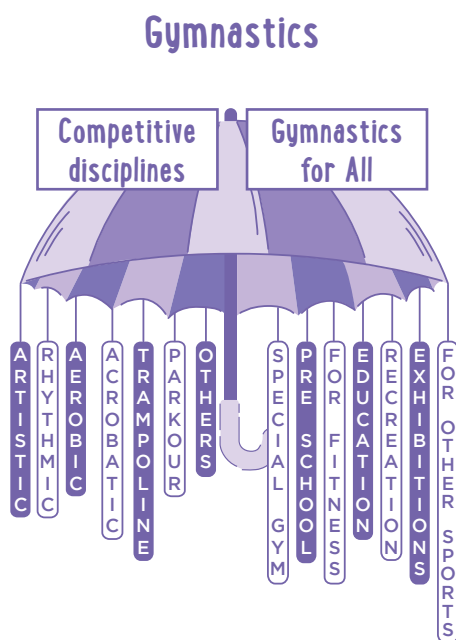
SPRING INTO THE FIG'S COACH EDUCATION PROGRAM WITH THE FOUNDATIONS OF GYMNASTICS COURSE

Marco A C Bortoleto | Keith Russell

When most people think of gymnastics they imagine children performing complex skills of an acrobatic nature. Some will imagine competitive gymnasts, some recreational gymnasts, some will even imagine adults performing in groups. In almost all cases, it is gymnastics performance that comes to mind. Behind these performances, however, are many support structures. These include: facility maintenance, staff training, club administration, local, regional, national, and various levels of inter-national governing committees. All these support structures exist because there are gymnasts. The gymnasts, in turn, exist because of COACHES. Coach education is therefore essential for the whole gymnastics enterprise to exist. No coaches, then no performers. No performers, no need for all the support structures.

Happily, many countries recognize the importance of coaches and have developed coach education programmes. In this regard, the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) faced a complex problem because it has six separate sport disciplines, plus the many activity areas under the umbrella of Gymnastics for All. In addition, it has to cater to the multi-national, multi-ethnicity of its global constituency.

It was necessary to build a programme that could be delivered worldwide and be meaningful to its diverse community. The first coach education “certification” that FIG embarked on was for General Gymnastics (now termed Gymnastics for All). A small manual was printed in 1994 and updated in 1999. Courses were 3 ½ days for the Entry Level and 3 ½ days for the Advanced Level.



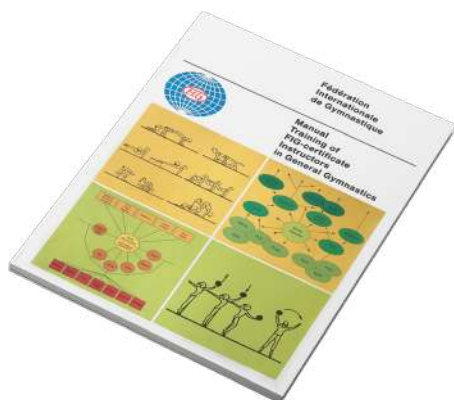


FIG planned for several years to develop coach education courses for the competitive sport disciplines. The work of an advisory group, then a validation group, then a working group in the late 1990's resulted in a pilot course in 1999. FIG hired a fulltime person in 2001 to refine a curriculum and its first full Academy course was held in 2002 in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia (Level 1 Artistic Gymnastics).

Other disciplines quickly followed and by the end of 2022 there were 533 completed Academy courses in all disciplines (30 in Foundations of Gymnastics)



List of experts sitting front row, left to right:

Brian McVey (CAN, WAG), John Salmela (CAN, Psychology), Nellie Kim (BLR, WAG), Adrian Stan (FIG Education Director), Eva Graf, FIG Administrator), Patria Hume (NZ, Biomechanics), Keith Russell (CAN, GMP's, Growth), Tim Lees (AUS, MAG), Hardy Fink (CAN, MAG, Coaches Roles)

In 2005 H. Fink (FIG Educ. Director) and members of GfA committee met in Zurich to plan a GfA course in line with other FIG coach education Academy courses. In Vancouver in 2006 the full working group agreed to a draft curriculum.



List of working group members left to right back row:

Hardy Fink (FIG Director Educ.), Slava Corn (FIG EXEC), Jenny Collins (AUS), Nicolas Buompane (FIG Deputy, Sec.Gen). Front row L to R: Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist (GfA president.), Keith Russell (CAN), Marie Nyberg (SWE), Rogerio Valerio (POR)

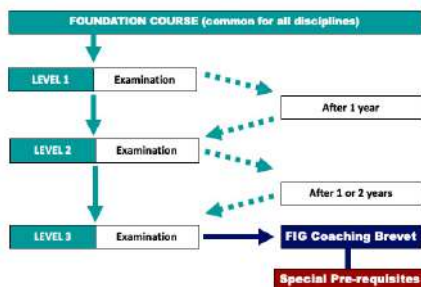


It was decided to contract Ruschkin Publishing Company to develop a course to be called Foundations of Gymnastics. A writing group was formed, and Ruschkin Publishing coordinated their writing and did the page layout and illustrating of the textbook. Two pilot courses were run in Walvis Bay Namibia in 2007 and Lilsved Sweden in 2008 using a draft of the textbook.

In 2008 a training course was held in Copenhagen to train experts for future courses. A hosting document was printed in 2008.



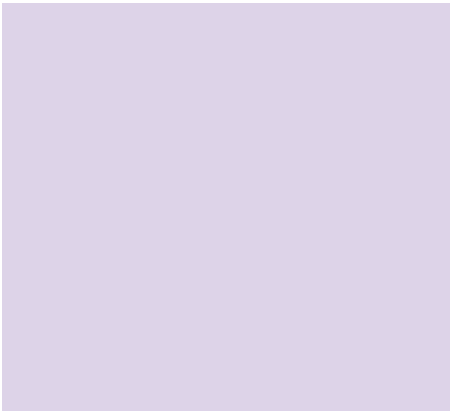
COURSE CYCLE



The final textbook was published in 2010
(all course participants worked from the textbook during courses)

The Foundations of Gymnastics course, as its name implies, was designed to be the springboard or starting point for all FIG education programs. At the end of the seven day course and exams (written, oral and practical) all successful participants receive a certificate of attendance.

FIG Academy – "FOUNDATIONS OF GYMNASTICS"											
Sample Schedule											
	Time	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	D 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8		
Arrival of Experts	09:00 – 10:30	Meeting of FIG Experts	FUN WHAT IS GYM	LANDINGS	LOCOMOTION	Individual Preparation for Assessment & Rest Day	GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT	ROTATION B HAND APPARATUS B	Theory & Planning Assessment 08:30 – 10:15 (in lecture hall)	D E P A R T U R E S	
	10:30 – 10:45	Coffee or Tea Break					Coffee or Tea Break				
	10:45 – 12:15	Meeting of FIG Experts	WARM UP BENEFITS MOVEMENT BASICS	SAFETY DISPLAYS	GROUP ORGANIZATION PLANNING A		SWING	SPRING B	Practical Assessment 10:45 – 12:15 (in gym B)		
	12:15 – 14:00	LUNCH					LUNCH				
	14:00 – 15:30	Meeting of FIG Experts	STATIONARY POSITIONS A	SPRING A	ROTATION A		ETHICS PLANNING B	APPARATUS CONCEPTS	Practical Assessment 14:00 – 17:15 (in gym B)		
	15:30 – 15:45	Coffee or Tea Break					Coffee or Tea Break				
	15:45 – 17:15	Meeting of FIG Experts	PHYSICAL & MOTOR FITNESS	MUSIC & MOVEMENT A	MUSIC & MOVEMENT B		MUSIC & MOVEMENT	TEACHING PRACTICE DISPLAYS B			
	17:15 – 20:00	Dinner					Dinner				
	20:00 – 21:30	Official Opening (in lecture hall)		HAND APPARATUS A	Individual Preparation		Individual Preparation	Closing Banquet			



The major premise of the course is that there are common patterns of movement shared by all forms of gymnastics. These **Gymnastics Movement Patterns** are what make gymnastics different from other sports and activities. They can best be described biomechanically in that we can logically group all gymnastics / acrobatic skills into the following mechanically-related patterns of movement.

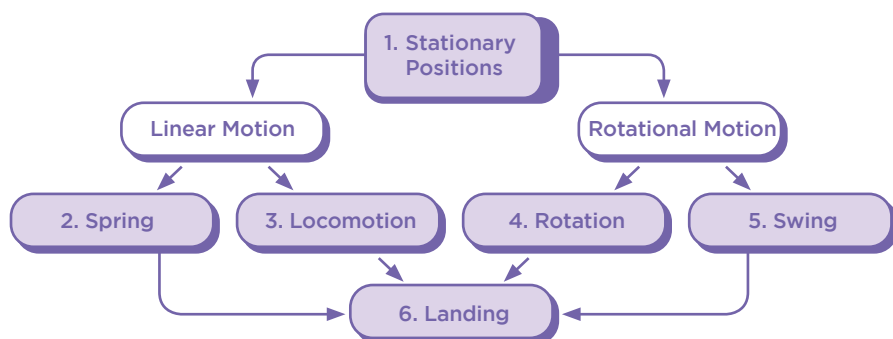
STATIONARY POSITIONS (Supports, Balances, Hangs)

LINEAR MOVEMENT (Springs and Locomotions)

ROTATIONAL MOVEMENT (Rotations, Swings)

STOPPING MOVEMENT (Landings and Catching)

Thus, all skills in all gymnastics activities can be logically grouped into these six movement patterns:



These six gymnastics movement patterns (GMP's) are at the core of the Foundations Course and provide the biomechanical underpinning for all FIG academy courses.

In addition to simplifying the mechanical understanding of gymnastics skills, the Foundations of Gymnastics course also advances the 4F's Coaching Philosophy that states that everything coaches do should ensure that gymnasts:

1. Have **FUN**
2. Gain **FITNESS**
3. Acquire **GOOD FUNDAMENTALS**
4. Enjoy **HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS**

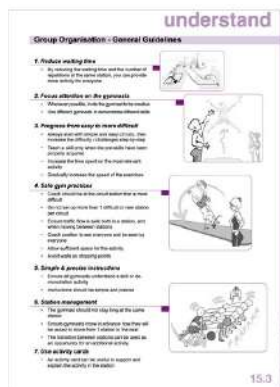
**Quote from FIG Foundations of
Gymnastics textbook :**

"Throughout this course we will refer to this COACHING PHILOSOPHY and use it in making decisions about coaching styles, and about selecting class/ program content."

The Foundations textbook was designed to be used during the course and all pages are colour-coded according to three “coach-competency builders”:

1. UNDERSTANDING

basic theoretical knowledge.



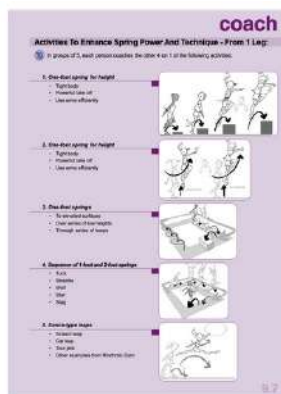
2. EXPERIENCING

practical exercises
coaches experience
during course.



3. COACHING

experiences coaches
engage in during
course.



Over the years the “Foundations of Gymnastics” course has been revised, expanding its content to better prepare coaches to work with different age groups, including seniors as well as “gymnasts with disabilities”. The FIG GfA Committee and the FIG Education Department is constantly working to keep the course up to date, following the recommendation made by the [FIG president](#).

As established by the government plan of the FIG President Watanabi Morinari, elected in 2016, the FIG Education Commission was given a relevant task: to debate the coach education program to adapt to new technologies, including online education. Two years later, the FIG implemented an [E-learning Platform](#) for its education programs, starting a 6-year process for the implementation of all courses in a hybrid format (theoretical lessons and access to a wide range of support material online; combined with a practical classroom course).

The FIG follows a similar change that has been adopted by the IOC, most international sports [federations](#) and also many gymnastics national Federations. The technological revolution that was already impacting the sports world was definitely adopted, bringing new challenges and also new [opportunities](#).

During the Covid19 pandemic and the impossibility of carrying out face-to-face activities, the development of a hybrid model for the FIG Academy program has become crucial and urgent. In 2022, all the theoretical lessons of the Foundations of Gymnastics course began to be conducted through the FIG E-learning Platform in three languages (English, French and Spanish).



There is also a set of complementary materials (videos, seminars, ...). The in-person portion, now delivered in 4 days, remains an important part of the course. After approval by the FIG Executive Committee, in 2021, all participants who pass the theoretical (digital platform) and practical exams (at the end of the face-to-face course) receive a Diploma, registered in the FIG database.

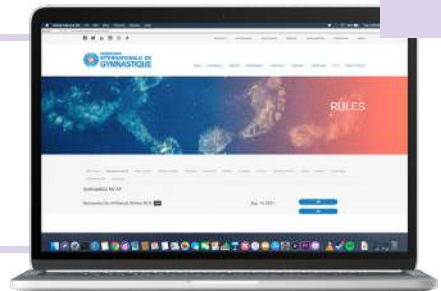
This process is new for the participants, experts and for FIG staff. New strategies have been adopted trying to optimise the process. Everyone's feedback has been helping the constant need to improve the e-learning platform.

This recent change certainly requires monitoring and improvement, but it looks like it's here to stay. **The FIG believes** it will help to expand the offering of the courses by more NF and to increase the number of participants. This is a necessary change considering that this is a basic course recommended for all coaches, as said before, but not yet fully developed like this.

References

FIG GfA Manual:

<https://www.gymnastics.sport/site/rules/#6>



**Foundations of Gymnastics
course: Barbados, 2019**



<https://www.youtube.com/@figeducationchannel2014>



USING GYMNASTICS AS A TOOL FOR CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Caron Henry | Marti Heri with contributions by Donovan Jurgens



Education and training within the sphere of gymnastics has been a key focus area of Gymnastics South Africa since its inception. Since 1997, it has played a pivotal role in developing and growing gymnastics beyond the borders of South Africa, with a focus on sharing their recreational and competitive programs, coaches and judges' education and hosting events for the African Zone 3 countries (Southern Africa), UAG (African Gymnastics Union) and other English-speaking countries on the continent of Africa.

Members of Gymnastics SA serve on different technical committees and the council of the UAG and the FIG Council.

Gymnastics SA holds the licence rights for six of the FIG Academy programs (FIG 1 and 2) and for the Foundations of Gymnastics Course. We also have numerous members who serve as Experts on Academy and Foundations Courses internationally.

Gymnastics South Africa is a leading federation in the growth and development of gymnastics on the African continent.

In 2020, Gymnastics South Africa created the “2030 Vision” – a plan for the National Federation for the following 10 years. As part of this document, a new Vision was drawn up.

Vision

To create through participation in gymnastics, a society of accomplished, self-confident individuals who are able to impact their own world positively with the lessons they have learned.

Mission

To empower each other with the fundamental physical, emotional and mental skills through the uniqueness of gymnastics.



The Republic of South Africa (RSA) is regarded as one of the most unequal countries in the world in terms of economic wealth distribution and access to resources. With this as the backdrop for our Vision, how do we make an impact in the lives of citizens?

Well, we firmly believe that Gymnastics can bring together families and communities, and create an environment that everyone can contribute to and thrive in!

Our country. South Africa – areas of concern

With a population of 60.6 million people, RSA:

1. Has 22 million people who are under 19 years of age.
2. Has an unemployment rate of 32% (Youth unemployment is as high as 60%).
3. Of the unemployed – 51.5% have not completed 12 years of formal schooling and 28.2% only have 12 years of school (no tertiary education).
4. Only 50% of children who enter the formal school system in Grade 1 complete all 12 years of formal schooling.
5. Between April 2021 and March 2022, there were 90,000 births to teenage mothers – some as young as 10 years old. This equates to 14% of all births in this time period.
6. Over the past 10 years, teachers have not been able to train as Physical Education specialists.
7. Physical Education is almost non-existent in around 80% of the 24,900 public schools in the country.
8. 30% of women will be exposed to rape or gender-based violence in their lifetime.
9. The average life expectancy is 62 years of age.



As with many developing countries, many of the above concerns fall within the framework of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established in 2015 by the United Nations

So how do we as a sporting organisation play a role in addressing these areas of concern?

Gymnastics as a sport is very well placed to play a role. Its different disciplines offer very different possibilities for participants. But, at the fundamental base level of gymnastics, it offers something that no other sport can offer – functional fundamental physical literacy. Gymnastics provides the foundation of all the movements required to succeed in all other sports – it is the “Mother of all Sports”.

It is this uniqueness that allows us as the National Federation to deliver different programs to different members of society.

In urban well-resourced communities, the “traditional” gymnastics disciplines thrive – Artistic, Rhythmic, Trampoline and Acrobatic Gymnastics, and more recently, Parkour. Clubs are independently owned, and gymnasts pay monthly fees for their participation. Gymnasts from poorer communities around the club will often have a portion of their fees subsidised by the club.

In less well-resourced and mainly rural communities, Gymnastics for All, Aerobic Gymnastics and Rope Skipping are offered at community halls and schools. Generally, a small monthly fee or no fees are paid by the gymnast to take part in activities offered.

Currently, gymnastics serves a very small proportion of the South African population.

But that is set to change with the introduction of the GYMNASTICS SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PROJECT, which we call GYMNASTICS+ (plus)!

The Social Enterprise Project is about delivering traditional Gymnastics programs in a new way. It is a deliberate focus on Gymnastics and Gymnastics Plus! Participants in the program follow the same discipline programs as offered by Gymnastics SA and participate and compete in the same way. The club is structured in the same way as “regular” gymnastics clubs, and participants pay a fee for their classes.

Gymnastics Plus focuses on providing all the benefits of gymnastics together with addressing the issues facing the community in which it operates. **Using gymnastics as the tool to encourage social change within communities.**

GYMNASTICS+ allows Gymnastics SA to grow its footprint in the sporting arena, broadening the base of its participants and delivering notable benefits to the community.

The project aims to address the following in our communities:

1. Club development

Creating new gymnastics clubs and gymnasts- Gymnastics coaching training (developing new coaches who will play a role in rolling out gymnastics programs as well as our Gymnastics+ (plus) programs)

2. Education and training

Encouraging 12 years of schooling (reducing teenage pregnancy and drop-out rate)

Leadership training (developing youth leaders who will be role models)

Life skill development (integrity, respect, tolerance, resilience) to bring down the level of gender-based violence, small business development and entrepreneurial skills (creating employment opportunities)

3. Physical Education

Rolling out physical education programs in schools (enhancing cognitive and physical development of children)

4. Healthy lifestyle

From toddlers to the elderly (increase life expectancy and quality of life through physical activity)

5. Cohesive communities

Creating tools for communities to take responsibility for and pride in the development and well-being of their members

The project started in June 2022 with 5 pilot sites. These sites are all existing clubs. The five different sites are all affected to different degrees by the areas of concern in the country.

Each site identified the areas that they wanted to address initially in their GYMNASTICS+ approach. From the work done thus far and regular report-backs received, these sites are providing the “best practice” tools for the Federation to roll out to more sites.

How do we deliver our GYMNASTICS+ programs?

The gymnastics club becomes the Hub of the community. It is through participation in the gymnastics activities that all the other benefits will flow. This Hub can be based in a community hall or a school, or in an existing gymnastics club.

The gymnastics club is run along sound business practices and runs as a community-based club with coaches and leaders who are paid by the gymnasts and community for their services. Meeting **Club development** and **Cohesive community criteria**.

Unemployed youth (**employment opportunity criteria**) are trained to be gymnastics coaches to deliver the programs, not only in the Club, but also to provide **physical education classes** at the local schools (6-18 year-olds), classes for Early Childhood Development (2-6 year olds), classes

for the aging members of the community (50 years plus) and fitness programs for all ages. **This fulfils the Healthy lifestyle criteria.**

The coaches deliver regular gymnastics classes within the following disciplines of gymnastics – Gymnastics for All, Parkour, Aerobic Gymnastics and Rope Skipping. Recreational and competitive classes are offered. In addition, they are trained to deliver the life skill programs (meeting the **Education criteria**) as well as their own development as **youth leaders** serving their community.

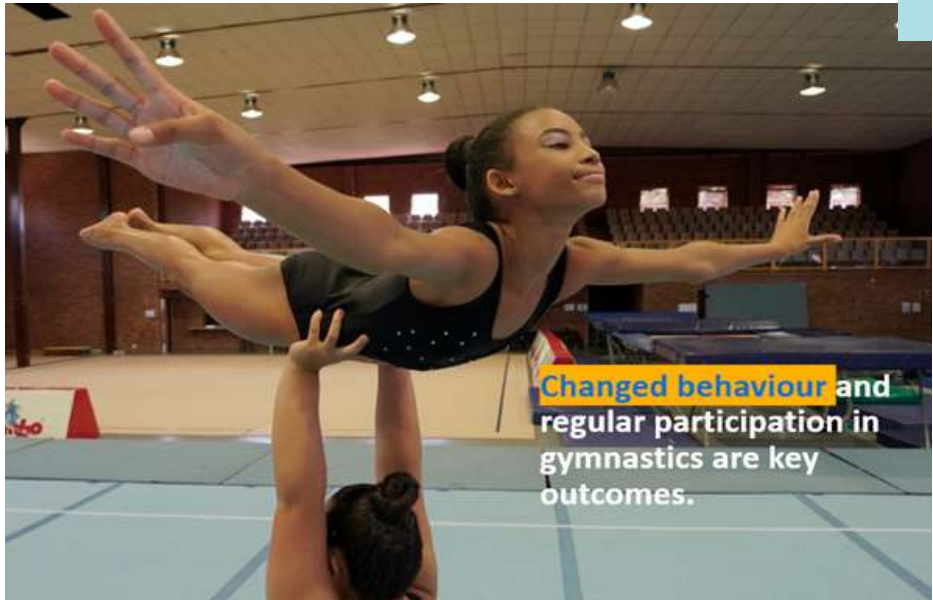
Linked to the club are ancillary services that make it the “place to be” for every community member. For example:

Educational services – tutoring in school subjects (helping students to improve in subjects that they struggle with (i.e. mathematics and literacy). Also linking participation in gymnastics to the need to meet certain academic requirements first, as a means to encourage the importance of academic attainment and

staying in school. Meeting the **Staying in school criteria**.

This also provides opportunities for tutors and teachers to engage with struggling learners in a less formal school environment and provides an additional income stream for them. Meeting the **Employment opportunity criteria**.

It is possible for any of the following services to also be available at the gymnastics club as a service to the community – **health and mental health** screenings, **small informal business enterprises** that provide goods and services that parents and children might utilise (i.e. fresh produce stall, courier services, admin services such as printing). Meeting the **Employment opportunity criteria**.



One of the five pilot sites now reaches 3400 children every week since the introduction of GYMNASTICS+ - through physical education classes and traditional gymnastics classes in three neighbouring mining towns. The previously unemployed youth coaches are taking gymnastics to the communities. These weekly classes also take place at two schools for children with intellectual challenges and one for children who are hearing-challenged.

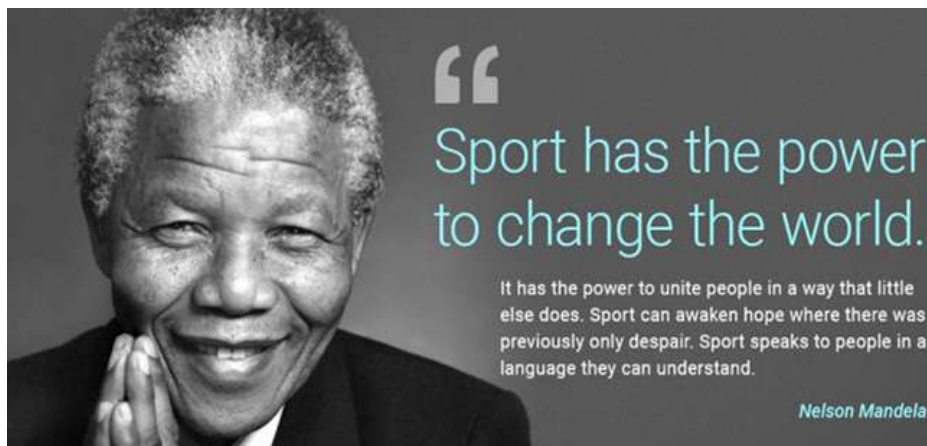
Classes within the Early Childhood Development sector (preschool/kindergarten) have started in two schools and regular classes for the elderly are underway at a community centre, in conjunction with the Department for Social Development in the area.

One of the factors which assists greatly with the rollout program is the Gymnastics SA "Gymnastics in a Box". This is a box that contains all the requirements for Fundamental Movement roll outs. Developed by the Federation, it contains the material to deliver Fitness programs (for all ages and ability levels), beginner Tumbling, Parkour, Rope Skipping and Gymnastics for All programs. The box travels with the coach to each site, thus one box can service many participants without any additional costs to the coach or club for expensive equipment.



WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Using the information gained from the five pilot sites, Gymnastics SA is engaging with government departments in health, social development and education, as well as private sector partners to assist in the education and training of coaches and community youth leaders in business and leadership acumen, providing opportunities for these leaders to become not only commercially viable enterprise leaders but also community leaders who can guide their communities to a better quality of life.



With our Gymnastics+ project we will strive to give meaning to these words!

KEY MILESTONES FOR GFA IN GYMNASTICS SA

Key milestones of South Africa's involvement in Gymnastics for All and Development of Gymnastics in Africa:



- Participated in the 1st FIG General Gymnastics Colloquium in 1997 and continues to participate and contribute to the annual Gym for All Colloquiums.
- We have hosted two FIG GFA Colloquiums and two GFA TC Meetings
- Gymnastics SA has been hosting FIG General Gymnastics/ Foundations Courses since 1997 - every second year with the participation of other African countries: Namibia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland (Eswatini), Malawi, Lesotho, Mozambique, Angola. To date we have hosted 12 FIG GG/ GFA courses and qualified over 350 GFA coaches and five international experts from RSA in the process.
- South Africa participated in the pilot Foundations of Gymnastics Course in Namibia in 2007 and was the first country to host the new hybrid version of FIG Foundations of Gymnastics Course with a new online component in 2022.
- South Africa was the first country to get a licence to host the FIG 1 MAG and WAG courses in 2007 – and fittingly, also the last to host a FIG 2 course in the “old” format in 2023.
- In 2013 South Africa hosted the 2nd FIG World Gym for Life Challenge in Cape Town.
- We work in collaboration with Africa FIG Development Officer, Tseko Mogotsi to assist new countries to affiliate to UAG and FIG and to expand their programs and coaches’ education. Uganda and Nigeria are two of the recent additions to our assistance programs.
- South Africa has served on the UAG General Gymnastics / Gymnastics for All technical committee with chair or member positions since 1999.
- We host a WhatsApp group for GFA Communication and information sharing for the African continent with 18 members from 15 countries.
- Gymnastics South Africa established the first Safeguarding for Coaches and Volunteers and Safeguarding Officers training in Africa (across all sporting codes, and one of only a handful internationally). In 2022 we launched an online Safeguarding Training course relevant for all Sporting codes.

HISTORY OF GYMNASTICS FOR ALL IN JAPAN

Araki Tatsuo

Period of creation 1800s – 1945

The history of gymnastics in Japan began with the **Elementary School Study Guidelines** published in 1872. From the 1860s, people began trying to learn European culture, gymnastics was included in that culture. The purpose was to strengthen the military forces of the Meiji government, which aimed to increase national power. They obtained a lot of information on gymnastics from Sweden, Germany, and France. The German and Swedish methods of gymnastics were adopted from these countries.



Although the exercises were for elementary school children, they were also adopted in middle and high schools

At that time, it was only implemented in schools. The spread of gymnastics was further promoted under the policy of Wealthy Nation, Strong Army. Later, Japan developed its own gymnastics program. **The National Sports Festival** began in 1925, and the Gymnastics Mass Display was held at the opening ceremony until 1943. The Gymnastics Mass Display was influenced by the **German Turnfest** and **Sokol**.





In 1929, with the spread of radio to every household, "radio gymnastics," which was already in practice in the United States, was introduced to Japan. Today, **NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)** broadcasts a daily TV program and a radio program.

The Japan Gymnastics Federation was founded in 1930 and joined the **FIG** in 1931.

Then, in 1931, the Niels Buck team from Denmark came to Japan to perform gymnastics. This had a great impact on the Japanese who saw gymnastics demonstrations from Europe and Scandinavia for the first time.



In 1935, the Asahi newspaper sponsored the Japan Gymnastics Festival, which was held until 1942, with the aim of creating performances of collective beauty and strength, centered on the Gymnastics Mass Display. All gymnastics events and activities were suspended from 1943 to 1945 due to World War II.

Maturity period 1945~2000

After the end of World War II in 1945, a new era began.



The National Sports Festival resumed in 1946, and the main performance at the opening ceremony was the Gymnastics Mass Display.

Group gymnastics was introduced at the **National Sports Festival** in 1949. Both men's and women's teams consisted of six members.

Later, women's gymnastics was adopted by the FIG as Rhythmic Sport Gymnastics and introduced to the Olympics. The men's team also adopted the individual performance using hand apparatus as well as the women's. However, the recognition of this sport in the world is low, and it has remained a competition only in Japan until now.

In 1965, JGA started the **GfA Festival**, which was renamed the **JG Festival** in 1989. GfA festivals are also held once a year in various regions of Japan.



The **General Gymnastics Committee** was created in 1984 in the GJA. The committee's first international Gymnastics event was the 1987 **Gymnaestrada** in Denmark/Herning.



Prior to that, the Japanese teams had also participated in the Berlin and Zurich **Gymnaestrada**, but as special participants.

Reformatory Period 2000~

In 2005, the **GfA Instructor Certification Program** was created. This is a license for team leaders and sports university students participating in the Japan Gymnastics Festival. It is a 20-hour program, consisting of GfA history, practical skills, teaching methods, and a teaching exam. More than 100 students take the course each year.

The GfA committee created the elderly people's **Gymnastics Instructor Certification System** starting in 2020 in response to Japan currently being the number one elderly country in the world. Elderly facilities in Japan do gymnastics for 30 to 45 minutes every day with the employees of the facilities provide the instruction. However, they do not have special knowledge of gymnastics. Therefore, this is a licensing course for them to study the teaching methods and the gymnastics program.



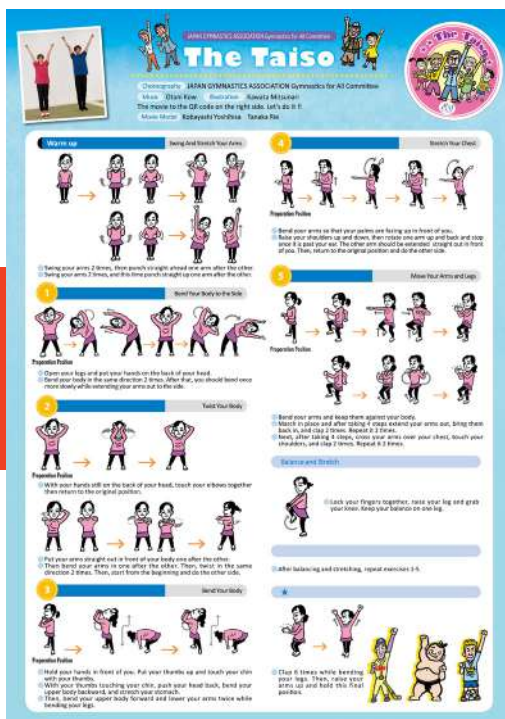
In addition, **JGA** created an original gymnastics program “**The Taisho**” in 2020.

The Taisho means Gymnastics.

This gymnastics program is a GfA program for children to the elderly people.

It will be shown on TV every morning from 2022.

In the future, JGA will spread The Taisho to other parts of the world.



GOLDEN AGE GYM FESTIVAL: a successful experience in Europe

Hlíf Thorgeirsdóttir

Aimed at gymnasts aged 50 plus, the Golden Age Gym Festival has the objective to inform the “older” generation of the 50 member federations of European Gymnastics about numerous forms of movements. Health in general as well as specific instructions to maintain or recover mobility are important objectives of this event. Add to this the social aspects, cultural values and the pleasure of moving and doing gymnastics, and you get an attractive event called Golden Age Gym Festival.



The festival is organised every two years, in a city chosen by the **Executive Committee of European Gymnastics** who look for a pleasant, compact and nice holiday destination so the participants have the opportunity to combine this event with their vacation.

The most recent edition, in the city of Funchal on the beautiful Portuguese island Madeira, warmly welcomed **over 1500 participants from 18 countries**.



The general aim of Golden Age Gym Festival:

- Practicing physical and cultural activities;
- Staying fit and healthy in a fun, relaxed environment;
- Promoting GFA movements especially adapted to 50 plus;
- Cultivating friendship and a sense of belonging;
- Promoting a mutual understanding of distinctive national characteristics;
- Engaging in new experiences.

Example of the week's schedule:

Sunday 3/10	Monday 4/10	Tuesday 5/10	Wednesday 6/10	Thursday 7/10	Friday 8/10
	Meeting LOC+HOD (obligatory) 8.30 - 8.45	Meeting LOC+HOD (obligatory) 8.30 - 8.45	Meeting LOC+HOD (obligatory) 8.30 - 8.45	Meeting LOC+HOD (obligatory) 8.30 - 8.45	Meeting LOC+HOD (obligatory) 8.30 - 8.45
		Workshop 9.00 - 10.00	Workshop 9.00 - 10.00	Workshop 9.00 - 10.00	Workshop 9.00 - 10.00
		Workshop 10.30 - 11.30	Workshop 10.30 - 11.30	Workshop 10.30 - 11.30	Workshop 10.30 - 11.30
Meeting Group leader +HOD 14.00 - 15.00		Educational Forum 12.00 - 13.30	Meeting Group leader Gala/Closing 12.30 - 13.30		Official Reception 12.30 - 13.30
Parade ready 17.30					
Parade start 18.00	City Performances 18.00 - 20.00	City Performances 18.00 - 20.00	City Performances 18.00 - 20.00	City Performances 18.00 - 20.00	Gala/Closing 17.30 - 19.00
Opening 18.30 - 20.00					
			GAGF 2022 19.30 - 20.30		

Street Parade and Opening Ceremony

The Festival officially starts with a parade through the streets of the host city. The participating nations proudly show off their flag as they come from different directions to meet at a central point to proceed to the site of the Opening Ceremony. There, all delegations are warmly welcomed, invited to take a seat, sit back and enjoy the show.



REPLAY: [2022 Golden Age Gym Festival - Street Parade and Opening Ceremony](#)

Workshops

In the morning, the participants enjoy a vast array of workshops, ranging from gymnastics-related activities, over water sports, orienteering and dance to traditional games, and anything in between! A special Choreography workshop allows the groups to get evaluated by a specialist so they can further develop their choreography/programme.



City performances

In the afternoon, participants get the opportunity to showcase their abilities on different stages around the city. This outdoor environment enables fellow participants to watch and attracts passers-by, inviting them to join the fun.

Each group gets a maximum six minutes for their performance, being called on stage twice during the week.



Educational Forum

During each Festival, a lecture is selected for the benefit of the participants. In 2022, this was 'Mind, Energy and Movement' by Dr. Paolo Barata where the participants could learn more about physical activity for senior people and the way to develop even more if we do it consciously. The Forum also offers the opportunity to create an exchange of ideas and experience between the participants.

Gala / Closing Ceremony

The absolute pinnacle of the week is the Gala & Closing Ceremony. Countries with three groups or more automatically get a place in the Gala, nominating their group of choice. During the city performances, the European Gymnastics Technical Committee GFA chooses one to three wildcards. Following the Gala, the event is officially closed with a ceremony in which the European Gymnastics flag is handed to the next organiser.



REPLAY: 2022 Golden Age Gym Festival - Gala & Closing Ceremony

The social aspect

Another important aspect of the Golden Age Gym Festival is the social and cultural part. Participants have the possibility to join excursions to get to know their host city and country better. In the evening, themed parties are organised, for example the white party, 70s/80s and karaoke. Participants come and enjoy themselves, party together and meet new friends from all over Europe!



OUR HONORARY GOLDEN STARS



In 2022, the Gymnastics for All Technical Committee introduced a new award, the Golden Stars! Only participants aged 90+ can join this exclusive club.

Congratulations to Tordis Helga Lilian Hagfors Mollat, 97 from Norway, Maria Manuela Correia, 91 from Portugal, and Svein Ronning, 91 from Norway! These inspirational gymnasts were honoured as the first Golden Stars in Madeira. We hope to welcome many more Golden Stars at our future Golden Age Gym Festivals!



History:

2005 - Test event Maspalomas.....	(ESP)
2008 - 1 st edition Maspalomas.....	(ESP)
2010 - 2 nd edition Portimao.....	(POR)
2012 - 3 rd edition Montecatini.....	(ITA)
2014 - 4 th edition Toulouse.....	(FRA)
2016 - 5 th edition Portoroz.....	(SLO)
2018 - 6 th edition Pesaro.....	(ITA)
2020 - 7 th edition Rethymno.....	(GRE)
2022 - 8 th edition Funchal.....	(POR)
2024 - 9 th edition will be in Burgas.....	(BUL)



LIVED EXPERIENCE IN GYMNASTICS: FESTIVALS AND ITS MEMORABLE MOMENTS

Tamiris Lima Patricio | Michele Vivienne Carbinatto

Festivals: essence and characteristics

For different purposes, events have constituted our social activities – celebrate, cheer, present, dance, taste, compete, dialogue, sadden, vibrate... – interdependent actions of human relations. Whatever the perspective, they cannot be literally explained and, in summary, are temporal phenomena (with a beginning and an end), thematized, programmed, planned, and disseminated.

Types of events



Source: Created by the authors based on Getz Typology (2012).

The fact is that events are spaces for experiences that escape everyday life and infer cognitive and affective aspects. Based on the anticipation of pleasure, participants can contribute and enhance this experience in general, making the atmosphere surrounding the event built so that participants have unique and excellent experiences, motivated by different purposes: sharing experiences, feeling part of a group and emotional connectivity (TRIGG, 2020).



Events and emotional connectivity

In a range of categories proposed by Getz (2012), we highlight the “Sports and Recreation” events. With the bias of sports practices, they are - usually - mediatic about the results that lead to the podium, however, the author defends them as something that “is much more than just winning!” (p. 205). The reasons why people compete or participate in these events are, in fact, very personal - health, performance, learning, or to socialize. For the author, what distinguishes sports events from others is their structural nature, since they involve rules, opposing teams and appropriate spaces, varying according to the modality.

Focusing on that category, we address our attention to “sports festivals”. As part of this larger system called “events”, they are social phenomena that can enshrine different communities, being characterized from their own relationships with management - the locality, the proposing institution, nationality customs. Thus, we agree with Patricio (2021, p.49):

“Sports festivals are events that bring together groups in a specific location, with a defined period and objectives, permeated by playfulness and involve a body practice and/or sports.”



Sports Festivals

Gymnastics Festivals

We observe a wide offer about different sports and body practices. In “aesthetic sports”, practitioners are observed for their body in movement, for their excellence and the beauty of their performance. Even if there is an assessment of the number of difficult movements, the fluidity of execution and the sequences between them are important aspects to be analyzed (BEST, 1988). In aesthetic sports events, such as gymnastics, performances are shown to an audience. From high-level athletes to active-life participants, a dialogue between movement, apparatus (or hands-free), music and/or rhythm is expected during performance. Even focusing on presentation or competition, one idea prevails in gymnastics events: the gymnast or the group must perform a composition that can be judged or just appreciated.

The “gymnastic festivals” are events with essentially gymnastic characteristics, in which the different expressions of the area can take part - either in the context of high performance or participation. These events are considered “participant events” among some other categories proposed by Getz (2012), since they are created so that participants are fully involved - presenting, competing, or watching.



Gymnastics Festivals

Especially for Gymnastics for All (GfA) - what we have seen is that gymnastic festivals are opportune spaces for the realization and presentation of works elaborated at the core of each group, as well as a moment of social interaction and learning (PATRÍCIO and CARBINATTO, 2021). In turn, for competitive gymnastics modalities, festivals can be part of competitive training, in which young athletes could experience and learn a certain practice without the rigour of a closed regulation (REIS-FURTADO, 2020). For high-level athletes, they suggest moments of training or even as a “relaxation”. Finally, in the high-performance retirement period, gymnastic festivals can contribute to moments of demonstration and/or recognition, as well as motivation to continue in practice with a goal other than maximum performance (CONTESSOTO, et al, 2021).

In the diversity of experiences that gymnastic festivals can offer to their participants, we highlight the possibility of “accommodating”. Many of them are organized with more than one day of event and, therefore, it is common for gymnasts to stay in the host cities to contemplate all that these events can offer. We emphasize that, when participants travel and stay, the experiences they have can be intensified by getting out of their routine, interacting with

other participants, witnessing rituals, conquests, different cultures, among other situations (WICHMANN, 2020).

Specific studies on gymnastics festivals indicate that in the view of organizers and coordinators, festivals are not limited to activities or official programming and offer a range of experiences, new knowledge, and interactions (PATRICIO and CARBINATO, 2021; PATRICIO and BORTOLETO, 2015).

Opportunities

One of the possibilities for massification and dissemination of gymnastics is the implementation of Gymnastics Festivals. One recent research points out that these events can contribute significantly regarding the strengthening of cultural identity (CORRÉA, CABO VERDE; CARBINATTO, 2020), since they can provide knowledge of different gymnastics manifestations, allowing the practice by different people, of any age, ethnicity, social class, physical and technical level. In addition, they allow the national identity to be listed, through the costumes, music, and styles of the people.

Although central Europe - the cradle of the gymnastics movement from the 18th century - has traditionally established some impressive festivals, we can currently find interesting festivals in different regions with heterogeneous formats and programs, which serve different objectives.

Among the oldest festivals (having its first edition between 1830 and 1890) and considered traditional parties in the host countries, we highlight five of them: Swiss Federal Gymnastics (1832), Deutsches Turnfest (1860), Landstaevne (1862), Slet (1882), and Sun Svoli Gymnastics Festival (1886).

TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS

Festival	Promoter Entity/Host Country	Number of participants
<u>Swiss Federal Gymnastics</u>	Swiss Gymnastics Federation/ Swiss	70.000
<u>Deutsches Turnfest</u>	Deutsche Turn Bund (German Gymnastics Federation) – DTB/ German	80.000
<u>Sokol/Slet</u>	Sokol/ Czech Republic	15.000
<u>Landstaevne</u>	Danske Gymnastik- og Idrætsforeninger (Danish Sports and Gymnastics Association) – DGI/ Denmark	23.000
Sun Svoli Gymnastics Festival (Gymnaestrada)	Finnish Gymnastics Federation/ Finland	11.000

In addition to these secular festivals, we have observed that some national federations and gymnastics entities are investing in their national festivals of Gymnastics for All. For example, we can highlight the Nippon Gymnastics Festival, which has been organized since the mid-1940s; the PortugalGym, the Gymnaestrada Australiana, USA Gymnastics for All National Championships & GymFest, and the GymBrasil Festival, which have been organized since the 1990s, and a more recent (2000), which is the National Festival of Mexico.

It is relevant to mention that here are some examples of festivals, as there are diverse festivals in different countries and continents.

NATIONALS FESTIVALS

Festival	Promoter Entity/Host Country
Nippon Gymnastics Festival	Japan Gymnastics Association
PortugalGym - Festa Nacional da Ginástica	Portuguese Gymnastics Federation
Aussie Gymfest/Australian Gymnaestrada	Australian Gymnastics Federation
USA Gymnastics for All National Championships &GymFest	American Gymnastics Federation
Festival GymBrasil	Brazilian Gymnastics Confederation
National Festival of México	Mexican Gymnastics Federation
Hong Kong Gymnastics for All Festival	Gymnastics Association of Hong Kong

These events have shown interest and promotion of the GfA in different continents, in addition to the competitions more incorporated by the confederations. It is common during these festivals that participation is a form of accreditation for international events, such as the [World Gymnaestrada](#) and the World Gym for Life Challenge (GFLC) proposed by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG).

In this sense, we have observed that the evaluative model of contests, such as the GFLC, has also inspired some institutions, such as the European Gymnastics Union, that is organizing EUROGYM and the European Gym for Life Challenge; the Federation of Portugal and Australia, which promote their own “Gym for life”.

GfA CONTESTS

Festival	Promoter Entity/Host Country
World Gym for Life Challenge	International Gymnastics Federation (FIG)
European Gym for Life Challenge	European Gymnastics Union
Australian Gym for Life Challenge	Australian Gymnastics Federation
Gym for Life Portugal	Portuguese Gymnastics Federation

Many of these events - in general - form partnerships with institutions responsible for tourism in the host city, since they receive many participants from other cities, or like the international ones, from other countries. In this way, in addition to the sports festival, participants could get to know the region and enjoy a moment of tourism during the season of the event.

In this sense, we highlight two festivals that are quite traditional in Europe and that have been growing with an emphasis on local tourism in the host city: the **Blume Grand Canaria** - held in the Canary Islands, in Spain since 1959 -, and the **Festival Del Sole** - held in Riccione, in Italy since 1989.

Another very particular festival that should be remembered is the Arirang Festival which is held every year in the capital of North Korea, Pyongyang, and entered the “Guinness Book” as the record for the largest gymnastics exhibition, involving 100,090 participants in the May Day Stadium on August 14, 2007. The presentations last 90 minutes and tell the history of the country, always honouring the generals, the deceased and the current general ruler of the nation.

In addition to the objectives of national massification, promotion of tourism or cultural identity, we see a very significant movement of groups of elderly people who have been participating in these events, including the European Union of Gymnastics itself, which has been promoting a festival for people over 50 years old: the **Golden Age Gym Festival**, which takes place every two years and in different countries in Europe.

Some considerations

As we can see, the festivals are organized according to the objectives of the promoting entities, but in general, we identified that the gymnastics festivals foment the idea of mass participation and cultural identity, favouring the diversity of ideas, culture, music, materials, among other elements.

Furthermore, it is important to point out: bringing up a festival is about giving experience to human beings. The precursors had a standpoint to make it happen; the stakeholders may think every strategy following business directions; coaches can focus on the performances; gymnasts assume they are getting healthy, etc. At the end, spreading gymnastics and showing abilities became secondary if compared to the potential the lived experience on a gymnastics festival

claim. Inspired by the four pillars of Education (**UNESCO, 2023**), the being in a gymnastics festival offers:

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.

Mainly not focusing on medals – a common goal at sporting events- we do not believe GfA and its festivals is the saviour of the world, but we highlight it provides potential spaces for lived experiences that can surpass long term athlete development, active life, professional development, sense of collective, all of these themes together, and importantly: **for every single person!**

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GYMNASTICS FOR ALL IS FOR EVERYBODY

CHATTOOGA – Our journey to INCLUSION

Cindy Bickman



The Beginning

"Perfection is the inclusion of imperfection."

Father Richard Rohr

The story begins in 1976, when my parents and I opened Chattooga School of Gymnastics & Dance in Marietta, Georgia. As with most gyms, we catered to young girls dreaming of going to the Olympics and becoming the next Nadia Comaneci. Competition was the focus, but because of my dance background, community performances were a big part of our program. During my career as a coach, I have been privileged to work with a diverse group of gymnasts. The sport of gymnastics has taken me to the 1996 Olympics, the 2008 Aesthetic Group World Championships, the FIG Alliance of Federations (gymnastics for disabilities), the Down Syndrome World Championships, many Special Olympics international competitions, the first three World Gym for Life Challenges, and best of all, six Gymnaestradas. Even though we didn't know it at the time, the opening of Chattooga marked our beginning of Gymnastics for All.

From 1976, fast forward to 2023 and the World Gymnaestrada, where Chattooga was chosen for the second time to perform in the FIG Gala. I want to share our journey with you. I'll introduce you to gymnasts of all ages and abilities who have bonded and worked together to create a Gymnastics for All family.

Chattooga is a Native American word that means “stepping stones of growth” and I'll walk you down the path those stepping stones have led us. Here's what Alana, who was on my first team, says: “Growing up at the gym changed my life, but little did I know, it would later impact the lives of my family. Chattooga is about family, with my own daughter Katy, a high-level rhythmic gymnast, competing alongside amazing gymnasts with special needs, and later coaching Special Olympians. She knew firsthand the value of these special gymnasts' involvement and inclusion because of her brother, who has Down Syndrome and autism. Raising a son with special needs is a huge challenge but at Chattooga, there is not only room for him, but there is also understanding, acceptance, and celebration of his abilities, not his inabilities! He and his sister can participate together in the same inclusive program. And because of Gymnastics for All, I have been able to join in too!”

In Alana and Katy's words:

<https://youtu.be/A6SqA3DlceA>



For your enjoyment: Firefly

2019 FIG Gala, Dornbirn, Austria

<https://youtu.be/QIDR885nPXo>



It's a Family Affair

Ladies & Gentlemen: To organize & execute an event as large as the Special Olympics, many volunteers have generously dedicated their time to bring to life everything that you see... But it doesn't even come close to what you cannot see: the untold stories of our special mothers & fathers who have sacrificially poured their lives into caring for and raising our Special Olympics athletes. But when asked what makes them so special, they humbly say, "We're just regular parents with extraordinary children."

Message from the Announcer, 2015 Special Olympics World Games

When a child is born, parents are full of hopes and dreams for the future of that child. But when a child is born with a disability, there are numerous doctors and therapists telling the parents all the things that child will not be able to do and the struggles that child will have to overcome just to survive. Let me tell you some stories about how gymnastics has impacted the lives of children with disabilities and their families.

Many years ago, a mother gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. When she went to the hospital nursery, she saw that all the baby girls had on pink hats: all but one, her daughter, because her daughter was born with Down Syndrome. That baby, Mandy, grew up to be an athlete. She competed in Special Olympics ice skating and even represented the US at the World Games in Japan. Mandy's dream was to be on a team and participate in sports with her friends. When she moved to Atlanta and started taking gymnastics, that dream became a reality. Mandy's dream soon became her mom's dream as well. They have performed together at several Gymnaestradas and World Gym for Life Challenges, travelling the world to show that it's not just the babies in pink hats who can grow up to achieve greatness.

Shelley started gymnastics when she was in middle school. Even though she didn't speak, she let everyone know she loved being at the gym, making friends, and learning new skills. She received her blue and yellow leotard for her first Special Olympics competition, and after many weeks of discussion about what would look best, Shelley's mom bought her a bright yellow hair ribbon to match the leotard. The choice of a hair ribbon was an important decision, because Shelley's mom never dreamed that Shelley would be on a team and have a uniform, or that she would have the opportunity to buy her daughter a hair ribbon for her first competition. Most of the doctors probably never imagined that Shelley would walk on a balance beam, do a log roll, jump on a trampoline, or dance with rhythmic gymnastics hand apparatus. But she did!

When Lani was born, she had many health issues associated with Down Syndrome. At a young age, she underwent heart surgery, and afterwards, the doctor told her parents to buy a stroller because Lani would never learn to walk or be able to take care of herself. Ana, Lani's mom, is an educator, and she refused to see that future for Lani, so she began teaching her. After many years of therapy and ballet lessons, Lani discovered rhythmic gymnastics, where she excelled and eventually earned the title of Down Syndrome World Champion. In 2009, Lani was part of the US delegation to the World Gym for Life Challenge in Austria. Her teammates were two other gymnasts with disabilities and three sets of parents. The comment from the feedbackers was that we shouldn't always have the girls with disabilities standing in the front during the performance. What the feedbackers (FIG committee members who evaluate and critique the performances) was that we shouldn't always have the girls with disabilities standing in the front during the performance. What the feedbackers didn't know was that the girls had to stand in front so their parents could follow them to remember the choreography. Listen to this interview by Lani and Ana, where they explain how Lani became her mom's teacher and yes, because it's Gymnastics for All, she also became her dad's coach.



https://youtu.be/vo_Qn5I1jTA

The parents of children with disabilities are not led down the road they expected to travel when raising their families. It's a different road, with different scenery, bumps, curves, and speed limits, but a beautiful journey, nonetheless. I think back to my presentation at the educational forum in Norway at the 2017 World Gym for Life Challenge, where I asked parents to speak of things their children had been excluded from because of their disabilities. Most of the stories were about programs and activities that wouldn't accept students with disabilities. One story was different: Dennie spoke about her daughter, Katie, who has Down Syndrome, and was the fifth child in the family. She limited Katie's social interaction with typical children because she was afraid others might not accept her daughter and wanted to protect her from possibly being made fun of or bullied. When Katie started gymnastics, all that changed. I'm quite sure that

her dad, John, our team doctor, never imagined that as a retiree, he would wear a tutu (with a sequin baseball hat to make the costume manly) and represent his country at an international gymnastics event. Or that his wife, Dennie, would do mother/daughter rhythmic gymnastics performances with Katie all over the world. Or that Katie would have more stamps in her passport than any of her four siblings.

There is an old saying "all roads lead to Rome." The same could be said of the Gymnaestrada. Gymnasts with and without disabilities, parents and grandparents, friends and family all have different life experiences, but at the Gymnaestrada, all can have the same Gymnastics for All experience.

The Beginning of Inclusion

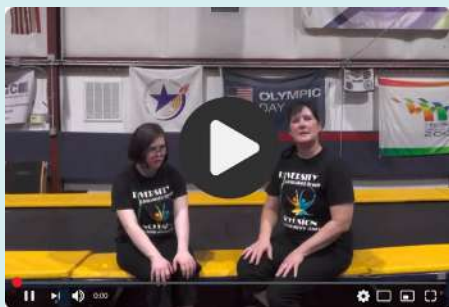
"We're really not so different. We all have special needs."

Elissá's Song by Jeff Pearson

Our first Gymnaestrada was 1999, in Goteborg, Sweden. I will always remember the moment when the bus drove up to the school where we were staying and one of the dads asked, "Where is the hotel?" To which I responded, "There's something I need to tell you ---." And so began the Chattooga tradition of celebrating gymnastics with the world every four years. Six Gymnaestradas and three World Gym For Life Challenges have defined and shaped the personality of the Chattooga performance team. The groups we saw at that first Gymnaestrada inspired us and fueled the imagination about our possibilities: the British Disabilities Team, the Norwegian World War II Veterans, and the girls from Malmo, to name a few.

I'll tell you a story about one of the families at Chattooga that parallels the journey of the team. Pam was an accomplished gymnast growing up and competed collegiate gymnastics at LSU. One of her children, Shannon, was

born with Down Syndrome. Pam enrolled her in mainstream classes at the gym where she taught and eventually found Special Olympics, where Shannon could compete in the sport they both love. Shannon became a decorated gymnast herself, earning the title of Down Syndrome World Champion in artistic gymnastics and medaling in the Special Olympics World Games. The story doesn't end there. The relationship evolved from mother/daughter to coach/gymnast and finally, in Gymnastics for All, Pam and Shannon are now teammates.



Listen to Pam tell their story:

<https://youtu.be/ZdOG6YwcZUA>

Chattooga has followed much the same path. In 1999, the team was comprised mostly of young competitive gymnasts and included only a few gymnasts with disabilities. The parents helped with logistics and cheered from the bleachers. But our eyes were opened at that Gymnaestrada. We saw that Gymnastics for All really did mean everybody.

Let's skip ahead to our second World Gym for Life Challenge - 2013 in South Africa. The team included competitive gymnasts, recreational gymnasts, family

members, and friends who played live music for the performance. We were thrilled to be awarded one of the wild card slots in the Gala! We thought we had arrived - that is, until I spoke to the feedbackers. They were very complimentary about our diversity, gymnasts of all ages, with and without disabilities, but said they felt like the “old people (parents and grandparents)” could do more. Challenge accepted!

When we returned home, the adults and seniors got to work. The ladies learned to do mills with the hoops and the men became somewhat expert hip hop dancers. Guess who taught them - their daughters. The parents had always been the muscle in our lifts, but they had only lifted the gymnasts. If the “old people” were going to do more, it was necessary to lift a senior. We were doing choreography for the 2023 FIG Gala and found the perfect accent in the music to lift Mary, a senior and the mom of one of our gymnasts with special needs. Her daughter, Emily, was worried about the parents’ ability to lift her mom safely so she wanted to help. We stationed a mom to lift the legs and a dad on each arm and gave Emily the responsibility for the shoulders. As they prepared to try the lift for the first time, I heard Emily’s voice from across the gym saying, “I’ve got your back, mama!” To me, that statement speaks for every member of the Chattooga team.



For your enjoyment: Elissa's Song
2015 Down Syndrome World
Championships, Mortara, Italy
<https://youtu.be/x8vLsjmR18U>

“I’ve got your back, Mama”
Emily Belk

We're All In This Together

"The right to play on any playing field? You have earned it."

Unice Kennedy Shriver. Founder Special Olympics

Gymnastics is typically viewed as a competitive sport, with the most notable stars being young girls. "The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat" are emotions felt at every competition. For many years, sisters Rosie and Ali competed first in artistic, and then rhythmic gymnastics. Their parents dutifully sat in the bleachers applauding their performances, giving high fives when things went well and drying tears when things didn't go quite so well. When the team began competing in aesthetic group gymnastics, the girls convinced twelve moms that they too should compete, and so the Vintage Team was born. The moms were good sports about being the only group of "experienced bodies" on the competition floor, but what they loved most was the opportunity to perform without the pressure of being judged. Many young competitive gymnasts have that same feeling. Gymnastics for All is the perfect solution – the chance to do gymnastics purely for the love of the sport. Rosie and Ali are grown now, with families of their own, but gymnastics is still very much a part of their lives. One of them has been at every World Gym for Life Challenge and Gymnaestrada that Chattooga has attended, and they are both active internationally in Special Olympics gymnastics. Their parents, Dan and Karen, are the first to sign up for every event and in 2023, they also signed up Rosie's children, their grandchildren. Dan says, "It's a blessing to have 3 generations of our family performing with Chattooga. It provides us an opportunity to spend quality time with our family and have memorable experiences with our grandkids." Karen echoes the sentiment, "It's very exciting to me to be performing with my daughter and grandchildren. I have spent many years proudly watching my daughters compete, and began performing with them several years ago, which was special. I am very thankful that my grandchildren will be able to experience what it means to be part of such a diverse team performing for the world."

As a coach, I have to ask: *Can you think of any other sport where it is possible to be on the world stage with three generations of your family as teammates?*

Imagine all the people I've introduced you to so far coming to the gym to practice for the 2023 Gymnaestrada. Add to the group a child who shows hogs and sheep at the local fair, an aspiring young dancer, a mom who is a therapeutic riding instructor, a group of competitive rhythmic gymnasts, and an assortment of other unique individuals. During the first months of practices, they meet Antton Laine from Finland, one of the foremost aesthetic group gymnastics choreographers in the world, and to Wolfgang Bientzle, World Champion from Germany, and now head of USA Wheel Gymnastic Federation. Both Antton and Wolfgang were excited to choreograph sections of our routine, and both were willing to include gymnasts of all ages and abilities.

The attitude in the gym is always:

"We can do this if we all work together!"

Choreography for a group as diverse as ours has probably been the biggest challenge of my career. It has been said that your team is only as good as the weakest member, but I take exception to that statement. To me, the team is only as good as the unity of all members working together to showcase each person's strengths and to support each person's weaknesses. My job as the coach is to find the talents of each gymnast and choreograph a performance that blends them all together.

There are some gymnasts who are natural leaders, some who are followers, and some who need a guiding hand. If I do my job well, the audience shouldn't be able to discern which group each gymnast falls into. Likewise, it shouldn't be apparent to spectators that in a particular part of the performance, there might be a competitive gymnast, a senior, and an athlete with disabilities all the same level, doing the same choreography together. Again, if I do my job well, ages and abilities shouldn't be segregated but integrated. They are all gymnasts. The feedbackers at the 2013 World Gym for Life Challenge commented that, during the performance, there should be a time when everyone comes together and performs in unity. It is my job to find that common ground that will transform the inclusive group of individuals into a harmonious picture of movement. I truly believe that working with each and every gymnast to find and showcase their abilities has made me a better coach and I thank them for giving me their trust and the honor of coaching them.

**For your enjoyment:
In My Daughters Eyes**

2010 Miss Valentine, Estonia
<https://youtu.be/jes2hF1cCJI>



**"It's the moment that you think you
can't. you'll discover that you can"**

The Power of the Dream by Celine Dion

The Legacy

"A hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove --- but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child."

Forest Witcraft, Boy Scouts of America

As I look back on the past 47 years of owning a gymnastics school, it is clear to me that success is not measured by the number of medals and trophies your team wins at competitions. Success is measured by the lives you have influenced in a positive way and the gymnasts you trained who will make the world a better place because they did gymnastics. Kara, who was on my first team, and who now owns a dance studio that includes Positive Motion, a program for dancers with different abilities, says it best: "Chattooga - what a wonderful part of my life as a child, a parent, and volunteer. Who knew that when I initially met Cindy at a local gym (I was 6 years old at the time) there would be such a lifetime impact on what is now a more than 45-year relationship. The cycle has included: coach, gymnast, friend, mentor, and colleague. Chattooga has positively impacted not only my life, but also my family. Experiencing Chattooga across generations has allowed my now college age children to look at the world more broadly, as exemplified by Cindy forging a path of inclusion in gymnastics. I am grateful to be a part of Chattooga's stepping stones, and I thank Cindy for her tireless efforts in inclusion, fun, and sport."

Debbie, another member of the original Chattooga team, says: "I started gymnastics classes when I was twelve years old and Chattooga became an important outlet for me. I was on the very first Chattooga team and never left. I started teaching and coaching, and my sister started working in the office. My niece grew up at Chattooga. Now her children are growing up at Chattooga. I have a bond with this team and the Chattooga family, which includes a diverse group of gymnasts. It is such an exciting honour to represent the USA and participate with three generations of my family in these performances. Gymnaestrada is the gift that keeps on giving. It allows me to see so much wonderful talent, gymnasts of all abilities, and I get to share my special Chattooga family with other gym families from around the world.

Over the years, the Chattooga group has gradually become more diverse, and the scope of our performances has widened. But some things remain the same. If you have seen Chattooga perform, you know that a trademark of our costume is mismatched knee socks. To me, that says who we are!"



On our journey, gymnasts have come and gone, and thanks to the opportunities provided by Gymnastics for All, many have come back. Lynne's family has been a part of Chattooga from the beginning, and three generations will travel to Amsterdam to take part in the Gymnaestrada. In her words: "Although I live some distance away, when invited to be a part of the Chattooga delegation to 2023 Gymnaestrada, I was thrilled! Returning to the gym where my sister competed and taught, where I worked some 25 years ago, where my own girls spent their early years flipping and twirling with abandon

and joy, and to now see my grown daughter and her girls practice their hoop trio, I realized what a legacy had been given me. Along with just the familial experience though, my grandgirls are getting to realize firsthand what inclusion really means. Performing side by side with athletes of varying levels of age, physical ability, and intellectual challenges, has shown them the uniqueness and beauty of the world around us. When one falls, we offer a hand for lifting up. When one triumphs, we offer our hands in praise. When we all work together, we offer a moment of beauty to a community, city, or world that may be in sore need of one. That is the legacy! So, with great joy, Gymnaestrada 2023, here we come!"

For your enjoyment: Rocking

2013 Gym for Life World Challenge,
Capetown, South Africa

<https://youtu.be/yZ7Hn7dluRU>



The Message

"We can't always choose the music life plays for us, but we can choose how we dance to it"

Kate B. Jackson

In 2016, Marco Bortoleto invited Chattooga to travel to Brazil and participate in the Ginastica Para Todos International Forum. We toured and performed with the German Oldtimers, who were an inspiration to our seniors. Every festival showcased local groups and we loved the enthusiasm for Gymnastics for All. A Special Olympics team from Brazil joined us, and together, we presented a workshop on the inclusion of gymnasts with disabilities. As we were leaving to return home, Marco said, "You have shown us a new way to look at gymnastics."

I've always believed that the best way to lead is by example. It is my hope that by presenting the Chattooga group at Gymnastics for All events, we have inspired others to be inclusive.

In our diversity, we are probably best known for including gymnasts with special needs. Janet, whose daughter Dana trains at Chattooga, explains how gymnastics not only benefits Dana, but also the people who work with her:

<https://youtu.be/lymdCqPhO8U>



I think Dana says it best, "a girl like me can do anything a typical gymnast can do," and asks that you "open your hearts and open your gyms" to girls like her with special needs.

<https://youtu.be/AXymJd67ZOk>

My challenge to coaches and choreographers is to look around you at the people in your life and see the possibilities of including them in Gymnastics for All. We did it, and so can you!

With Thanks

**"DIVERSITY is being asked to the party. INCLUSION
is being asked to dance."**

Verna Myers

USA Gymnastics has a motto: "There is no I in teamwork." I know firsthand how true this is. The Chattooga experience would never have been possible without the hard work and cooperation of all members of the team. I wish I could mention each of them by name, but there would be a long list after 47 years of coaching the most amazing gymnasts ever. I do want to say a huge thank you to Joey Burgess, who has been on the Chattooga journey every step of the way.

USA Gymnastics has long been a leader in the sport throughout the world and I am proud to say that they are pioneering INCLUSION and leading the way to provide more opportunities for gymnasts with disABILITIES. I say thank you for the HUGS program (Hope Unites Gymnastics with Special Athletes) and for the support of Chattooga. What an honour it has been to represent our country at the World Gymnaestrada and World Gym for Life Challenge. A special thanks to Lori Laznovsky, who has been our rock at every event.

Words cannot express our gratitude to the FIG for recognizing and applauding the diversity of our Chattooga group. Gymnastics for All has given so many people, who never expected to travel the world performing gymnastics, the opportunity of a lifetime. We hope that we have given back to the world a fraction of what the FIG has given us.



"We rise by lifting each other"
Cirque du Soliel

Reference

Gymnastics for All 2020 USA
Gymnastics National Congress
Presentation

<https://youtu.be/VPRDQF2qztQ>

Finally, thank you to the audiences who have given us
standing ovations over the years. You get it!
GYMNASTICS FOR ALL IS FOR EVERYBODY!



Acknowledgment

Chattooga Gymnastics – Owner & Director

USA Gymnastics – Advisory Council, Rhythmic Gymnastics
XCEL Development Chair

Special Olympics International – Global Sport Adviser for
Rhythmic Gymnastics



The Pan American Gymnastics Union and its inclusion as a group, in the World Gymnaestrada

Carmen Gómez Alcalá | Ximena Dreckmann Rodríguez



Something to remember...

"Faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase".

Martin Luther King

A story of individual commitment with a great collective effort!

For the Pan-American Gymnastics Union, also known as PAGU, or at least for some of the countries of the American Continent, the history of participation in non-competitive gymnastics dates back to 1957; a date incredibly close to the beginning of the great festivals that were held at that time in Europe.

Actually, according to the records of the FIG (International Gymnastics Federation), 1957 was the year in which, for the first time, some countries of the American Continent, specifically Canada and Brazil, presented themselves with gymnastics groups in Zagreb, Croatia as part of the Gymnaestrada.

It is worth mentioning that these two countries: Canada and Brazil, together with the United States of America, were the only countries of our continent that had ventured in different editions of this great event that is the World Gymnaestrada to participate, and that they had also done it much more frequently since 1969.

As in all beginnings, starting a job as the "Pan American Union", seeking to coordinate the efforts around "Gymnastics for All", was not easy. Our countries did not easily understand this concept of "non-competitive gymnastics" and therefore convincing them that it was worth participating in its events was almost unthinkable.

Known at that time as "General Gymnastics", developing and promoting it as something we had to do, imposed various obstacles: communication was not easy at that time, the great geographical distances that separate our countries, various issues that affect and affected our economies, the attainment of economic resources, the political, cultural, social, even idiomatic discrepancies that existed, and many other arguments, did not support a real integration of our Continental Union and for the same reason, we did not even know how to start.

In contrast and even with all these drawbacks, we also discovered that our countries had many similarities. The Latin origin of a good part of our continent, put us in contact and at the same time in action, inviting us to overcome the challenges that dictated that PAGU should be organized in a strong group that began to work, especially including Spanish-speaking countries, to get to know this modality of gymnastics and participate in it, opening new perspectives and venturing so that the world could also know us.



Our beginning as a working group, seeking to represent PAGU.

"The real miracles make no noise. The crucial events in a life are unobtrusive."

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Plato, the great Greek philosopher, could affirm, based on his description of how relevant it is to start, that the beginning of our working group was important. Under the leadership of Steve Witlock (USA), who acted as head of PAGU for General Gymnastics in 2001, a first meeting was organized supported by the FIG, for leaders from different countries of the Americas, with the intention of training us in General Gymnastics. With the objective of sowing a seed able to initiate it in an organized manner in more countries of our Continental Union, and why not, also achieve a first foray into the World Gymnaestrada, the invitation reached our hands and had important effects. Chosen by our National Federations, prominent leaders who already worked with performance groups in their countries met, but without knowing much more about this discipline called "General Gymnastics", much less about its great possibilities.

For several of us, this was the first contact with this non-competitive modality, which quickly showed us its charms and recovered in us that force that Cupérous had defended since the 19th century with so much formative vision.

Of course, in our countries we already practiced this type of gymnastics and we even had our own school, university and social festivals, which were framed at that time in the category of "Gymnastics Performances". But an organization like the one we met in those days, with its own world events, opened a new chapter for all of us individually and for our countries, soon starting conversations about our participation as the Pan American Gymnastics Union.

Plato affirmed the existence of two worlds: the sensible world and the world of ideas. In the sensible world he explained that we were all susceptible to capture experiences through the senses, to generate motivation; but he also affirmed that this feeling (motivation) did not generate, nor would it generate,

the sufficient and necessary powerful force to lead us to action. While the world of ideas, made that feeling longed for by sensitivity, remains to the point of moving us to do what is necessary, so that what we wanted, became real.

Although Plato with this statement wanted to underestimate the value of the sensible world, since its perceptive nature distanced it from a real will to act. In the case of our Union, the perception that several of us had in that meeting of what was "General Gymnastics", which in the manner of Plato, was also accompanied by a powerful idea, invited us to participate in the World Gymnaestrada, conforming ourselves as a PAGU group in a performance. This also put us in front of the exceptional opportunity to get to know the event and feel part of it, and yes... this was what really moved us to action!

We left that meeting in 2001, with the formal task of designing a routine to present within the framework of the World Gymnaestrada that would take place in Lisbon, formed, and committed by the countries that were present at that time: USA, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Honduras, and Chile.

We were literally sensitively captured by those beautiful videos that we saw during the meeting, and which curiously led us, most of us still being "new countries", because we had never participated in a World Gymnaestrada before, to get excited about the idea of generating this joint performance of 15 minutes. In this way, united as a Continent we would be present in Lisbon, Portugal, in this great world event of 2003.

Indeed, we could say that this was the beginning of what to this day, after 20 years and 5 Gymnaestradas, is a real Gymnastics For All Committee in the Pan American Gymnastics Union, which has managed to generate a PAGU Evening since the World Gymnaestrada Dornbirn 2007, in four more occasions and preparing for the fifth. Within the framework of Amsterdam 2023 World Gymnaestrada, we will celebrate 20 years since having presented ourselves for the first time.

Without a doubt, this event changed our history and even the leadership of this modality in our Continental Union. We say this because in 2003, we had our first committee president who in addition of being a woman coming from a Spanish speaking country, had a single experience of participation in the World Gymnaestrada, and whom, together with all those who participated in that first experience, was in charge of consolidating us as a work group and keeping it that way, to this day.

The great challenge at that time was to create a framework from which those considered young federations could find the basis to participate in an event like the World Gymnaestrada supported by the experience of those who had already done it before, and therefore, had the knowledge that it was possible and were determined and prepared to share the "how" to do it.

Five Objectives were proposed as the most relevant in order to achieve the growth of our Pan American group after that first participation in 2003:

- The countries with the most experience would support the new ones, sharing their experience in the participation in Gymnastics for All events, resolving their doubts and supporting their planning and registration process, which would lead them to participate in the world event in its next edition.
- Share economic models, development models, communications, guidelines, regulations, formats and any document that could facilitate the development process of this idea of participating in the World Gymnaestrada, helping in the development of each country.
- Participate with a common routine, in which we would introduce ourselves as the Pan American Union.
- Maintain the common commitment of: "No matter what, or with how many... we will be present."
- Keep in communication and always in touch since then

Here you can see some of the World Gymnaestrada spirit:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zwT7NpFpMw>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJVjuq3Yw4U>

A watershed in our existence...

Creative ideas are like a delicate cocoon: you have to pamper them so that they flourish. Although the experience of participation as PAGU in Lisbon 2003 was not a complete success, it definitely allowed us to create a strong and powerful bond between leaders that participated and the countries that joined. Despite the obstacles and barriers that each one of us encountered we have been always convinced that the combination of people with a reasonable

talent and a great will to persevere in this idea has been what really keeps us together until today.

Later in time and through the years, some events marked and consolidated PAGU in Gymnastics for All as a working group that would venture with many more bases and a real participation structure in different Gymnastics for All events. With this, we can conclude that talking about the growth and development of PAGU in Gymnastics for All is talking mainly about friendship, commitment, and why not, also about courage.

Without great resources, nor a lot of experience, we have projected our development based on the thought of Cupérus: "My ideals remain unchanged and I keep dreaming of the day when competition will be superfluous, in which gymnasts will compete only for the great prize of his own effort, of its equivalent in health, flexibility, strength and tenacity".

And in this way, in 2007, we held our first Evening as a Continental Union in the World Gymnaestrada in Dornbirn 2007, with which we managed to project ourselves forward, united with greater strength every day, and always with this great joy of performing for the audience; celebrating movement, gymnastic expression, culture, diversity and everything we like about this beautiful sport, both in national and international events throughout the Continent and in different parts of the world as well.

On the other hand, the first technical committee of Gymnastics for All elected in Congress, was formed by vote in 2011 in Guadalajara, Mexico, within the framework of the Pan American Games. After seven years of work bidding for this from PAGU, we consolidated as a committee headed by Carmen Gómez Alcalá (MEX) in the presidency for the third time, and formally supported by an intrepid and multivalent committee that was made up of valuable people such as Elisabeth Bureau (CAN), Marly Rojas (VEN), Rebeca Rojas (VEN) and Ximena Rodríguez (CHI), with whom we will always be grateful.

Here you can see our evolution as PAGU Group though time:



Our first National Evening:
Dornbirn, Austria, 2007.



Lausanne, Switzerland, 2011.



Helsinki, Finland, 2015.

Dornbirn, Austria, 2019.

The actual Gymnastics for All committee was elected in congress in 2019. Composed by Ximena Rodriguez (Chile) in the presidency and its members Claudia Barros (Arg), Cristina Desentis (Mex), Lori Lavznovzky (USA) and Sarah Lambert (TTO) had the difficult task of keeping the Union active during pandemics and also in charge of promoting the new Introductory courses. Now the committee is working together with Carmen Gómez and the support of our President Naomi Valenzo to give life to the PAGU evening which will take place in the World Gymnaestrada - Amsterdam 2023

Today, Gymnastics for All promotes multiple events. All very interesting:

- The World Gymnaestrada
- Gym For Life Challenge
- The Educational Colloquium
- And it even has the basic and formal part of the FIG Academy with the Foundations Course, whose manual, thanks to a collaborative effort between the FIG, a non-profit organization known as "Peace & Sports" and PAGU, has since been translated into Spanish.

Since then, PAGU has proudly participated continuously in all these events, and has even managed to create some of its own:

- A Pan-American festival that was held for the first time in Dallas, Texas in 2010, with the support of the Sokol organization and the United States Federation, led by Lori Laznovsky.
- Courses that are part of the FIG structure, such as "Join the Gymnaestrada" and Join Gymnastics for All Events.
- The new Introduction to Gymnastics for All course which has taken place in Uruguay, Paraguay and Trinidad and Tobago

Given that we have heard that the means of obtaining economical resources are a topic of interest for any sports reader who seeks to develop as a leader in this sport, we would like to mention that we have sought at all costs to prevent this important topic from being an obstacle to the development of PAGU's work in Gymnastics for All.

For this reason, our friendly union and the body of leaders who have participated together in different events, have learned to rely on the following principles:

- Have a well-developed working plan and yearly budget in order to have access to PAGU's financial support, which has greatly increased in the past three years.
- Take advantage of the support that the FIG grants for educational and academy courses to invite new countries and promote their development. For this reason, we believe that the designation of venues for these courses must be carried out cautiously and commit whoever has it, to this clear development intention promoted by our Union.
- We start from the basis that the Pan American Union does not have enough resources to support the participation in this modality due to the big numbers of athletes that make a delegation, and for this reason, our principle is to be self-generators of resources in order to help our delegations in international events.
- It is important to seek the presence and alliance of the national sports institutions and their government structures, so that the development of Gymnastics for All is promoted collaboratively, in all educational and sports spaces and physical activity.
- Likewise, and taking advantage of the premise that gymnastics in any of its modalities is the sport most liked by audiences looking for sporting events, it is imperative to do marketing work that generates sponsorships and support from private initiatives.
- Finally, it seems relevant to us to document and share as a union, the successes and lessons learned that have led us to this point, to continue opening a gap along the way and continue our development more firmly and with better tools.



The challenges of the future.

"Do not wait until the conditions are perfect to begin. Beginning makes the conditions perfect".

Allan Cohen

The importance of sport and exercise in general for the development of any person is undoubted. It is a source of physical well-being, an element that helps combat the imbalances of daily life and the pressures exerted by daily work, and if we also add the fact that we enjoy doing it, the result will be an experience that is close to what we could call happiness.

Emphasizing that the message of Cupérus has not been lost and today plays an important role in the national federations that have Gymnastics for All, we honour and recognize their participation in different fields and interesting projects in conjunction with the FIG and other organizations such as "Peace & Sports" to spread their message and seek to reach new communities, even those with very few resources or who live in poverty, marginalization, violence and even isolation.

As examples of this work, there is the course carried out jointly with the Colombian Gymnastics Federation in 2012, which was given to personnel from the suburbs of the city of Bogota and its social adaptation centres, where the course of "Foundations of Gymnastics" was given with the intention that the promoters of these government centres find in gymnastics and its foundations a way to use the free time of children and adolescents, and thereby balance their energy, avoiding facilitating their proximity to the structure of the drug cartels.

It is because of projects like this, which highlight the formative and educational nature of gymnastics and because of the infinity of aspects on which "Gymnastics for All" can be focused, that we consider it so vital for all the countries of the American Continent and its people.

With all the above we can conclude that:

a) Gymnastics for All is an invitation to form groups that practise gymnastics for the simple fact of practising it, and with this, discover a new opportunity for artistic expression, explore new possibilities of movement and remember the versatility of its contents, since it provides to all who practise:

- An incentive to practise exercise for health.
- A way to align the teaching of the base of all gymnastics modalities.
- Involves a non-competitive participation forum for all, as it allows your practice to include all ages and abilities.

b) This modality is an important source of "well-being" that can fight social imbalances and present healthy alternatives for the comprehensive development of entire groups, of entire cultures, of entire countries.

c) Pass and communicate the important message that sport should become an integral part of daily life and of the habits and customs of a nation.

d) And...when this phenomenon gains importance anywhere, it also becomes an economic factor, which fosters and generates interest and affinity, including everyone.

However, the greatest results are won by "the person" individually, because:

- It's fun.
- Develops physical capacity and allows learning its fundamentals.
- Changes the use that the person gives to free time.
- Increases your health and well-being.
- Develops the ability to participate in teams or groups.
- Elevates physical performance and increases self-esteem.
- Creates lifelong friendships.

Sport and much more, "Gymnastics for All" is one of the factors that contribute to prolonging life and maintaining it with quality for longer. Reduces the possibility of contracting diseases, develops healthy habits and behaviours, improves physical awareness, and nourishes the spirit. In short, it changes people's lives.

Don't miss the highlight of one of our Pan-American Evening (WG2015)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBF5IC8I2xY>

Nothing stops us, and perhaps this is the most complex thing to understand. As gymnastics group leaders, we have someone to follow and whom to teach. We have examples from which to learn, experiences that we can share and above all, a long way to go, so that with a vision of participation, we can find the how. This is the real challenge; this is the real intention of our efforts, and they must remain that way, seeking the development and participation of **EVERYONE**.

And remember...you should not be discouraged if your plans do not succeed on the first try. Finally, no one learns to walk with the first step.



GYMNASTICS FOR ALL AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Angela Wichmann | Fernanda Raffi Menegaldo
Marco Antonio Coelho Bortoleto

Society, Sport and Human Development

Sport and body practices have been part of our daily activities for centuries, changing over time. Today, they represent an important aspect of contemporary society, engaging with other aspects of our life, such as health, quality of life, leisure, and fun. Of all dimensions that could be used to approach this phenomenon, we are particularly interested in the social and human dimension of sport and body practices, a dimension that has been widely debated by many fields of social sciences.

Different research in the Sociology, Anthropology and Philosophy fields has been developed focusing on human development promoted by sports participation. These studies address the social relationships that arise in different sports experiences, whether in daily activities or participation in a sports event. Friendship, social skills, community ties, as well as commitment, social recognition, and a sense of belonging are some of the categories that are usually part of the sports' atmosphere and have been receiving attention from many researchers.

This importance given to human development in the sports context is not an isolated effort nor an unintentional one. In effect, these aspects form a global agenda never before so concerned over the social dimension of our lives. Collective experiences and their benefits for social well-being, for the promotion of respect, diversity and peace are at the heart of the **contemporary discussions**. This happens due to an urgent demand for social transformation: in times of



Reference:

Collison, H., Darnell, S. C., Giulianotti, R., & Howe, P. D. (2019). *Routledge Handbook of Sport for Development and Peace*. Routledge.

decreased collectivities and profoundly enhanced intimacy and individualization, the experience of social relationships becomes more and more difficult, creating a scenario that weakens solidarity and strengthens an individualistic way of life. In this sense, sports participation aligns with this urgency, being a powerful path for human and social development.

Could gymnastics contribute to this process?

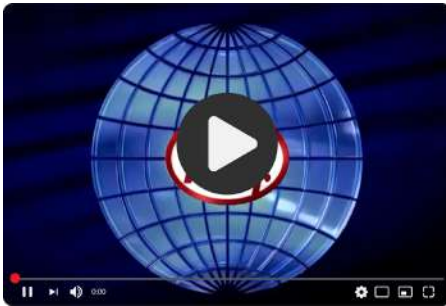
Group gymnastics as part of Gymnastics for All (GfA) allows many potentials regarding social relationships, especially when its collective feature is combined with other aspects such as its development focused on leisure, its predominantly demonstrative proposal, and its non-competitive festivals. Based on the principles of **Fun, Fitness, Fundamentals and Friendship**, GfA promotes an experience of collective sports participation that goes in the direction of social development. This collective feature has even been the focus of recent **GfA studies** that place the social dimension as a protagonist of its development. In this sense, this chapter aims to show the relationships between GfA and human development and, more than that, how this gymnastics practice can foster relationships that play a true role in this **social transformation**.

GYMNASTICS AND SOCIAL SKILLS: Improving cooperation through GfA



Although GfA does not have a set of extremely rigid rules for its practice, if there is something in common in all performances that we see in festivals such as World Gymnaestrada, it is teamwork. Choreographies in small and large groups, collective acrobatics, gymnastics skills performed in harmony and synchrony, from the simplest to the most complex. In these performances, the collective feature of GfA is expressed in different ways based on cooperation and communication. Like so many other group sports and body practices, GfA constantly demands the exercise of cooperation and other social skills, and it does not just happen during the performances.

In fact, the cooperative relationships that are shown in **GfA choreography** should be part of each group's daily living: doing a collective warm-up or conditioning, composing choreographies together with ideas from different gymnasts, proposing a costume, a make-up or a new apparatus for performance; helping some colleague to improve some gymnastics skill; proposing and participating in strategies to raise money for an event registration. Also, this cooperation seems to be intensified even more in the experience of participating in festivals, since these events are often characterized as an immersion in this gymnastics atmosphere where the group members need to always act collectively (in anticipated and also unexpected situations!).



GfA choreography

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

Looking carefully at the GfA practice, cooperation emerges as a central aspect. For this reason, it is one of the transforming social potentials of this gymnastics practice, since the cooperative relationships built between group members is often a disinterested cooperation. In other words, most of the cooperative relationships that are established within the GfA context have no other purpose than well-being, good living and a positive, fun and satisfying experience in gymnastics. Cooperation is developed with a focus on choreographies, but not only on that. In the GfA atmosphere, the act of cooperating is not predominantly motivated by a medal, a ranking, or an exclusive recognition of performance. Cooperation at GfA can be motivated by multiple goals.

If cooperation and other social skills related to a solidary coexistence, which allows large participation and diversity, can be part of the daily life of GfA groups and experiences at festivals, could the exercise of cooperation at GfA contribute to **better skills in other social contexts of our lives other than gymnastics**? Does the diversity and plurality of the GfA environment not teach us a more genuine, long-term, and active cooperation? Could the cooperation be the foundation for strong friendships between GfA group members? In these contexts, where cooperation is understood as an ability capable of boosting human and social development, what we named commitment is essential.



The importance of commitment

Practicing GfA, in general, and taking part in an international GfA event, in particular, celebrate a special form of collaboration, namely one that is based on commitment even if you might not take part in a competition. The deep sense of belonging that the participants experience and express through cooperating in the display does not arise automatically or naturally. A sense of duty and dedication on the participants' side is crucial for the development of the spirit of affiliation. Thus, commitment is one of the driving forces' behind the strong feeling of connection the participants experience.



When we watch a GfA performance, we see a group of people acting harmoniously and synergistically. Often, the gymnasts practice their performances for months, sometimes for years. Thus, the commitment with the group, with the common objective becomes the amalgam of the practice.

In this sense, commitment plays a more significant role than gymnastics skill level. What fascinates GfA practitioners is the experience of physical interaction in unison and in a synchronized way. It is not about sticking out as an individual, it is not about drawing attention to oneself on one's own. But it is about blending

into the group, it is about being a precious part of a whole, which is strongly related to the joy of doing well in the performance, of creating wonderful experiences for the spectators. In GfA, it is usually the collective, not (only) the individual performer, who facilitates these effects. And it is especially in this context, that the practice of GfA provokes us to reflect on some relevant questions: Is not believing in being able to achieve something great together, no matter how skilled you are, absolutely essential against the backdrop of the various social and political crises our societies around the globe are currently faced with? Is it not inspiring to see, in the light of today's challenges, that a GfA display is based on a shared belief that both the individual and collective achievement matter, that individuals are committed to a shared goal, while being simultaneously aware that each and everybody is significant to reach it?

Social belonging through GfA

Going beyond today's challenges, we often see that individuality, personal fulfillment and self-actualization are common life aspirations in many western societies of the twenty-first century. These high aspirations, as appreciated as they might be, however, do also bring forward aspects on the flip side, expressing itself, amongst others, in a constant pressure to perform, or even in egocentrism. Yet there are still spaces that elude these aspects. GfA in general, and events such as the World Gymnaestrada, in particular, can be considered one of them, with its invitation to gymnasts from all over the world to experience a magic sense of belonging, not only in a social, but also in a physical sense. Taking part means uniting people. It means making the individual feel part of a group, not only through various social encounters, but also in and through the **group display**. Performing together and experiencing physical interaction in common is at the core of what makes taking part so very special. Participating in GfA, in general, and in an event, such as the World Gymnaestrada, particularly, allows for a twofold group experience, where the sense of belonging to a whole is not only experienced and expressed through social encounters, but also especially through interacting physically in and through the collective performance.

16th World Gymnaestrada 2019 in Dornbirn

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



Inclusion & diversity

One of the main challenges of the 21st century global sport agenda is **INCLUSION**. The mobilization of sports federations and other organizations creates a worldwide network to develop and promote effective actions on this matter. Looking at the particular case of gymnastics, GfA has played an important role in this international movement. The inclusion of all kinds of people, with all skill levels, is a non-negotiable feature of contemporary GfA practice. Its practice often represents an opportunity to be active in sport, regardless of the condition and possibilities of each human being.

Indeed, GfA has become an excellent tool for social, cultural, economic, gender, race, religious and age inclusion, offering experiences for its participants and also for the audience that follows the performances. GfA has registered in its DNA the power of inclusion.

To be quite strict, GfA cannot reinforce exclusion. It can only exist if it is inclusive!



In this sense, there is an important challenge for each of the numerous GfA groups: not to give in to social pressure to build excluded practices. It is worth remembering that the current world strongly and recurrently promotes exclusion, division, and segmentation of the population into homogeneous groups, favoring exclusion. It is therefore necessary to act to overcome the divisions imposed by the traditional sport categories (age, sex, competitive level, ...) that often affect the practice of GfA, even if there is no prerequisite that obliges us to adopt any of these characteristics. We have to resist and keep the GfA practice inclusive.

Certainly, many GfA groups are doing this!

It is possible to note groups avoiding establishing levels of comparison, evaluating performance based on strict codes of conduct, or even the requirements that make up high performance sports. In the **“society of the spectacle”**, as discussed by **Guy Deboy**, GfA appears as an alternative for a massive gymnastics practice, promoting health and wellbeing for everyone.

Reference: Deboy, Guy. (2002). Society of the Spectacle. Black & Red.

Therefore, it is important not to convert GfA events into what they should not be: selective, ending in ranking, etc. It seems to us that GfA festivals need to reinforce the inclusive nature of participation.

Having said that, the adoption of a gymnastics practice for **ALL** will only be complete when it becomes effectively inclusive, guaranteeing fun, freedom and emancipatory participation for all participants.



CULTURAL EXCHANGE: Playing with national identity

When GfA is practiced not only at home in daily life, but with the aim of taking part in gymnastics events, such as the **World Gymnaestrada**, it becomes a precious platform for international relations and cultural exchange, an important step for a better understanding of diversity. A strong symbol of this is the common and popular ritual to exchange clothes



World Gymnaestrada Lausanne 2011

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dz9JsXXHPfM>

and other items that are markers of one's national identity. Coming across a Canadian gymnast who wears a t-shirt from the Austrian delegation, while waving a Czech flag is not unusual. As soon as the opening ceremony is over, people start exchanging their dress items, which is an important element and ritual of the festival week. The host destination evolves into a colorful picture of nationalities that are merging and blurring. Even if these encounters might be fleeting, this phenomenon provides a strong symbol of playing with national identity, a pleasant, heartening and heartwarming message especially in today's times.

But it's not only the event as such that brings together gymnasts from different parts of the world, there are also several formats that allow gymnasts to perform together and, hence, provides the chance to experience cultural exchange also on a physical level in and through a common performance. Especially the **World Team performance**, introduced at the 2015 World Gymnaestrada in Helsinki in Finland, provides the opportunity to take part in a supra-national performance with everybody having the chance to participate. In the World Team, not only gender and age, skill level and gymnastics form are merging and blurring, but here also the national boundaries cease playing a role. The World Team performance is a platform to feel a strong connection through moving together in the display. At the same time, doing gymnastics in common and performing together provides a stage for national boundaries to become blurred. In the performance of the World Team the different nationalities of the participating gymnasts are merging into an international community that is expressed and experienced through physical interaction, taking the form of collective gymnastics. Here again, the practice of GfA at international events such as the World Gymnaestrada has a strong message to tell. Could we not consider the joyful social and physical encounters of gymnasts coming from even the most different nations around the globe as an inspiring, forward-looking example of living together peacefully in society?

World Team-2019 Gymnaestrada

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=_eUoJvZIUCM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_eUoJvZIUCM)



GfA's strong message for our living together

As we have seen in this chapter, over and above the fascination and magic experienced by the participating gymnasts, GfA in general, and the World Gymnaestrada as a key event of the GfA practice, particularly, have a strong message to deliver for our living together in today's times. It conveys the impression of experimenting with potential approaches to meet the challenges many societies are faced with currently. It appears as if it suggests possible solutions for some of the pressing issues that shape our living together in the twenty-first century. In times of rising individualism, in GfA, in general, and at the World Gymnaestrada, in particular, the individual is an equal part of a whole that both needs and transcends the individual. In times of increasing competitiveness, in this context, commitment matters more than skill level; what makes a difference is the motivation and willingness to achieve even without judges, ranks and medals. And in times of rising nationalism, the World Gymnaestrada participants play with nationality, to mention just a few aspects.

GfA and its related events have the potential to foster a world view that is underpinned by interpersonal values and a dialogue based on trust and mutual respect, linking tradition and progress, based on gymnastics as a common language. Even if obviously even here all that glitters is not gold, it appears as if GfA activities might even be a bit ahead of time.



GYM FOR LIFE PORTUGAL

A success story

Ricardo Lima

Introduction

The Gymnastics Federation of Portugal is the institution that promotes and organizes gymnastics, in its different disciplines, at a national level. In addition to the competitive disciplines (Men's and Women's Artistic Gymnastics, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Trampoline Gymnastics, Acrobatic Gymnastics, Aerobic Gymnastics, Teamgym and Parkour) the Federation also develops the non-competitive area, Gymnastics for All.

Gymnastics for All represents a large part of the total membership of the Federation and currently has the largest national events in terms of participation of clubs and gymnasts.

The promotion of general practice, regardless of gender, age, physical/ intellectual abilities or culture is the main purpose of Gymnastics for All. In this discipline the Federation promotes the organization of events, education for coaches' and is also responsible for all the national regulations.

The events in the area of Gymnastics for All, developed and organized by the Gymnastics Federation of Portugal are PORTUGALGYM (our national Gymnaestrada), SENIORGYM (a festival for people over 45 years of age) and GYM FOR LIFE PORTUGAL (a gymnastic group contest).

Gym for Life Portugal will be developed in the following chapters, and we will demonstrate the evolution of this event, which is currently one of the largest internationally, counting the number of groups and gymnasts registered.



Gym for Life Portugal performance group

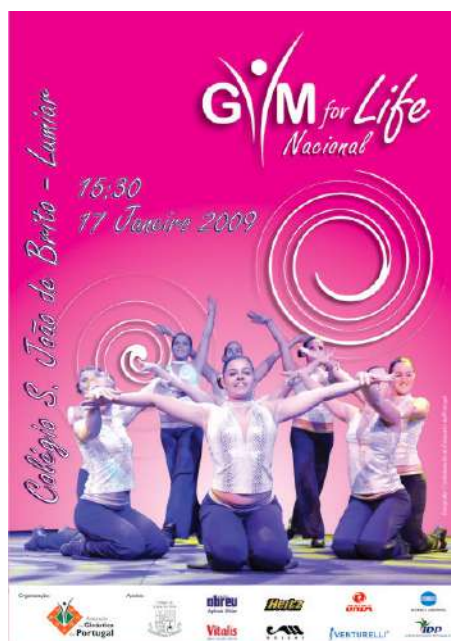
The beginning

The year 2003 was for Portuguese Gymnastics, a year of beautiful memories and excellent sport results. The organization of the World Gymnaestrada in Lisbon boosted the exponential growth of participants in all disciplines and promoted, at a later stage, the improvement of conditions in national clubs.

Gymnastics was also promoted in the media, such as national TV, national radios and newspapers, which increased the sport's notoriety at a national level.

In the following years, the challenge was to continue to promote this development in a sustainable way and for the clubs to continue to develop and actively participate in the Federation's events.

Other Gymnastics for All events were developed, but in 2009 with the organization of the World Gym for Life Challenge by FIG, the Federation decided to also develop the first edition of Gym for Life (formerly known as National Gym for Life).



1st Gym for Life poster

This first edition intended to validate the performances of the groups that were going to participate in the international event and help to develop these works by giving the coaches some feedback in this regard.

Since then, all groups that intend to participate at an international level in any Gymnastics for All event of European Gymnastics or the International Gymnastics Federation, must participate in Gym for Life Portugal, so that their exercises can be observed and receive feedback, to improve the performances.

The feedback was innovative and different compared to other events. This educational nature of the event, which boosted the qualitative development of the Gymnastics for All groups, was definitely the touchstone for the growth of the gymnastics quality of the national Gymnastics for All groups.



The development

Since the first edition in 2009 until the current season, the Gymnastics Federation annually organizes the event Gym for Life Portugal. This has been developed and improved considering the size of participation in the event. The focus was, motivate the clubs to participate in this new event that added an evaluation process.

In the first editions, the event had a modest participation, however the result was quite positive, either by the participation of the groups, or by the organization and evaluation of the same.

The following table shows the evolution of participation in Gym for Life Portugal.

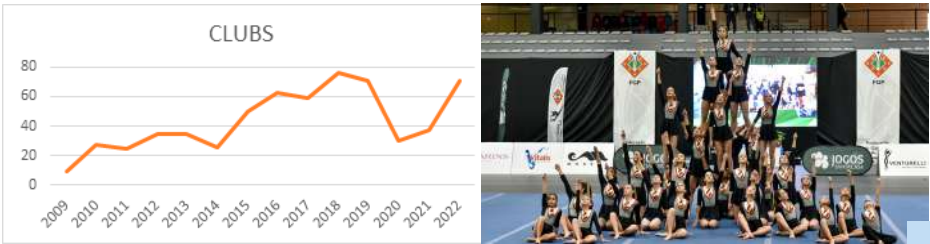
YEAR	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
CLUBS	9	27	25	35	35	26	50	63	59	76	71	30	37	71
GROUPS	18	48	37	70	68	76	101	130	130	166	165	50	76	133
PARTICIPANTS	316	1224	956	1307	856	1722	2380	3248	3134	4223	4009	844	1426	2991

Gym for Life Portugal participation data

The above table shows a variation in the number of participants in the first years, which gradually stabilizes from 2014 onwards. This is the big turning point and quantitative increase in the number of participants.

It is also evident the direct correlation between the evolution of the number of participants, with the number of clubs and groups.

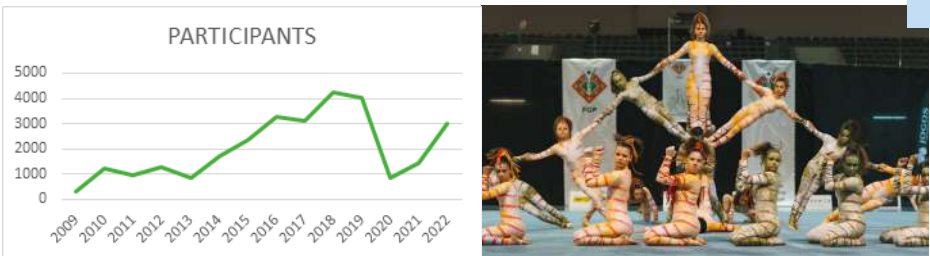
We represent these results in the following graphics.



Evolution of the number of clubs in Gym for Life Portugal

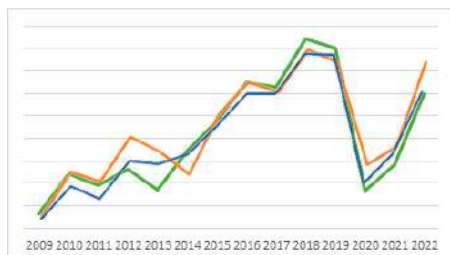


Evolution of the number of groups participating in Gym for Life Portugal



Evolution of the number of participants in Gym for Life Portugal

Through the previous graphics we can show that after some stability in the first 5 years, we moved to sustained growth until 2020, the year in which the COVID-19 Pandemic took place and all activities were closed.



Statistical data analyse from Gym for Life Portugal

If we compare the 3 graphs, we can see that there is a direct relationship between the participation data (clubs, groups and participants). This is a fact that confirms the sport sustainability of the event.

Financial sustainability is also very important for any organization, and with this event is managed to add profits for the Federation.

The strategy

Gym for Life Portugal was from the beginning more than a simple Gymnastics for All event. Its educational essence (feedback) allows old mistakes to be changed in a continuous and simple way, in choreographic or teaching gymnastic elements. This facet was almost always well received by the clubs/coaches and this helped the massive participation in several editions of the event.



On the other hand, the Federation adopted certain measures to make the national competitions and festivals more attractive, trying to bring more public to the arenas. Provide the public present at events with a more pleasant experience, making events more dynamic and spectacular for those who attend (often for hours).

Quality presentation, with a speaker who has knowledge about the sport and who could guide the competition, as well as LED wall animation with a presentation of the rankings and who will be performing, makes the events easier to understand.

An investment was made to always present the best conditions to the clubs/participants so that, in this way, it would also be a good experience for them and that they would feel valued as if they were gymnastics “superstars”.

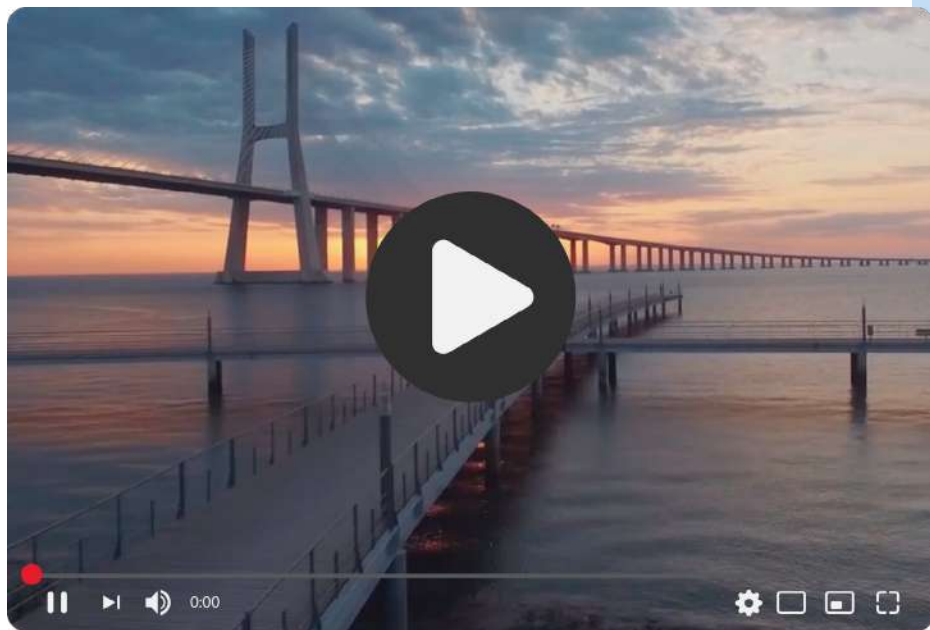
The rules themselves were adjusted to the event size and groups’ participation.

In the first phase there were no categories, and every group competed for the Gold, Silver and Bronze awards in a single category. Subsequently, and after a study phase (2017 and 2018), the categories were implemented, and the groups began to participate in the category that best fits their performance (with or without apparatus, large or small groups).



Currently, groups compete in the following categories:

- a) Gymnastics with Apparatus;
- b) Gymnastics and Dance, Small Group (up to 20 gymnasts);
- c) Gymnastics and Dance, Large Group (21 or more gymnasts).



Promotional spot video

CONCLUSIONS

For the Gymnastics Federation of Portugal, the Gym for Life Portugal event is one of the qualitative development factors of Gymnastics for All, due to its educational essence (feedback).

The ability to go on adjusting and developing the participation rules was also decisive for the success of the event throughout these editions. Clear and transparent rules that motivate participants are an important factor for regular club participation.

Investing in the best conditions for participants and also for the public, as well as the development of education courses for coaches, are essential factors for Gym for Life Portugal to be one of the biggest events in Portugal and one of the most attended at a global level.

REFERENCES

- Technical Manual of Gymnastics Federation of Portugal;
- Manual of Procedures of [Gymnastics Federation of Portugal](#);
- Competition and Events Manual of Gymnastics Federation of Portugal;
- Technical Archive of Gymnastics Federation of Portugal;
- [Gymnastics for All Manual](#) by the International Gymnastics Federation.





GYMOTION

music and gymnastics fascination

Jérôme Hübscher



Initial situation

The Swiss gymnastics clubs have always had a great tradition in gymnastics evenings. This means that the clubs organise an entertainment evening in their village/town and present Gymnastics for All in all its facets. From young to old they are on stage and entertain the audience. These events help the clubs to finance their sporting activities and are an important source of income.

History

The Swiss Gymnastics Federation recognised and promoted this potential early on. Since 1970, the federation has organised a **Swiss Gym Show** every two years. The best clubs and creative gymnastics were presented to the general public and on three weekends, about six shows were presented in four different Swiss cities. The music, however, came from CD and the light and effect were still not very developed.

In 2007 the Swiss Gymnastics Federation celebrated its 175th anniversary

and in this context the idea came up to accompany a gymnastics show with live music. Together with the Swiss Army Concert Band, the 4 shows in Aarau were a great success and sold out four times. Therefore, the head of sports promotion, Jérôme Hübscher, asked the federation to repeat this in a larger stadium as a replacement for the previous Swiss Gym Shows. The **Gymotion**, Music and Gymnastics Fascination was born and the first edition in the Hallenstadion Zurich was 2009. Two shows in front of a total of 8,000 spectators were a real success.

Editions

2009 Hallenstadion Zurich	2010 Hallenstadion Zurich	2012 Hallenstadion Zurich	2014 Hallenstadion Zurich	2016 Hallenstadion Zurich
2018  Hallenstadion Zurich	2020  Hallenstadion Zurich	2023 Hallenstadion Zurich (postponed from 2022 to 2023 due to the pandemic)	2025 /2026 the planned next editions	

Development

The show always takes place in the even years so that we do not compete with the World Gymnaestrada and the corresponding premieres of the Gymnaestrada in our own country. Since the first edition in 2009, the concept has been worked on again and again and the show has been developed further. At the beginning, existing performances and shows were presented and staged with live music and light and pyro effects. In 2023, it is important that the performances for the show are developed and presented only for Gymotion. This gives the show a **uniqueness**. They have also started to work much more closely with music and the clubs, so that the show has a storyboard even without a big story, has a musical guideline and always takes the audience along emotionally and interactive.

The core team of the show starts about 18 months before the show with the development and the ideas so that we can present the clubs and Gymnastics for All in the best way.

The layout became more and more important and is now developed right at the beginning of the creative process.



[Gymotion 2023 Event Movie - YouTube](#)



Live Music

Since the beginning, live music has been the trademark of this show. Over the course of the editions, the collaboration has been intensified and this has paid off. In 2020, Jesse Ritch also wrote his own Gymotion song, which gives the brand additional weight. The song will be slightly adapted for the grand finale of each edition so that it fits into the overall show. The musicians and the gymnasts are now united in a symbiotic relationship.

Show and television production

When Gymotion started in 2009, we had to pay for the television production, the amount decreased with the success and since 2018, Swiss Television has taken over the production of both shows. With all the effects and light settings, there is always the balancing act to do in terms of settings so that it works as a live production, but also as a TV show. The logistics, the material changes, the artists, the gymnasts, the volunteers, the technicians and production crew as well as the television crew have to work together like clockwork so that the show can be realised to the second.

It gives the federation the opportunity to focus on the work of the clubs and to draw attention to the attractiveness of the clubs

The show has become a kind of engine for Gymnastics for All in many ways:

“The six keys for our federation”

1. The top clubs are becoming more and more creative and are thus role models for other clubs in terms of quality and demonstration effect. The desire to be part of it encourages the gymnasts to experience it.

In the course of the Gymmotion, the federation was able to have various innovations developed, e.g. a new type of horizontal bar frame, a mouldable swing ring frame or the Big Air Floor.

These innovations are then incorporated into the gymnastics sport.

2. It is a platform for clubs that want to set the scene internationally, such as the World Gym for Life Challenge or the FIG Gala.

3. The event is a welcome platform for all partners and sponsors in the sport of gymnastics

4. It strengthens the federation as an event organiser and trains and promotes know-how

5. It gives us the opportunity to put the honorary office in the shop window or in the show light and to honour it accordingly.



Facts

- Show Gymotion
- Realisation: every 2 years
- Number of spectators: 13'500
- Venue: Zurich Hallenstadion
- Number of gymnasts: approx. 550
- Number of musicians: approx. 20
- Number of helpers: 250
- Number of technicians: 40
- Television crew: 40
- Set-up of the show: Wednesday/Thursday
- Rehearsals: Friday
- Main rehearsal: (Friday) Saturday morning
- Saturday: 2 shows
- Duration of the show: 150 minutes incl. 30 minutes intermission
- Budget: 1.1 million Swiss francs (self-supporting)

Here you can find some impressions of the 2023 edition



Gymotion 2023 | Aftermovie

Statements

Jérôme Hübscher. Programme director and founder

"Gymotion is a fascinating symbiosis of music and gymnastics. For us as a fédération, it is also a driving force in many ways, but above all in the area of innovation and creativity and acts as a role model for other clubs."

Kevin Eggenschwiler. Events Manager

"For me, Gymotion reflects the diversity of gymnastics and shows the best of the best from Gymnastics for All. As one of the biggest events of the Swiss Gymnastics Federation, Gymotion is a good example of how important volunteerism is and how it can work in sports."

TJ Gyger. Musical Director

"The combination of spectacular gymnastic performances and live music with outstanding singers in front of a fascinated audience is the best entertainment on the highest level. It's a multilevel experience at its best. "

Guy Mäder. Show Choreographer

"At the Gymotion the Swiss gymnastics family meets on stage as well as in the audience. Due to the top-class cast in all facets, music, light and performances, the show has something to offer for everyone. The extra class of the Swiss gymnastics at its very best."

Tamara Grob. Show Choreographer

"Gymotion, a spectacular show at the highest level, combining excitement, power, perfection, elegance and emotion. Seamless transitions create a stunning show that captivates the audience from the first moment and takes them on a journey through Swiss gymnastics."

Hansgeorg Siggenthaler. Light Designer

"For me as a lighting designer, the Gymotion is a unique combination of sports, music and show effects."

AUSTRALIAN GYMNASTICS FOR ALL

Development of Events and Education

Georgie Keith | Kirrilee Torney | Petrina Hutchinson | Tom Finch

Historically, gymnastics in Australia has been strongly based on Artistic Gymnastics, with the Australian Gymnastics Federation founded in 1949 just prior to Australia's first gymnastics representation at the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. From those competitive roots, and with the addition of other disciplines, Australian Gymnastics for All has evolved to offer fundamental movement programs for all ages and all abilities, plus a range of performance opportunities. Within Australia, GfA is placed as the base for all other gymnastics disciplines.

The fundamental gymnastics skills learnt in a GfA program, create the foundation for further gymnastics experiences, both for recreation and competition. As well as the starting point for other disciplines, Gymnastics for All offers coach education and workshops, competitive team events and judges' courses, lesson plans and coaching resources for clubs and schools plus age specific initiatives. In Australia, the National GfA commission is responsible for developing programs across the lifespan which change overtime according to trends and other influences. The current focus areas are Performance, KinderGym (0-5years learning through play), TeamGym, FreeG (freestyle gymnastics) and Fitter for Life (over 50s). In addition, Gymnastics Australia has established partnerships with organisations such as Special Olympics, to provide opportunities for all Australians to participate in gymnastics.

National Gymnastics for All Events

GfA performance events have been held in Australia since the late-1980's and have evolved to include team competitions using gymnastics skills in non-traditional ways. The events include other opportunities for the community to interact, socialise and share ideas.

National events link to international opportunities while local events have been created to cater for specialised groups. There are pathways from Gymnastics for All into other gymnastics disciplines as well as the encouragement of competitive gymnasts to use their skills creatively within GfA performance opportunities.

Past GfA events:

Aussie Gymfest, 1994 to 2012: a biennial display festival including an opening ceremony; indoor and outdoor performances; workshops and a social function. International Gymfests were held on occasion with teams from Japan, Denmark, Germany and New Zealand being regular participants.

Cirque de Gymnastique, 2002 to 2016: a theatrical show under lights, presented by gymnastic groups from all disciplines. Held across three different states, each Cirque de Gymnastique was linked to its local Fringe Arts Festival which attracted audience members from the public, helping to promote the possibilities within gymnastics. Costs for the shows were covered by the audience with no cost to the performers.



Current GfA events:

NATIONAL CLUBS CHAMPIONSHIPS:

This national event caters for all disciplines and enables gymnasts to participate across multiple disciplines and competitions, including GfA. All national GfA events are held at the NCC and include contests and competitions; outdoor performances; workshops; a gala and a social event.

Australian Gym for Life Challenge, first held in 2010: This contest's format and regulations are based on the FIG World Gym for Life Challenge. The event has changed from a stand-alone biennial event to its current annual format as part of the NCC. Gymnasts from other disciplines are encouraged to create performance teams and enter the GfL during the NCC.

Three Australian teams participated in the World Gym for Life Challenge, Norway 2017.

TeamGym, started at a state level before developing into a national program. Over time, more levels have been offered and events have developed to include novice to international level.

FreeG: Prior to the introduction of Parkour as an FIG discipline, GA licenced FreeG (freestyle gymnastics) from British Gymnastics to cater to youth participants. There are resources for schools and clubs to run FreeG programs, plus an event structure of skilled and timed obstacle challenges.





WORLD GYMNAESTRADA:

Australian teams have been participating in the World Gymnaestrada since the 1980s. Teams first participate in a state or national event to gain sanction to join the Australian World Gymnaestrada Team. With no tradition of Large Group Performances, Australians keenly participate in the World Team with a large contingent of around 200 Australians involved each time. Gymnastics Australia has assisted the newer Oceania Federations to participate in the World Gymnaestrada through joint training camps, combined teams and donations from participating WG clubs.



See some stories of the Australian contingent at the 2015 Helsinki World Gymnaestrada.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLU2pwWTgqbHMmKa8PvU9EMO8VGXgIkbpt>

Coach development

Gymnastics programs are delivered in clubs across Australia by 7,800 registered coaches. To become accredited, coaches must complete a series of coach education courses and annual updating. Since the development of courses in the late 1970s the structure, presentation and course format have changed but regardless of the name, the key messages at the beginner/ fundamental/ level one stage have stayed similar:

- Work from a philosophy of fun, fitness, fundamentals and friendship
- Break down skills into the Dominant (Gymnastics) Movement Patterns based on biomechanical principles
- Use key coaching points to communicate clearly
- Enhance skill learning through physical preparation throughout a lesson
- Use a mix of teaching styles and group sizes
- Adapt activities to cater for individual strengths, challenges and interests
- Monitor the safety of the participant, coach, environment and program.

The base level for all coach education, the Fundamental Gymnastics Coaching Course, begins with the philosophies of Gymnastics for All and from here coaches progress onto discipline-specific training across the range of gymnastics, including intermediate and advanced GfA. With its position across the gamut of gymnastics and movement styles, the Gymnastics for All coach accreditation requires a broad range of skills as well as the ability to create group performances. The philosophy of fun, fitness, fundamentals and friendship overrides all aspects of each GfA course with topics including games; apparatus exploration; acrobatics; tumbling; hand apparatus; choreography and performance.



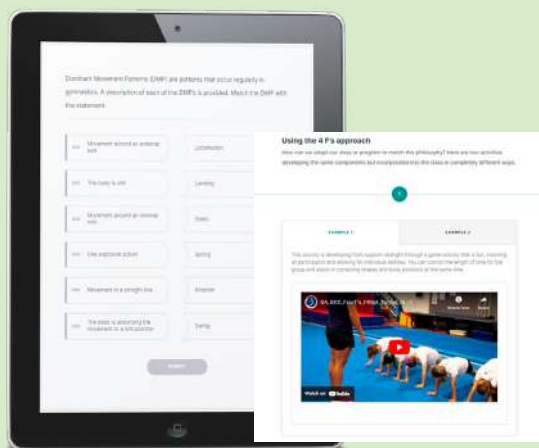
Gymnastics for All Education in Australia

Fundamental Gymnastics Course

Gymnastics Australia's new Fundamental Gymnastics Coaching course was created as a first step in a way to rethinking gymnastics coaching education. It provides the foundational knowledge needed for an individual to coach Gymnastics for All. The online course prepares coaches to work with beginner participants, teaching fundamental movement skills in a safe and fun environment.



The following activities are some of the many interactive tasks embedded in the course to engage trainees and test their knowledge of the material.



The response to these new education practices has been overwhelmingly positive, laying the groundwork for coaches to excel in Gymnastics for All coaching. Following a debrief with new trainee coaches aged 15 to 17, it was discovered that, despite only two weeks of learning and coaching experience, the seven coaches' understanding of working with children, enhancing participant engagement, and child-centered teaching strategies was astounding.

Social Learning Platform

The introduction of an online community space where coaches can share their experiences, ask questions, and gain professional help from other coaches all over Australia is a key component of the Fundamental Gymnastics Coaching course.

Throughout the course, coaches are encouraged to discuss their thoughts on the course content. Coaches can share their thoughts on what it means to be a fair and inclusive coach, using each other's responses to better understand how to prepare to welcome children of varying abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and ethnicities.



This aspect of the course allows trainee coaches to learn from coaches from other clubs and promotes the practice of ongoing upskilling. As demonstrated, coaches can respond to and reflect on the responses of others.



On-Job Learning

Gymnastics Australia's coaching education now includes On the Job Learning, a component designed to make learning more effective and to encourage the development of coaches as lifelong learners.

On the Job Learning supplements the theory content from the Fundamental Gymnastics online course with exercises which integrate theory into coaching practice. The On the Job Learning curriculum is divided into six modules: Coaching Philosophy, Coach Role and Responsibilities, Who you Coach, Where you Coach, What you Coach, How you Coach, and How you Improve.



Analysis of lesson plans for opportunities to embed the “Five Fs” and analysis of fundamental movement skills to identify fundamental shapes, Gymnastics Movement Patterns, relevant physical preparation, and skill progressions are among the activities coaches engage with in On the Job Learning. Participant-centered teaching strategies, such as group discussions on behavioural expectations, athlete-centered coaching, and designing a welcoming and inclusive environment for young participants, are also part of On the Job Learning.

According to feedback from a pilot club, the club had become a learning environment for the trainee coaches as a result of the On the Job learning, and they had become much more curious about their own coaching. Instead of viewing their learning as complete after a one-day workshop, they've begun to view their coaching sessions as learning opportunities, questioning how they could do things better and what they could try next.

Athlete-Centered Learning

Participant-centered coaching is emphasised in the Fundamental Gymnastics Coaching course. A participant centered coaching style is concerned with overall growth. This means that the coach focuses on emotional and social development as well as physical and intellectual development. Participants' motivation improves when coaches encourage their autonomy. Giving participants a chance to be heard and make choices, even if it's only between two options, feels better than being told what to do all the time.



Making participants feel like they belong and are not isolated because they are unfamiliar with physical activity or are afraid of trying new things improves their motivation and performance, and they will want to return to class after class.



A club's feedback indicated that a coach was having difficulty with a disengaged participant who simply did not want to be there. Using one of our new On The Job exercises, the coach was able to get to know the participant, what they like to do at school, what they like to do at home, and so on. The coach noticed that the participant was obsessed with dinosaurs, so the next session was themed around dinosaurs. The participants' engagement with the class completely changed. They not only participated in every activity, but they now return to gymnastics lessons excited and enthusiastic.

DORNBIRN WORLD GYMNAESTRADA

having a community engagement

Nina Amann | Thomas Bachmann

To understand how a World Gymnaestrada could ever take place in a city like Dornbirn, we have to go back in time – to a meeting in the mid-nineties between **Ernst Mathis**, the then-president of the Gymnastics Federation of Vorarlberg, the most-western province in Austria and **Erwin Reis**, at that time head of the sports department within the city of Dornbirn. Ernst Mathis had written down a concept how a World Gymnaestrada with 20,000+ participants could be hosted within such a rural area as Vorarlberg with less than 400,000 inhabitants - and Dornbirn as the biggest potential host city in the area having less than 50,000 inhabitants at that time.



The idea of Mr. Mathis to turn an obvious drawback into THE key factor for the success of such an event was the birth of the so-called „**National Villages**“: around 20 villages with small distances between them, most of them being connected by a capable public transport system (railway line and numerous bus lines) should be used for the accommodation of thousands of participants in schools. Such de-centralisation should also be visible in the sports area - with

a substantial number of city performance areas located outside of Dornbirn, bringing the World Gymnaestrada even closer to the local population. Such extra effort should be put on the shoulders of the local gymnastics clubs, knowing that Vorarlberg with its almost 40 clubs and more than 10,000 members could play a key role in the search for thousands of volunteers needed to organise and carry out such a big sports event.

Erwin Reis, a highly engaged sports manager with an excellent network, instantly believed in the success of the concept and initiated the application process for Dornbirn to host the World Gymnaestrada in 2003. While such bid got lost against Lisbon, the second attempt turned out to be successful – even against such big names as Amsterdam and Brussels.

Success of the World Gymnaestrada

The concept paper of Mr. Mathis had one prominent example: the 8th World Gymnaestrada which had taken place in Herning/Denmark in 1987. Just like Dornbirn, Herning didn't have the entire specific infrastructure (e.g. an efficient subway system and/or numerous tram connections, a big exhibition centre, various indoor arenas with substantial capacity as well as a major sports stadium) of a big European city like Vienna, Berlin or Zurich – all of them having hosted a World Gymnaestrada prior to Herning.

The key idea of Mr. Mathis was the involvement and the motivation of the local gymnastics clubs to organise National Villages where participants could not only expect a proper accommodation in school facilities, a satisfactory connection to the main performance areas and a qualified information desk. On top of that each and every participant should experience an extra-ordinary hospitality by the local community, outstanding support services by thousands of volunteers and a highly personal treatment throughout the entire duration of the World Gymnaestrada.

To put the unique commitment in numbers: in total around 9,000 volunteers were engaged in 2019 - 1,500 of them were involved in the main sports venues and around 7,500 volunteers took care of the participants at their National Villages. An impressive comparison in this respect: With a total number of 18,000 participants and 9,000 volunteers at hand this means that for every two participants there was one volunteer available – probably one of the most significant evidences for the outstanding empathy that could be experienced at such event. And almost all of the volunteers were local ones while only a very small number of volunteers (mainly due to specific skills like foreign languages) were engaged from abroad.

Another success story: Knowing that Dornbirn would be hosting the World Gymnaestrada a second time, it had never been the intention of CEO Erwin Reis and his team to gain a new record in active participants in 2019. Instead, it

had been much more interesting to bring new countries to Austria and thus, to strengthen the diversity of the participating nations. The internal goal was set to welcome more than 60 nations and quite a few actions were taken to achieve such ambitious target, one of them being the „host loaf“. Thereby, more than 30 local bakeries were selling specially created bread for almost 2.5 years across 120 stores whereby for every single bread a small amount was automatically donated to the so-called „Rainbow project“ fund. Via such fund gymnasts from less wealthy countries were financially supported enabling them to participate in the World Gymnaestrada for the very first time.



Additionally numerous trips were made by several LOC members in the run-up to the event to promote the participation at the 16th World Gymnaestrada – knowing that the registration for such event is not happening by itself, but requires proactive action. In fact a regular exchange with delegations is absolutely necessary and must be developed in order to maintain contacts over the years. The result of such efforts: participants from 65 (!) nations were marching in at the opening ceremony, 12 nations even participated in Dornbirn for the very first time at a World Gymnaestrada – mission accomplished!

Organization of a local committee with broad participation from the local community

A small team around Marie-Louise Hinterauer (president of the Local Organising Committee/LOC), Monika Reis (president of the gymnastics federation of Vorarlberg) and Erwin Reis (LOC chief executive officer) – who were previously in leading positions at the 2007 edition of the World Gymnaestrada in Dornbirn – had already been formed at the official award ceremony and the announcement during the 15th World Gymnaestrada in Helsinki, Finland.

Having returned from Helsinki, the „old team“ from 2007 was enthusiastic about the chance to host such event a second time while having the possibility to make use of the experience gained only twelve years ago. This team of true experts was completed by young, dynamic, inquisitive and innovative people bringing some fresh wind.

The full responsibility for the organisation of the [World Gymnaestrada 2019](#) was on the shoulders of the Austrian Gymnastics Federation (ÖFT), as they acted together with the FIG as contract partner. In addition, a contract was entered between the Austrian Gymnastics Federation and the Vorarlberg Gymnastics Federation (VTS) which commissioned the VTS with the operative management of the event.

In cooperation with the VTS, the World Gymnaestrada 2019 non-profit limited liability company was founded as a further executive organ in the city of Dornbirn. The responsibilities and tasks were clearly determined in advance, always focusing on „the big picture“. The VTS, for example, was in charge of the sports events, like the Opening Ceremony, Dornbirn Special and Closing Ceremony, just to name a few, whereas the World Gymnaestrada company has been responsible for countries acquisition as well as logistics terms. The importance of a close working together and regular updates are self-explanatory. The VTS in cooperation with this company formed the main body of the operative management of such project – the LOC. Such committee consisted of various departments (e.g. accommodation & catering, transportation, sports infrastructure & technics), the heads of which had been responsible of forming their own working groups.

The basis for the realisation and implementation of an event of this size wouldn't have been conceivable without partners from the local gymnastics movement. The local gymnastics clubs and all of their numerous voluntary members and helpers were the heart of such festival and essential for the implementation of this big event. They once again ensured that – even more than at the premiere in 2007 – the World Gymnaestrada was a unique and unforgettable experience for each and everyone involved.

Engagement of the local community

Knowing that 20,000+ participants will be noticed and felt within a city with around 50,000 inhabitants (in terms of more people on the streets/ in public transport/ in recreational facilities/ in tourism areas, more events, more activities) it was essential from the very beginning to involve the local community and to „prepare“ it for the upcoming event. In this respect the concept of creating the so-called „National Villages“ in 2007 was retained in 2019, which proved once again to be a huge success.

All participants from the same country were – wherever this was possible – accommodated together in the same village/city. This was of great benefit for all participants, the group leaders and the Heads of Delegation as the closeness allowed easy and fast communication among each other. Also the hosting clubs and the local population tried their very best to provide a warm welcome to „their“ arriving nation by creating and putting up posters in the corresponding language for example and to make their stay as enjoyable and rememberable as possible. At the same time, each and every National Village was filled with energy and colour, brought by the participants.



Friendships and personal relationships were formed between the participants and their hosts, making their stay a very special experience. Even special requests of the participating nations regarding their desired accommodation were taken into account as far as possible. Due to the friendships having been formed in 2007 it was a „return to old friends“ for many gymnasts coming back to „their“ National Village.

Actually, such warm welcome could be experienced by all the participants from the very beginning of their stay as all of the national villages had organised welcome parties for the arrival week-end. Such events turned out to be perfect „ice-breakers“ as the local community got to meet their temporary fellow citizens while the gymnasts could promote their upcoming performances at the Trade Exhibition centre or at an open-air stage.

To name just one of the numerous highlights in this respect: For many participants the walk from the Trade Exhibition Centre to the stadium Birkenwiese prior to the Opening Ceremony was a moment that gave them the goosebumps when countless national flags could be noticed on locals' balconies, participants were celebrated and invited for a drink, spontaneous barbecues were organised and everybody was given a very personal and emotional welcome!

Another decision derived from 2007: Knowing that Dornbirn with its Trade Exhibition Centre and the stadium Birkenwiese would anyhow be „the“ hotspot of the World Gymnaestrada, all of the open-air stages for city performances were situated outside of Dornbirn, thus bringing such event even closer to the local population. Again, no less than eight stages were set-up – and just like in 2007, they were crowded from day one onwards. The atmosphere was overwhelming as the positive spirit of all the participating groups was very well received by the local population which could not only enjoy more than 400 City



Performances, but also numerous presentations of local (sports) clubs, live concerts, DJ sets etc. until late night. Such combination of sports, music and catering at National Villages' hotspots proved to be the perfect frame conditions for a both unique and memorable get-together of all the international participants and the local population.

Legacy of the event to the city

The two World Gymnaestradas definitely had a substantial impact on Dornbirn as the host city as well as the entire province of Vorarlberg – not only how such area was perceived from thousands of participants from around the globe before compared to after the event, but also how the local community was assessing itself. Before the event for many participants Dornbirn was barely known and most probably quite a number of gymnasts had to search for it on the map prior

to their arrival. After the event everybody was thrilled by the unique atmosphere and the outstanding hospitality and not only CEO Erwin Reis compared the duration of the World Gymnaestrada in Dornbirn with „a week in paradise“.

The local population was proud of the great job of the key players within the LOC, of their very capable gymnastics clubs, of the outstanding commitment of thousands of volunteers – and last but not least of themselves as they were praised to the skies by the participants for their enthusiasm, their openness and their helpfulness in so many ways.

The sheer size of the World Gymnaestrada also proved what a comparatively small region was capable of doing: Whether it was the necessity of accommodating more than 13,000 participants in more than 70 schools, the setting-up of a highly efficient public transport system within the entire National Villages area, the daily catering of more than 13,000 participants at one central area for lunch – to name but a few of the biggest challenges.

Additional legacies of the two World Gymnaestradas include

- A new sports hall which was built up in the trade exhibition centre prior to the first World Gymnaestrada in 2007;
- The continuous upgrade of the public transport system in Vorarlberg in recent years whereby the experience of both World Gymnaestradas was seen as a „best practise model“;
- The high reputation of gymnastics in general and of the skills and professionalism of many regional gymnastics clubs in particular;
- The extraordinary awareness of a non-competitive amateur sports event while the sports scenery in Vorarlberg seemed to focus on football or skiing and on international championships, titles and world records – till the World Gymnaestrada filled both local TV stations and newspapers with content!
- And substantially less persuasion of media people, sponsors or local authorities in the run-up to the World Gymnaestrada 2019 compared to the 2007 edition - which was very well received as a delayed gratification by the LOC.





ASIAN GYMNAESTRADA

Araki Tatsuo

Until this century, there was very little Gymnastics for All activity across Asia, other than the isolated long GfA history in Japan. The election of Araki Tatsuo in 2001 as the Asian Gymnastics Union GfA President saw the beginning of an era of development.

From this time, Araki was able to support, educate and develop a better understanding of the range of possibilities within GfA from the starting point of Artistic Gymnastics. At the AGU General Meeting in 2002, Araki reported on the FIG World Gymnaestrada and requested that a GfA Festival be held in an Asian country. He presented a set of conditions for the festival:



**A location in the
centre of Asia**



**Low cost for
participation and
accommodation**

As a result, Thailand requested to hold the first Asian GfA Festival in Chiang Mai city. Since then, the Asian Gymnaestrada has been held five times in three different countries with a sixth instalment planned for Mongolia in August 2024.

1ST ASIAN GYMNAESTRADA

Location:

Chiang Mai, Thailand

Dates:

February 28 - 29,
2004

Participating countries:

Thailand, Japan,
Myanmar, Qatar, Korea

Participants:

600 people



2ST ASIAN GYMNAESTRADA

Location:	Dates:	Participating countries:	Participants:
Hong Kong, China	May 28, 2005	Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia	600 people



3ST ASIAN GYMNAESTRADA

Location:

Hong Kong, China

Dates:

May 22 - 23, 2010

Participating countries:

China/Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Sri Lanka, Kingdom of Thailand, Uzbekistan, Mongolia

Participants:

1,100 people



4ST ASIAN GYMNAESTRADA

Location:	Dates:	Participating countries:	Participants:
Singapore	November 2 - 3 2013	Singapore, Japan, Korea, China/Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Qatar, Israel, Germany	650 people



5ST ASIAN GYMNAESTRADA

Location:

Qingdao, China

Dates:

September
21 – 22, 2016

Participating countries:

China, Japan, Korea,
Finland, Australia,
Malaysia, Hong Kong

Participants:

10,700 people
Gala Show
audience 12,000



The AGU GfA Committee has aims for future development of the Asian Gymnaestrada and to advance GfA within all Asian countries.

Future Asian Gymnaestrada development plans

The GfA committee aim to ease the conditions for participation by reducing the cost of participation and accommodation fees. The program of the Asian Gymnaestrada will include opportunities for participants to learn about the culture of the host country.

Future AGU/GfA Tasks

In order to promote GfA across the continent, national GfA committees have been established in each Asian country. The GfA committee aims to promote exercise programs for people's health in Asian countries instead of emphasizing only festivals. International exchanges are to be created to actively promote GfA throughout Asia as well as in Europe and other countries.

6th ASIAN GYMNAESTRADA
"INTERNATIONAL GYMNASTICS FESTIVAL"
ULAANBAATAR MONGOLIA
24th-26th AUGUST 2024

PARTICIPANT WRISTBAND \$200.00
 The Participant Wristband for the 6th Asian Gymnaestrada - "International Gymnastics Festival - 2024" includes the following:

- The Opening ceremony in the Buyant-Ukhaa Sport Palace
- General access to the Sport Palace
- Gala Performances
- All bus transports
- 1-day sightseeing tour to Gorkhi-Terelj national park: Genghis Khan Statue Complex, Great Mongol Empire Museum, 13th Century Nomadic camp-Mongolian Traditional Culture and Arts concert

AGU
 ASIAN GYMNASTICS UNION

AGU
 6th ASIAN GYMNAESTRADA 2024

SHIHED VAL
 IN USHE
 MONGOLIA





LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCES

Slovak experience

Emília Fialová | Monika Šišková

The very rich history of Group Performances and Large Group Performances in former Czechoslovakia, later Slovakia, gives the strong base for our current creation of Large Group Performances presented mainly at World Gymnaestradas and Sokol Slets.

The roots go back to the middle of the 19th century – to the year 1862, when the SOKOL (Falcon) organisation was founded in Prague, Czech Republic by Miroslav Tyrš. It is important to write that at this time, Czechia and Slovakia were part of the Austrian – Hungarian Monarchy as two different regions. Sokol was a multisport organisation based on antic principals of “A healthy mind in a healthy body” which offered opportunity for healthy exercises for all people regardless of their social status in society. Sokol was not only a sport organisation, but a very important and equal part was patriotism and social and cultural activities. In this time the first Terminology in Czech language was created (1862), the terminology is used until now.



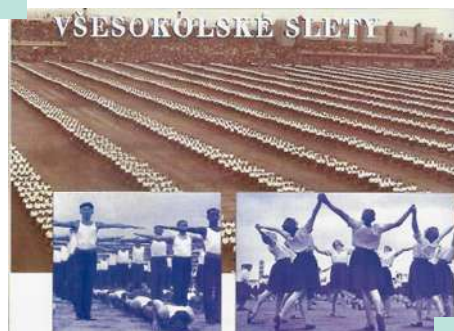
Adolf Liebscher: První sokolský slet na Střeleckém ostrově 1882



First Sokol Slet at Střelecký ostrov in 1882



VŠESOKOLSKÉ SLETY



Sokol Slet 1907

From the beginning, women were active and involved in the physical and sport movement. In 1869 a special organisation was founded for girls and women and in 1870 the first public presentation of Large Group Performance was presented. In 1901, 867 women presented the first large group performance during IV. Sokol Slet, and from 1914 women became lawful members of Sokol.



1. sletové vystoupení žen - 1901

1st women's performance at Sokol Slet in 1901

HISTORY OF SOKOL MOVEMENT – SOKOL SLETS

Slet Nr.	Year	Place	Participants	Spectators	Nr.of Clubs/members
I.	1882	Střelecký ostrov	1720	3420	86 / 7 812
II.	1891	Královská obora	2 473	7000	229 / 24 268
III.	1895	Letenská pláň	5 000	30 000	350 / 36 000
IV.	1901	Letná	9 560	50 000	571 / 57 226
V.	1907	Letná	12 900	200 000	710 / 90 000
VI.	1912	Letná	32 527	300 000	1 026 / 100 000
VII.	1920	Letná	100 000	500 000	2 629 / 500 000
VIII.	1926	Strahov	143 863	800 000	3 134 / 548 885
IX.	1932	Strahov	188 004	1 000 000	3 150 / 704 185
X.	1938	Strahov	348 086	2 300 000	3 337 / 818 188
XI.	1948	Strahov	585 000	2 000 000	3 367 / 1 004 987

Membership in Sokol:

1882	86 clubs	7812 members
1918	Czechoslovakia was founded	
1948	3367 clubs	1 million members
(every 15th citizen in Czechoslovakia was a member of Sokol)!		

February 1948 – change of political system

Unified Physical and sport organisation under leadership of Communist party. Communist cooperated with Sokol from the beginning, but cooperation did not last very long. After XI. Sokol slet they realised that cooperation was not possible. The ideology behind Sokol movement was too far away from the communist philosophy and ideology.

The Communists created a new demonstration of a healthy nation: Spartakiada. The first edition was held in 1955 in Prague as a celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCES IN COMMUNIST TIME: SPARTAKIADAS



Large group performance in 1985 at Spartakiada

Sokol slets versus Spartakiadas – Similar or different?

Similar:

- **Same place** (Strahov stadium built by sokols 1926)
- **Large group performances:** choreography, rehearsals, organisation of event
- **Experts** (choreographers, coaches, leaders) educated by Sokol

Different:

- **Spartakiadas** were financed by the government

XI Sokol slets	6 Spartakiadas	XII.	XIII.	XIV.	XV.	XV.
1882 – 1948	1955, 1960, 1965, 1975, 1980, 1985	1994	2000	2006	2012	2012
Spartakiada 1970 was cancelled due to the Russian Army invasion of Czechoslovakia.						

LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCES IN PRESENT TIME: CREATIVE WORK

The Slovak Republic was founded in 1993 – and the Slovak Gymnastics Federation is a governing body for all gymnastics disciplines in Slovakia. During communist times all kinds of Sport for All activities were associated under a special organisation, including Gymnastics for All. GfA was included in the Slovak Gymnastics Federation in 1997.

Participation at World Gymnaestrada as Slovak Republic:

1999 Goteborg	
2003 Lisbon	
2007 Dornbirn	
2011 Lausanne	Large Group Performance: Let's go Slovakia
2015 Helsinki	Large Group Performance: We (mothers) & We (daughters)
2019 Dornbirn	Large Group Performance: Together (Czech and Slovakia)
2023 Amsterdam	Large Group Performance: Que Sera Sera



Large Group Performance We & We

Main Characteristics of Large Group Performance:

- 1. Large number of performers
- 2. Optimal movement content
- 3. Expressive spatial choreography

Large Group Performance as a system

- 1. Subject (choreographer)
- 2. Object (gymnasts)
- 3. Project (composition)
- 4. Conditions (rehearsals, material and financial conditions)

LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCE: WE (MOTHERS) & WE (DAUGHTERS)

Analysis:

1. Subject (choreographer or team of choreographers)

During the creative process the team of choreographers have different tasks – idea, selection of motion, motif - movements, selection of music, rehearsal and realization of performance.

The creative process process is a combination of physical and intellectual efforts of choreographers.

2. Object (gymnasts)

Gymnasts realise choreographer´s ideas. Choreographers can create everything, but gymnasts according to their skills development can realise only part of it.

It is important to know from the beginning:

Large Group Performance: We & We

Number of gymnasts	288
Gender	women
Age category	adults and seniors
Movement skills and movement maturity	Basic

Is very important to find optimal movement content – modern, progressive forms which meet formative and aesthetic norms.

The movements have to realise all gymnasts on requested level (chain is as strong as the weakest link).

The selected movements have to still be interesting for advanced gymnasts!

3. Project (composition)

2 components:

Content

(Idea, movement, apparatus, music)

Idea: can't be formal, has to follow whole performance from the beginning until the end.

Formal part

(Structure of performance, movement motif, Formations, Non-physical means – dress for gymnasts, spoken words, video-projection, lighting)



Idea: We are as we are. We mothers and we daughters. We are special, we are different. What we have in common is the joy of movement, joy of dance. This is what we want to give you by our performance and we believe our enthusiasm and positive energy will be passed on to the audience!

To this intention we subordinate the choice of movement and hand apparatus: a ball wrapped in a strip of fabric and white removable scarf.

Age difference was expressed in a part of performance where mothers perform using both scarves and daughters had a challenging exercise with two balls.

The end of performance had dance and a joyful character that pointed to the common joy of movement from the Idea of Performance.

Movement

Different forms of gymnastics:

(aerobic gymnastics, dance, acrobatic gymnastics)

Apparatus

- No apparatus
- With hand apparatus
- Creative apparatus
- Big apparatus

Music

Is not only about connection of music with movement, music defines the time from beginning to the end, also brings emotional and aesthetic value.

Selection of music has to be appropriate to the age category, level of gymnasts, main idea.

For teenagers it is difficult to slow down the tempo, for seniors it is difficult to perform in a fast rhythm.

Music also fulfils an aesthetic and educational function. Its artistic value must excite not only performers but also the audience.

Large Group Performance: We & We (worldwide hits – Black Eyed Peas, Milk & Sugar vs. Vaya con Dios, Madonna)

Formal part:

After choosing the content, the appropriate form is chosen, while the content must have a dominant position.

Components of Formal Part:

- Structure of performance
- Motor Units
- Formations

Non-physical means

Structure of performance:

Is based on selection of music, which is strictly compositionally divided. Change of formation can't be at the beginning of new part in music, the best time is the pause or you can use end of previous part.

Marching in – can be part of the performance or not.

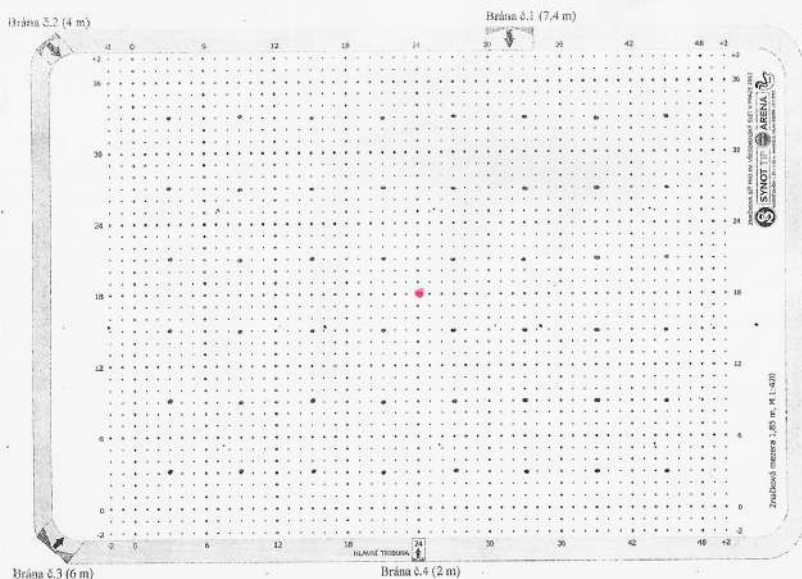
Motor Units:

The smallest building unit is a movement motif, which must be identical with a musical one. Movement motif can be repeated, developed, shortened, split. Thus form, spatial, rhythmical and dynamic connections are created.

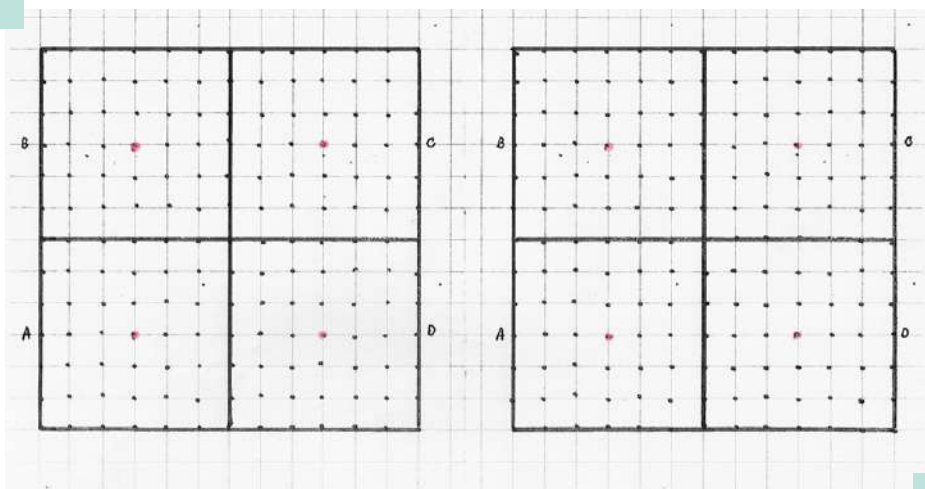
Formations:

For a large number of gymnasts special orientation play an important role.

In order to facilitate the work for choreographers but specially for gymnasts we use marks which range from 185 cm to 200 cm. For a football stadium we can use 48 marks horizontally and 36 vertically. Marks of the multiple of 6 are larger. It is very useful to also differentiate central mark of a small square. It is absolutely important to start with mark number 0, so that there is an odd number of marks and the centre mark 24/18 is in the centre of the area.



With this we divide the area into small squares 6 x 6 marks with sign A, B, C, D. For small squares create 1 big square. This marking will simplify the implementation and training of changing formations.



The number of gymnasts can be the same as the number of marks, or less, which allows for a more creative approach when solving space.

The gymnasts move in a small square, where position changes can be solved. More difficult changes are in the big square and the most demanding is the full-length choreography, which we recommend at the end of the performance.



Non-physical means:

Dress for gymnasts, spoken words, video-projection, lighting etc.

The choice of exercise clothing should be functional and must also meet aesthetic requirements.

REALIZATION OF LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCE

An important moment in the realization of the composition is the interest of the gymnasts in the practice. Once the participants identify with the choreography success is guaranteed and the performance has a lot of expressive value.

Realisation and its steps:

1. Description of performance (movement and space)
2. Video instruction
3. Rehearsal of performance led by choreographers – leaders of different groups, clubs
4. Rehearsal of performance in basic squares led by leaders of groups
5. Control rehearsals led by head of choreography
6. Rehearsal together for more basic squares
7. Rehearsal for All gymnasts together, including marching in and out

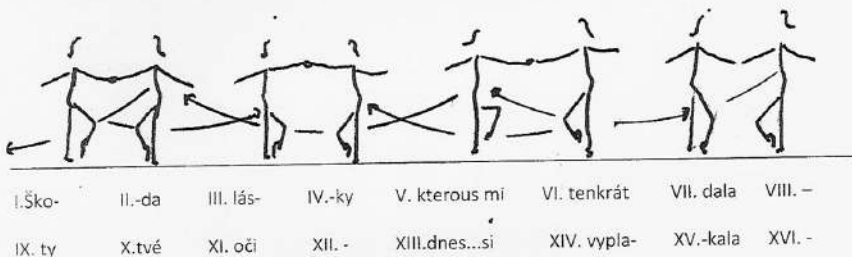
Description of performance (movement and space)

Vetac- 32 2/4t.

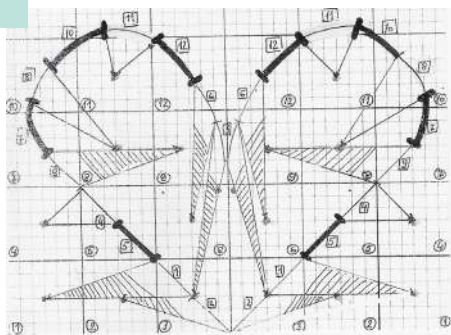
V prvej polovici tejto vety cvičenci vykonajú prepleťanie dvojíc po obvode striedavo von a dnu (**obr.č. 5**).

ZP: Stoj spätný - predpažiť pravou. Dvojice stoja čelom oproti sebe a držia sa za ruky.

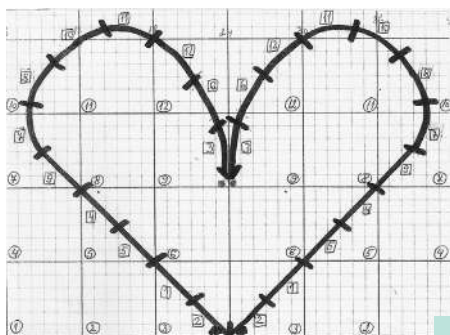
I.-XVI. 1.-32. Polkový krok opakovane, začať pravou – striedavo predpažiť pravou (uchopiť sa za ruky), zapaziť ľavou. V ďalšom takte vymeniť polohu paží.



Example of description of movement



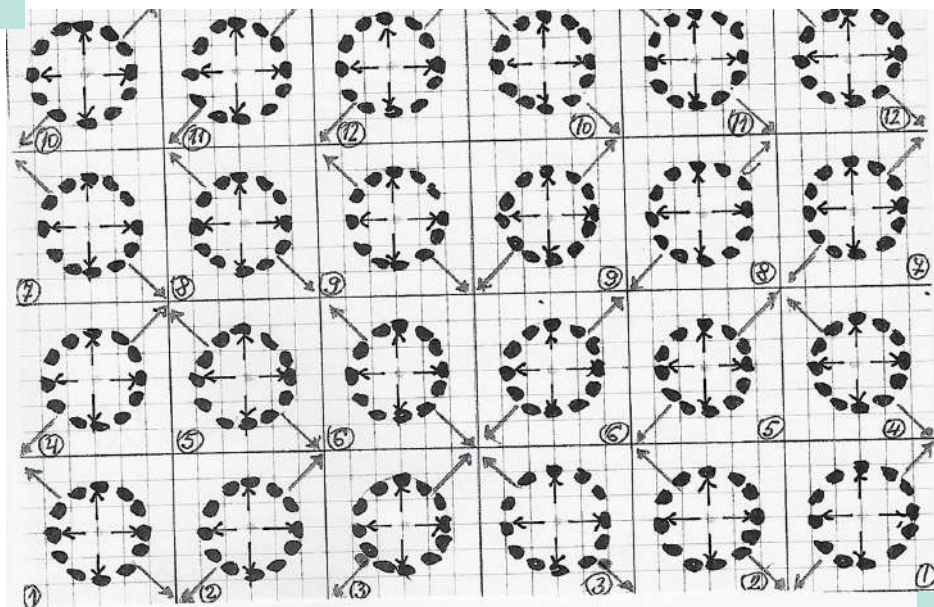
Position of gymnasts and clubs on performance area



Change of formation - movement of gymnasts



Watch the video showing the formation



New formation

This was and still is our Slovak journey. Main choreographer Emilia Fialová wrote her experiences from her whole life involvement in the creative work of Large Group Performance choreography.

At the age of 84, she is still active and she has prepared the choreography and led the rehearsal of the Large Group Performance for the World Gymnaestrada in Amsterdam and she is preparing a new choreography for Sokol Slet in 2024 in Prague.





HISTORY OF GFA IN THE OCEANIA GYMNASTICS UNION

Kim Richardson

Founding of the Oceania Gymnastics Union

The Oceania Gymnastics Union is the newest continental union within FIG, formally recognised in September 2018 after the Oceania Gymnastics Development Plan brought an idea into life.

The Oceania Gymnastics Development Plan was an initiative of Gymnastics Australia (GA) in partnership with Gymnastics New Zealand (GNZ) to establish gymnastics in the Oceania region with the intent to formally constitute an Oceania Gymnastics Union. This project would not have been possible without the financial support of the International Gymnastics Federation. The plan was to develop gymnastics in the schools and communities of countries in the Oceania region, leading to the formation of national gymnastics federations, recognised by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG).

According to the Olympic Charter:

“The Olympic flag includes the five interlaced rings, which represent the union of the five continents and the meeting of athletes from throughout the world at the Olympic Games.”

There were previously four Continental Unions recognised by the FIG: Europe, Pan America, Africa and Asia. Until December 2018 there was no formally constituted Continental Union for the Oceania region in the same way as the other four continents.

Oceania includes Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, but of those, prior to 2015 only Australia and New Zealand were affiliated members of FIG. Countries participating in the first stage of the Oceania Development Plan were American Samoa, Fiji, Cook Islands and Guam. Each country is unique in its culture, and in the level of gymnastics participation. American Samoa had no

previous gymnastics participation and the Sports Commissioner saw the benefits gymnastics could provide as a foundation for other sports. Guam had established gymnastics programs, with high level gymnasts and experienced coaches, and had not yet become a member of FIG. Fiji had recently been introduced to gymnastics and numbers have been growing steadily. Cook Islands had a long history of gymnastics participation and a desire to re-establish the national body.



In October 2016 American Samoa, Fiji and Cook Islands were all officially recognised and ratified as full member federations of the FIG. Stages two and three of the Oceania Development Plan saw Tonga, Papua New Guinea and Samoa introduced and finally, Vanuatu will be included in development activities. Tonga and Papua New Guinea Gymnastics Federations were accepted as Provisional FIG members in May 2018, bringing the total Oceania Gymnastics FIG member federations to seven.



The focus of the Oceania Gymnastics Development Plan was to promote to the Oceania region gymnastics as the Fundamental Movement Program for all children, with a strong message that gymnastics is truly a “Sport for All” that can be practised in many ways and by all ages and abilities.

Gymnastics also offers a pathway to international competition. Development activities have included coach and judge education, teacher in-servicing, “come & try” gymnastics sessions and clinics for gymnasts with some experience. Additionally, board governance mentoring and administrator training are important components of establishing sustainable federations. The Oceania Gymnastics Development Plan has been underway for four years. With funding from The International Gymnastics Federation, Brooke Kneebush coordinated activities based at the GA office. From GNZ, Education Administrator Tas Evans also contributed her wealth of knowledge and experience.

In September 2018, the founding General Assembly of the Oceania Gymnastics Union (OGU) was held in Auckland, New Zealand, chaired by FIG Secretary General, Andre Gueisbuhler. The Constitution of the OGU was approved and directors from the seven member federations appointed. Kitty Chiller (AUS) was elected President, Raukura Ellison (COK) was elected Vice President and Brooke Kneebush (AUS) was appointed Secretary General.

Development of Gymnastics for All within OGU

Prior to 2016, GA & GNZ conducted GfA programs and events alongside everyday operations. Australia conducted multiple GfA events during this time and has participated in the World Gymnaestrada since 1987. The International Gymfest and Australian Gym for Life contest were held in Sydney 2012. New Zealand held a Pacific Gymfest & first participated in the World Gymnaestrada in 2007.

The Gymnastics Federation of Fiji (GFF) alongside the Pacific Sports Partnership Program (PSP) conducted the AeroGym program to improve health related behaviours through participation in regular exercise and build leadership capacity of women. This program is still conducted today and has been hugely successful.



2019 saw some major development in GfA programs within the region. The first OGU team participated in the World Gymnaestrada in Dornbin, Austria. **Teams from Australia, Fiji & Tonga attended the event.** This was a huge achievement for the continental union that was less than one year old.



The Gymnastics Federation of American Samoa (GFAS) in collaboration with the Department of Youth and Women's Affairs (DYWA) conducted three rounds of the Activate program initiative hosted at the DYWA Gym with over 30 children aged 4 to 17.

Island Twisters Gymnastics in Guam also held the Micronesia Mall Gymnastics Demonstration. More than 120 gymnasts participated, performing gymnastics routines and demonstrating their flexibility and tumbling skills. Gymnasts also

participated in an obstacle course, which included vaulting over a trapezoid vault and jumping in the air off a mini trampoline, demonstrating different kinds of jumps and flips. Advanced gymnasts ended the performance with a team gymnastics dance



The Pacific Sports Program funded program led by Oceania Badminton in partnership with Papua New Guinea Gymnastics Federation (PNGGF) conducted its GymBad Program. This program provides inclusive activities for people with disabilities with up to 70 participants attending weekly sessions across multiple locations to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Sessions focus on social interaction/combined inclusive adapted programs.

Tonga Gymnastics Federation (TGF) hosted activities for a group of kindergartens' annual Sports Day competition, alongside other local sporting groups who also participated. The Cook Islands Gymnastics Federation (CIGF) also saw the introduction of FreeG program at Tereora College.



Before the world shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Guam was officially endorsed by the FIG & became the 8th OGU Federation. During the pandemic, participation in GfA continued virtually in the federations as much as the local restrictions would allow.

Once the world started to slowly open up, the CIGF successfully delivered their first ever program alongside Autism Cook Islands. Their GymSchools program and recreational gymnastics, saw an increase in participation, despite Covid-19 continuing to impact life. In Fiji, the AeroGym Showcases were hosted and conducted by GFF outside the capital of Suva, in Lautoka and Labasa for the first time.

Activities in Papua New Guinea were very limited in the first year of the pandemic. However, the PSP/PNGGF Program, GymBad, continued limited sessions within Port Moresby at minimum level for a couple of government schools and disability facilities. Once training in Tonga recommenced, the Federation celebrated by conducting a small showcase opportunity for participants to demonstrate their skills to family and friends.

2021 was a turbulent year for most federations with governments' pandemic situations frequently changing and evolving. While Federations planned for GfA programs and events to take place, they were sometimes changed to become virtual events or completely cancelled due to the local pandemic restrictions. However, OGU in conjunction with GA, hosted an online meeting 'Welcome to the Gymnaestrada' with special guest, FIG GfA Committee President, Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist. This virtual meeting was attended by 50 people, representing all OGU Federations.

With life within gymnastics finally getting back to a new normal, Australia hosted their national Gym for Life Challenge, TeamGym and FreeG events in September on the Gold Coast as part of their National Clubs Carnival in 2022. Australia and the Cook Islands had participants at the FIG GfA Colloquium held in Lausanne, Switzerland. OGU, Australia and the Cook Islands also had participants at the most recent FIG GfA Colloquium in Athens, Greece.

Australia, Fiji and New Zealand will participate in the 2023 World Gymnaestrada in Amsterdam, Netherlands as part of an Oceania Combined Team, managed by the OGU.



WHY SHOULD YOU DEFINITELY READ THIS BOOK?

"Gymnastics for All (GfA) combines various forms of Gymnastics and blends them with other cultural manifestations. In a free and creative way, GfA respects the unique features of a social group, which helps increase interaction among participants and with society at large."

Professor Jorge Sérgio Pérez Gallardo, Ph.D.

Professor Elizabeth Paoliello, Ph.D.

"The contents describe an excellent insight into the world of Gymnastics for All and show examples of the activities offered by the FIG, Continental Unions and National Federations."

Ruedi Steuri, former FIG GfA C member





“The truly global Gymnastics for All movement and its colourful and exuberant, non-competitive festivals remain an under-researched area, despite their enormous popularity and far-reaching socio-economic, political and cultural impacts. This book makes an important contribution to fill this void. Its focus is on the historical development, philosophy, practice and experiences of those involved. It contains both academic analysis as well as the convincing testimony of performers and administrators, impressive photos and great detailed stories from all over the world that provide some fascinating comparative insights.”

Professor Udo Merkel, PhD

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Gymnastic for All – Committee (GfA C)

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