

BALLET IN RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS: CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT TECHNIQUE AND INSTRUMENTATION FOR THE SPORT

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Abstract

In its historical trajectory, rhythmic gymnastics (RG) has been influenced by Swedish Gymnastics, Dance and Theatrical Arts, being today a sport characterized by a strong artistic and aesthetic appeal. Thus, starting out as field study research, this manuscript aims to bring data, but mainly reflections about the way in which classical ballet classes have been conceived and used in the training of high-performance rhythmic gymnasts. This is field research, with qualitative and quantitative approach (quanti-quali). The sample consisted of nine participants (coaches and / or ballet instructors) who work with athletes in junior and senior categories in the São Paulo State, with indexes in national championships. A questionnaire tool was conducted in the period from May 1st to 15th, 2018, in loco. Data showed that the most used ballet methods are Royal, Vaganova, French and Cuban; that the structure of the classes includes the bar and finalization, and that the planning of ballet classes is collaborative. The main goal of this practice is to learn and improve the implementation of the ballet movements in the RG Code of Points (CoP), and thus, the contents are mostly the higher valued body elements. It was concluded that there is still an accumulation of functions (coach and ballet instructor in one person), a strong influence of the CoP in the training plan of classic ballet classes, which unfortunately reinforces the great instrumentalization of this practice, disregarding its characteristics as an art, and its creative, rhythmic, aesthetic and expressive aspects.

Keywords: *Training, Classical ballet, Dance, Ballet for rhythmic gymnastics.*

INTRODUCTION

Classical ballet (CB) has been a part of rhythmic gymnastics since the artistic approach spurned the sport, after its great and initial influence by Swedish gymnastics and the movements of the time, i.e., rhythmic (Emile Jacques Dalcroze) dance (Isadora Duncan,

Elizabeth Duncan and Rudolf Von Laban) and expressive elements (as Rudolf Bode performed) (Langlade & Langlade, 1970; Bobo, 1998).

Since its advent as a sports practice to the present times, RG continues to be influenced by artistic practices and dance

movements, as a folkloric connotation (Loquet, 2016; Toledo & Antualpa, 2016), or with an avant-garde connotation as modern dance (Velardi & Miranda, 2010). These influences can be identified in the attention paid to the relationship between music and movement as one of its main characteristics. Whether in the training and development of artistic skills (Mullagildina, 2016), or artistic performances delivered by the best athletes, there is a great variability of rhythms and musical styles presented by athletes in the Olympic Games (Toledo, Oliveira, Scarabelim & Assumpção, 2017). Classical ballet, as a manifestation of classical dance, continues to play a major role in RG and is a part of its Code of Points - CoP (FIG, 2021), gymnasts' routines (Furtado, Toledo, Antualpa & Carbinatto, 2020) and their training (Assis, Guiramand, Lourenço, Gaio & Lacerda, 2009), from the beginner to the top performance level (Simões & Dos Anjos, 2010; Loquet, 2016). Undoubtedly, the extensive relationship with dance has become the artistic appeal of the discipline, with greater or lesser emphasis on CoPs (Toledo & Antualpa, 2016), and differentiates it from other more athletic gymnastics branches.

However, there are different classical ballet methods. These methods were developed by ballet schools, which systematized classical ballet rules and established teaching methods following their own style. Among the best known methods are Vaganova, Royal, French, Checetti, Cubano, Bournoville and Balanchine (Agostini, 2010).

For a better understanding of the technical, artistic and aesthetic relationship between practices, the classical ballet methods were ordered according to their name, name origin, characteristics and RG training, based on data described in the scientific literature by the following collective of authors: Sampaio (2001); Assis et al.

(2009); Simões & dos Anjos (2010); Agostini (2010); Antualpa (2011) and Spalato, Toledo, Antualpa & Carbinatto (2015).

According to Agostini (2010), Whiteside & Kelly (2016) and Zeller (2017), classical ballet follows a systematization always organized into two parts: bar (training laterality), and center (training strength and balance); the bar includes stretching, flexibility, strength, agility, explosion and balance exercises, and the center includes exercises of port-de-bras (arm movements), adage (slow movements) and finally the allegros (fast or explosives movements).

In general, there is a strong emphasis in the literature on the importance of classical ballet (CB) in RG training, given the CoP demands, which creates a requirement to perform these movements (many of them even with the same names as in CB) combined with the handling of the apparatus, giving the gymnast's exercises more or less punctuation in their routines.

Certainly, this aspect is relevant, and sometimes even decisive in competitions; however, there still seems to be little appreciation of the artistic aspect of CB, considering how this practice could contribute in the expressive and creative training of the gymnast.

Thus, there is a hypothesis in this research that CB would be a practice widely used for technical purposes, although it could also be designed and used for aesthetic and artistic purposes of the discipline (expressiveness, lightness and refinement of movement), as it facilitates the construction and maturation of the technical issues related to the body elements of the CoP.. In this context, seeking to understand the motivations that bring classical ballet to training sessions in RG, this study aimed to identify the purpose, content, method and organization of CB classes in the training of high-performance gymnasts, from a local study (national) that brings reflections on the

global (international) level, and also to present an overview of how a professional who works in RG can act as a coach, an instructor, or in the dual role. In summary, this manuscript aims to bring data and

reflections about the way in which classical ballet classes have been conceived and used in the training of high-performance rhythmic gymnasts.

Table 1

The classical ballet methods, their name of origin, characteristics and RG training.

Name	Name origin	Characteristics	RG training
Cecchetti	Dance master Enrico Cecchetti.	High difficulty technique, ways to develop quick thinking and structured training planning.	The Cecchetti method requires quick thinking, as it is necessary to apply speed of reasoning, mainly in the apparatus reception, connection of elements, rhythm and changes of direction during the routine
French	Gets its name after its country of origin.	Creation of the five “foot positions” and systematization of the ballet vocabulary in French.	The French method contributed the five “foot positions” that were created to facilitate agility of movements. This is of great importance to some RG elements, such as, for example, the <i>fouetté</i> , which requires agility during the execution of the turn and leg movement.
Vaganova	Student of the Imperial Ballet School of St. Petersburg, Agrippina Yarovlena Vaganova.	Fusion of French and Italian methods, divides <i>allegros</i> into two types, and strong dramatization training.	The Vaganova method connects contributions from the French and Italian methods, and its division of <i>allegros</i> helps with the technique of great jumps in RG. The method also contributed the role of dramatization with a lot of facial expression and interpretation; this artistry is recognised by the CoP and has its own score in the athletes' routines.
Cuban	Gets its name after its country of origin.	Graciousness, creativity, agility in the execution of movements; the Cuban culture inserted dynamics and rhythm in the routines.	The Cuban method contributes to the agility in the routine's execution, develops creativity and adds refinement and lightness of movements. This method inserts some Cuban culture in dance. This characteristic has great importance for the gymnasts' routines, as it helps with the body expression, rhythm, relation to music, movement and improvisation during the routine's execution.
Bournoville	Antoine Bournoville (1760-1843) and Auguste Bournoville - creators of the Royal Danish Theater (RDT).	Choreographies in small spaces and emphasis on male dance, high expressiveness and drama on stage.	The Bournoville method can contribute to the performance of gymnasts' jumps as it is developed for smaller spaces. Makes use of dramatization and facial expression, which can help with the artistic criterion set by the CoP.

Balanchine	Dancer and instructor Georges Balanchine (1904-1983).	Modern ballet, composed of fast and dynamic movements.	The Balanchine method is a modern ballet, very close to contemporary dance, it contributes to body expression, and lightness and speed of movements.
Royal Academy of Dance (RAD)	Legal recognition of The Association of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain (AOD) as the Royal Academy of Dancing, and in 1991; name was changed to Royal Academy of Dance (RAD).	Evolutionary learning stages prioritizing pedagogical progression and appropriation of the level change exam (syllabus) as a strategy for disseminating the method.	The RAD method contributes to the improvements in technique and polishing of movements. However, this method produces more mechanical ballet with little expressiveness.

Characterized as field research, this is a study that "presents itself as a method of choosing and verifying data; it aims to access relevant sources, and, as such, is an integral part of heuristic research" (Sá-Silva & Guindani, 2009, p.13). There was also documentary research (Thomas, Nelson & Silverman, 2015), using the CoP (2017-2020 cycle) as the primary source and documents of the Brazilian Gymnastics Confederation (CBG) available on their website as a secondary source.

In order to select the participants, the classification of the clubs in the state of São Paulo (the state in which Lapegi is located and in which the researchers live) was previously carried out in the All-Around competition of the 2017 Brazilian Rhythmic Gymnastics Championships, in the junior and senior categories (CBG, 2017). As the inclusion criteria, we used the three best ranked clubs from São Paulo state in this championships.

For the study, we conducted interviews with RG coaches and classical ballet instructors who work with the junior and senior teams in the selected clubs. However, in two of these clubs we discovered a coach that also worked as the ballet instructor, and thus we established three professional profiles of our interviewees: RG coaches, ballet instructors, and professionals with dual

role (who combine both functions). Thus, the study sample was made of 9 participants, as detailed in the table below.

The research instrument was a questionnaire, with opened and closed questions in two variants (one for coaches and one for ballet instructors). In the case of the dual role, the same professional answered both variants. The survey was conducted from 1 to 15 May 2018, *in loco*, by the main researcher of the study (first author of this manuscript).

The project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee – University of Campinas (Unicamp - CAAE: 86660518.0.0000.5404).

The questionnaire replies were analyzed using Bardin's (2011) proposal for content analysis, organized in the following way: pre-analysis, which consists of the organization of the document and aims to systematize the initial ideas; exploration of the material, which consisted of categorizing the variables chosen for the analysis in the previous phase; treatment and interpretation of the data obtained. The data were treated using a qualitative and quantitative approach (quanti-quali). This approach is widely used in studies in the humanities, as it allows for a wide understanding of the object of study and is based on the need for the sociocultural

and historical panorama (Sá-Silva & Guindani, 2009, p.13).

Table 2
Clubs and profiles of instructors and coaches.

Club	Ballet instructor	RG Coaches	Dual role (ballet Instructor and RG Coach)
Club	-	1	1
Club	-	1	1
Club	1	4	-
Total:	1	6	2

The qualitative data will be presented in five subdivided blocks (themes), as shown in the table below, and the quantitative data will be presented in graphical format and represented numerically.

Table 3
Data presentation structure.

BLOCK A	Profiles of classical ballet instructors and RG coaches
BLOCK B	The relationship between classical ballet instructors and RG coaches
BLOCK C	Methods used in classical ballet classes
BLOCK D	Classical ballet classes (contents and structures)
BLOCK E	Objectives of classical ballet classes in the training of RG athletes

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As detailed previously, the questionnaire results will be presented by thematic blocks, following the organization logic of the questionnaire itself

BLOCK A - Profiles of classical ballet instructors and RG coaches

From the 9 interviewees, two (from two of the clubs analyzed) acted in the dual role, occupying the position of ballet instructor and coach. This information can help understand the structure of classical ballet classes taught by a person who acts only as an instructor, and the structure of classes taught by a person who acts as a classical ballet instructor and a RG coach.

The dual role is also present in the composition of the technical committee of the current Brazilian RG team (cycle 2017-2021), in which the ballet instructor operates as a coach assistant and choreographer. In contrast, Antualpa (2011) pointed out that in 2010, the Brazilian RG team had a special professional working only as a ballet instructor.

This situation is also present in successful São Paulo clubs that follow the reality of the Brazilian team. Nevertheless, this mainly brings us back to the lack of investment and infrastructure in Brazilian clubs. One professional is overloaded with two functions and may perform in one role worse than in the other (the one with less professional training and experience).

Convergence of roles in high performance gymnastics training is still a reality in many Brazilian clubs, and in the national teams, as well as in other clubs and sports/gymnastics associations in other countries.

Serrão & Tricoli (2005) emphasize the need for a multidisciplinary team that acts in an integrated manner, offering support for different aspects that may influence sports performance. Nunomura & Oliveira

(2012), Schiavon, Paes, Toledo & Deutsch (2013) and Vargas & Capraro (2020) emphasize the importance of multidisciplinary teams in centers of excellence / clubs of artistic gymnastics for women and men that develop the sport both at the grassroots and at the competitive level. With regards to RG, Antualpa (2011) points out that there are professionals from different areas who provide services to the main teams in the country, and also at the training center of the

Brazilian team. However, these studies show that these multidisciplinary teams exist only in the main institutions that train athletes at the national level..

In relation to specialized training in classical ballet and experiences with ballet and ballet courses, the following data were found: 3 respondents who work as ballet instructors have a degree in physical education, one of them has specialized in classical ballet and 2 instructors have classical ballet training. Among RG coaches (6 RG coaches and 2 dual role coaches), 4 coaches have no experience with classical ballet, 1 coach practiced classical ballet as a child, 1 coach as a gymnast and 2 coaches have training and certification in CB (dual role), as shown in Figure 1.

Table 4 presents more clearly reflections on the training of these professionals involved with RG and CB. These data bring light to some reflections due to previous experience of these coaches and instructors, and also due to the training required to work in both areas.

Acting as a sports coach in Brazil, requires (except for exceptions such as fighting / martial arts and dance) a degree in Physical Education and registration in the federal council of the area (CONFED / CREF) and is based on a Brazilian federal law (Law n. 9696, 1998). Besides this prerogative, although they are not mandatory requirements, to work as a coach in RG it is expected that professionals take complementary courses,

and thus invest in continued education, aiming at professional improvement and updating.

In Brazil, such courses are mostly organized by private associations, bringing together coaches, former foreign gymnasts and/or other prominent international experts in the field. Schiavon et al. (2013) add to this discussion from the point of view of artistic gymnastics coaches by pointing out how difficult it is for coaches to acquire knowledge through courses organized by the Brazilian Gymnastics Confederation. In general, some initiatives are provided by state federations, regional leagues and private associations (Nunomura, 2001) and universities, like training courses and/or scientific events, such as the International Forum of Gymnastics for All - "FIGPT" (Forumgpt 2021) and the International Seminar of Competitive Artistic and Rhythmic Gymnastics - "SIGARC" (Sigarc, 2021).

Specifically for CB instructors (CB only), it is noteworthy that in addition to the CB certification they also all have a physical education degree. To be a CB instructor, it is required to complete the prescribed level of education in the chosen method, but a physical education degree is not necessary. This is a gain for physical education and sport, as it was difficult to find ballet specialists with a physical education degree until very recently.

Despite the nonrequirement, it is expected that professionals keep themselves updated with complementary courses. In this sense, CBG (2020) recently held a series of virtual meetings with the theme "Classical Ballet Techniques for Gymnastics", taught by the Brazilian national gymnastics team's ballet instructor and assistant coach.

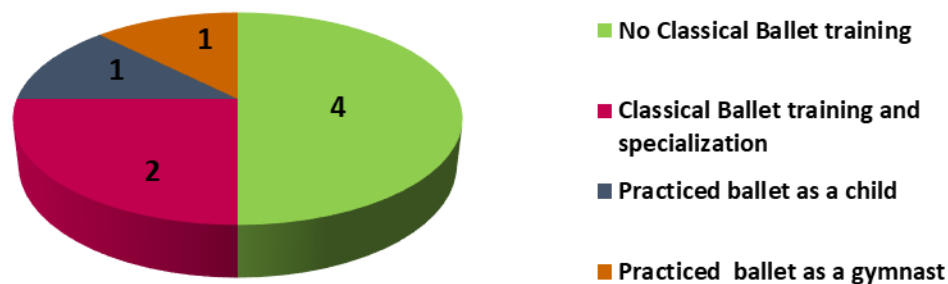


Figure 1. RG coaches education classification.

Table 4

Educational background of ballet instructors, RG coaches and those in dual roles.

Ballet instructor (1)	Dual roles (2)	RG Coaches (6)
Physical education degree	Physical education degree	Physical education degree
Classical ballet certification	Classical ballet certification	

BLOCK B - The relationship between classical ballet instructors and RG coaches

Of the 6 coaches approached, 5 of them follow the planning process of classical ballet classes.

This large proportion of coaches involved in lesson planning is noteworthy because it provides a greater understanding of how classical ballet teaching in RG must occur. The involvement of coaches in ballet lessons planning establishes a greater understanding between the areas (CB and RG) and improves the performance of RG athletes:

[...] interdisciplinarity presents itself as a methodology where the specificity of each area is respected, seeking to establish and understand the relationships between systematized knowledge, expanding the space for dialogue in the direction of

negotiating ideas and accepting others. (Pontuschka, 1993, apud Weigert; Villani & Freitas, 2003, p. 4).

BLOCK C - Methods used in Classical ballet classes

When asked about a specific classical ballet teaching methodology, two instructors said they used specific methods (Royal and Vaganova). The third instructor answered that her classes were based on the French and Cuban methodology. This response shows that some professionals adapt these methods for the RG, the gymnast and the group profile (age group, technical level, etc.). Nobody mentioned Cecchetti, Buornoville and Balanchine methods there were no answers.

The choice of the abovementioned methods was probably due to the instructors' previous exposure to them. However, this choice must go beyond the

instructors' certification; it should be based on the understanding of these methods, their concepts and theoretical and technical basis. The methods have a similar base, however, there are some characteristics that differentiate them and they can play a significant role in the athletes' successful performance of their routines.

Working with a variety of methods can bring a range of different benefits (in relation to objectives, content, or performance), since each method has its own terminology, execution techniques, and artistic conception. The RAD method, for example, is very good for the improvement of technique, polished movements posture, but this method is relatively mechanical with little expressiveness. On the other hand, the Cuban method stimulates creativity, body expression and contributes to the artistic score in the RG CoP. The Bournoville method, adapted for limited spaces, is very strong in jumps and movements of great explosion and strength and is thus an excellent method for training jumps.

It is interesting to point out that the club with its own method developed it on the basis of two schools (French and Cuban). The club employs the movements and nomenclature of two methods; however, the structure of the classes and the teaching method are different in order to accommodate the requirements of RG.

The use of classical ballet in training sessions follows the path of using fundamentals of this practice to expand and develop gymnasts in order to improve their technical and artistic performance, even if the content developed in classes is far from the prescribed training of traditional schools. Batista, Gomes, Garganta & Ávila- Carvalho (2015) set out to investigate the training session intensity of the Brazilian team (group), and observed that the part of the session dedicated to CB is 60 minutes long, composed of bar exercises, practice of pivot fouettés (center), and ballet exercises in diagonal. This confirms the findings of this research,

that classical ballet methods offer the technical-practical training and also facilitate the structuring and planning of classes, learning, and pedagogical progression.

BLOCK D - Classical ballet classes (contents and structures)

In terms of classical ballet classes structure, the following responses were obtained:

Club 1 splits the class in three sections (warm-up, bar and finalization), club 2 organizes the ballet class in four parts (bar, center, diagonal and finalization) and club 3 combines the two, splitting the classes in five sections. In other words, Figure 2 shows that “the bar” and “finishing” are sections used by all three clubs, while there is a lower use of “warm-up”, “center” and “diagonal”.

Table 5 presents the justification for the selection of one or another structure for ballet classes.

According to Sampaio (2001) and Boti & Nascimento (2011), the use of the “bar” is very important for the physical and technical preparation. This part of the class can indicate if the gymnast will be light, heavy, fast, slow and/or will be in some specific motor behavior. The authors also point out that a well worked “bar” will define the best execution of movements in other situations, i.e., if something in the execution is inaccurate, it is probably because the “bar” was not worked on efficiently and with enough time. Laffranchi (2005) compares this step to the needs of the gymnastics training, affirming that in addition to developing physical qualities, the “bar” also has the function of allowing assimilation of gymnastics postures and facilitating the execution in a conscious way. Work on the “bar” ability is fundamental for the mastery and stabilization of movement, especially for performance in the “center” (where you don't have the bar for support):

We started to dominate the bar stability. During the exercises, the body must remain upright on the leg, so that the dancer can release the hand that holds the bar, at any time, and not lose her balance. This serves as an introduction to the proper

performance for core exercises. (Vaganova, 1991, apud Souza, 2012, p.76).

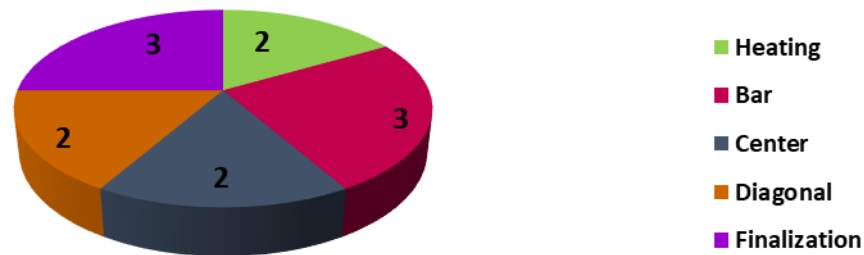


Figure 2. Classical ballet classes structure by sections.

Table 5

Professional's justification.

Club – Structure	Reply (CB instructor)	Reply (RG coach)
Club 1 - Warm-up, bar and finalization	" The structure of the lesson depends on the time the athletes have for ballet classes"	"The instructor works with warm-ups and bar to improve posture, and center for conditioning and hip opening. At the end she performs jumps."
Club 2 - Bar, center, diagonal and finalization	"Because with this structure I can conduct a complete ballet training. "	"Because with this structure you get a complete workout: balance preparation, rotations and jumps, in addition to arm line and posture training."
Club 3 - Warm-up, bar, center, diagonal and finalization	"A slow start with a lot of stretching, gradually increasing the intensity, proceeding to exercises that require greater muscle strength and explosion. "	"Because with this structure you work on all points necessary for RG in a gradual increase of load (increasing difficulty of execution)."
Three coaches did not respond.		

Table 6

Contents covered in ballet class - professionals' perceptions.

Ballet instructors	RG Coaches
Motor coordination	Contemporary dance content
Improvement of gymnast's execution	Posture correction
Specific strengthening	Exercises adapted for efficiency in RG
Refinement of movements	Improvement of gymnast's execution
Posture	Strengthening and technical preparation
Correct technique to perform balances	Correct technique for the execution of balances
Correct technique to perform rotations	Correct technique to perform rotations
Correct technique for performing jumps	Correct technique to perform jumps
<i>Grand Battement</i> variations	Technique for expressiveness
Variations of <i>jeté</i>	Technique for refining movements
Variations of <i>plies</i>	<i>Grand Battement</i> variations
<i>Relevance</i> variations	Variations of <i>jeté</i>
Variations of <i>rond de jambé</i>	Variations of <i>plies</i>
Variations of <i>tendu</i>	<i>Relevance</i> variations

As for the “finalization”, Agostini (2010) states that in classical ballet it should be done with *port-de-bras* exercises that are used as an educational means for lightness and communication between the arms, and serves as a gesture of appreciation at the end of class as well. The “finalization” section brings a preparation for training with small and big jumps, exercises that require greater muscular strength and explosion, i.e., exercises also considered by classical ballet as “center” exercises.

From this perspective, it is possible to notice an approximation between RG and CB contents. In this regard, the contents of ballet classes for rhythmic gymnastics differ in two ways:

1 - Ballet contents that are part of the gymnasts' periodization, separated according to the answers of the ballet instructors and the RG coaches (Table 6);

2 - The contents proposal in the pre-competitive and post-competitive period separated according to the answers of the ballet instructors and the RG coaches (Table 7).

We identified that there are more similarities than differences between the

perceptions of coaches and instructors about the contents of classical ballet that should be part of the gymnasts' periodization. Regarding similarities, professionals identify:

- posture correction;
- improvement and sharpening of the gymnastic elements similar to ballet elements (rotations, balances, jumps);
- the presence and variation of specific ballet elements, such as *plies*, *tendu*, *jeté* *rond de jambé*;
- and the development of aspects related to strength.

Furtado et al. (2020), analyzed the presence of classical ballet movements in RG routines and observed that the Eastern European training model prioritizes the practice of classical ballet in its training sessions, and that this training can be noted in the performance of elements of RG, as well as in body difficulties, dynamic elements, elements with rotation, apparatus difficulties, and dance steps.

The method of developing these contents will depend on the technical choices of the instructor, and/or on what was agreed between her/him and the coach. According to Laffranchi (2005), for

example, the specific strengthening is focused on RG, where it can be performed in the center and mainly on the floor, composed of exercises, such as abdominal and plank strengthening. The center can be used as a support for posture corrections (floor), in addition to being a space that will complement training on the *barre*.

Regarding the differences between the perceptions of coaches and instructors, the ballet instructors emphasized collaboration to build up motor coordination and specific types of strength, as well as more general improvements related to the refinement of gymnast's movements. The RG coaches, on the other hand, put the emphasis on the development of expressive techniques, as well as learning contemporary dance, which, like ballet, is a type of dance and an artistic manifestation.

Our data highlight how classical ballet has been almost entirely focused on the improvement of techniques to perform elements with the CoP value (directly or indirectly). Little has been done or mentioned in relation to creativity, expressiveness, rhythm, and aesthetic appreciation.

The coaches' perspective pays attention to the use of contemporary dance contents, highlighting that contemporary dance as a strong ally for the development of expressiveness, improvisation and dramatization of movements. Within it, it is also possible to work on other contents, such as movements, expressiveness, affectation and non-verbal communication

(Stevens & McKechnie, 2005) that are also part of the artistic component required in RG.

The organization of ballet classes, and therefore, of their content, must adapt to the gymnast's periodization established by the coach, and must vary according to the pre- and post-competitive periods. For most coaches and instructors, this differentiation seems clear, as shown in Tables 7 and 8.

Some of the contents mentioned by the ballet instructors are not described in the table, possibly because the basic elements (*tendus*, *pliés*, *relevés* and *jeté*) are commonly used in any class. When using the term "complete bar", it probably involves all types of exercises that constitute this section, such as *tendus*, *pliés*, *grand plié*, *relevés*, *jeté*, *rond de jambé*, *battement fondu*, *adagio*, *grand battement* and stretches on the bar.

Free activities appear in the post-competitive period and may be related to the gymnasts' routines, or even to activities that involve rhythm, creativity, expressiveness, and improvisation since ballet (as part of dance and the arts) allows for such exploration. This again shows how little these aspects have been explored, with a lot of scope for much more.

Floor training (exercises performed on the floor) encompass strengthening and conditioning exercises like abdominal, plank, and hollow position.

Table 7

The contents in the pre-competitive and post-competitive period mentioned by the ballet instructors.

Ballet class content in the pre competitive period: Ballet instructors	Ballet class content in the post-competitive period: Ballet instructors
Bar with basic elements	More explosive exercises
Technical training specific to RG	Muscle strength training
Elements used in the routines	Posture training
Dance to help the fluidity of movements	Complete ballet bar
Difficulties of the routines	Floor training trainingtraining
Concentration exercises	Free activities
Resistance exercises	Dance activities
<i>Relevé</i> exercises	
Exercises for <i>en dehor</i> training	
Complete ballet bar	
Balance training	
Small hops training in the center	

Table 8

The contents of the pre-competitive and post-competitive period as mentioned by the RG coaches.

Ballet class content in the pre-competitive period: RG coaches	Ballet class content in the post-competitive period: RG coaches
Choreographic composition	Less exercise intensity
Improvement of balances, small jumps and pivots in the routines	Correction in movement refinement
Complete bar	More loosening training
Technical training specific to RG	Dance training
Support in the sets	Waves training
<i>Barre</i> training in line with the routine's difficulty	More explosive exercises
Concentration exercises	Muscle strength exercises
Resistance training	Posture exercises
<i>Relevés</i> and <i>en dehor</i> training	Complete bar
Structure to fit the athletes' need to fulfill BDs (Body difficulties) in the choreographies	Teaching new techniques

Table 9

How the ballet contents are taught and grounded according to the RG coaches.

Coach	Substantiation of the content
Coach 1	It follows a classical ballet methodology . The instructor passes the sequence of movements logically (<i>pliés, tendus, rond de jambé, relevés and battements</i>).
Coach 2	They are based on the Cuban and French Schools of classical ballet.
Coach 3	They are mainly based on the Cuban and French methods .
Coach 4	Based on a ballet methodology .
Coach 5	Based on a classical ballet methodology .
Coach 6	They are based on a classical ballet methodology (Vaganova) learned by the coach in the ballet school. In stages, exercises on the floor, facing the bar, side the bar and center.
Coach 7	Ballet methodology .
Coach 8	They are adapted for RG. Using the ballet base together with the athletes' periodization.

Table 10

The contributions of classical ballet classes to the development of RG gymnasts - according to the instructors.

Ballet instructor	Reply	Category
Instructor 1 (Dual role)	"I can improve their technique to execute balances, rotations and jumps, as well as improve the posture and motor coordination".	Improvement of the technique of body elements and coordinating aspects
Instructor 2 (Dual role)	"Ballet may be the 'boring' part of the training, because of the slow and repetitive exercises, but it helps a lot with posture, the correct arm and foot position, hip fitting; it also helps with gracefulness. Ballet techniques are the basis for most of the elements of RG. With ballet we can see an improvement in posture, agility, motor coordination, expression, and rhythm".	Improvement of the technique of body elements, artistic, coordinating and motivational aspects.
Instructor 3	"I believe that besides helping the gymnasts with rotations, balances, and jumps that are based on dance, classical ballet provides refinement and clarity of movement".	Improvement of body elements technique

Table 11

The contributions of Classical Ballet classes in the development of RG gymnasts - according to coaches.

Rhythmic Gymnastics Coach	Reply	Category
Coach 1 (Dual role)	“Because it helps in the training of posture correction , because through ballet technique, they can better execute RG difficulties. Because it helps prevent injuries due to bad posture during difficulties”.	Improvement in the technique of body elements,difficulties and injury prevention.
Coach 2 (Dual role)	“Ballet may be the "boring" part of the training, because of the slow and repetitive exercises, but it helps a lot with posture, correct arm and foot position, hip fitting; it also helps with gracefulness. Ballet techniques are the basis for most of the elements of RG. With ballet we can see an improvement in posture, agility, motor coordination, expression, and rhythm”.	Improvement of the technique of body elements; artistic, coordination and motivational aspects.
Coach 3	"So that they can correctly execute the body base and posture in the specific RG body elements, with increased awareness of each movement and body expression".	Improvement in the technique of body elements and artistic aspects.
Coach 4	"Classical ballet helps training the muscles the gymnast needs to jump, spin, and balance".	Muscle strengthening and improving the technique of body elements
Coach 5	“Many movements in RG have their basis in ballet. The training is based on the execution of these movements”.	Improvement of the basic body elements technique
Coach 6	“The basis of RG is ballet, all our exercises are based on it. That's why ballet is so important for better execution and clean movements.”	Improvement of the basic body elements technique
Coach 7	“Ballet is the basis for almost everything in RG. It is the most important thing for everything to happen.”	Improvement of the basic body elements technique
Coach 8	“Ballet is the basis of RG. When ballet training is done well, athletes have fewer weaknesses in gymnas tics” .	Improvement of the basic body elements technique

Some of the contents mentioned by the ballet instructors are not described in the table, possibly because the basic elements (*tendus*, *pliés*, *relevés* and *jeté*) are commonly used in any class. When using the term “complete bar”, it probably involves all types of exercises that

constitute this section, such as *tendus*, *pliés*, *grand plié*, *relevés*, *jeté*, *rond de jambé*, *battement fondu*, *adagio*, *grand battement* and stretches on the bar.

Free activities appear in the post-competitive period and may be related to the gymnasts' routines, or even to activities

that involve rhythm, creativity, expressiveness, and improvisation since ballet (as part of dance and the arts) allows for such exploration. This again shows how little these aspects have been explored, with a lot of scope for much more.

Floor training (exercises performed on the floor) encompass strengthening and conditioning exercises like abdominal, plank, and hollow position.

The answers from gymnastics' coaches follow the same pattern seen in Table 7. The highlighted topic, called "teaching new techniques", shows the significance of interdisciplinary work between coaches and instructors since many of the ballet contents can help in the development of new techniques.

Tables 7 and 8 both show that the contents of the ballet classes are part of the athletes' periodization. We found some very specific contents of classical ballet, such as complete bar, *relevés* training, and *en dehor* and small jumps in the center, that are very specific to RG, such as improvement of pivots, waves and difficulties of the routines.

Table 9 shows whether the ballet content is based only on

a specific CB method or has the basis in a method borrowed from physical education.

The data presented in this table show the perceptions of RG coaches about the organization and methods used in CB classes. The coaches identified (or tried to) the method applied in the classes. Thus, we have a situation in which there is a convergence of methods in some clubs (especially those with the dual role profile); a divergence where the instructors and coaches use different methods, and the third possibility where the coaches and the ballet instructors create their own methods.

The data represents a general conception about the teaching methods and in a way validates the answers given in blocks C and D.

BLOCK E - The objective of classical ballet classes for RG athletes

Finally, Tables 10 and 11 bring answers of the ballet instructors and the RG coaches to the question in what way classical ballet classes contribute to the training of RG gymnasts.

Table 10 shows instructors' reports. Instructor 1 and 3 state that the goal of ballet classes is to improve the gymnast's technique. Instructor 2 mentions that it also aims to improve the technique and gracefulness in the elements. Table

11 brings coaches reports. In support of ballet instructors (Coach 1 and 2 act in the dual role), Coaches 5, 6, 7 and 8 also believe that the ballet classes objective is to improve the gymnasts' technique. Coach 4 considers muscle strengthening to improve technique as an objective and coach 3 emphasizes technique improvement in the first place, followed by body awareness and expression.

For all the professionals involved in this research there is a consensus that ballet classes are used to improve elements technique, whether they are basic or difficult. For a minority of coaches and instructors, ballet can also bring improvements in other aspects, such as motivation, gracefulness, body consciousness, and expressiveness (artistic component).

The term "artistic" did not appear in the answers, but similar terms, such as "expression" and "gracefulness" appeared in the discourse. Toledo & Antualpa (2016) point out that the artistic aspect is adjusted in the scoring code every cycle, but it was in the Rhythmic Gymnastics CoP (2013-2016) where artistic aspects were included in the judgment of routines. The authors also highlight that an increased appreciation of artistic aspects goes to the roots of RG:.

[...] In RG, development increases the role of the aesthetic component. We can consider the aesthetic principle

of rhythmic gymnastics not only as a complementary element, but as a basic element of discipline structure that directly affects the formation of sports results. Sports technique and perfection constitute, to a considerable degree, the realization of the aesthetic program. The aesthetic value of the movements must be an object of special concern to the coach and athlete (Toledo & Antualpa, 2016, p.129, apud Lisitskaya, 1995)

Still on the purpose of ballet classes in RG gymnasts' development, we can observe a great importance of this practice for the execution, refinement, body consciousness, body expression and strength training. Antualpa (2011) and Batista et al. (2015) point out that the practice of ballet in RG allows for a posture correction, elements of flexibility, balance and rotations - in addition to other motor skills - that are fundamental to the sport. Gancheva, Borysova & Kovalenko (2021) argue that the artistic aspect should be present in the planning of classes already in childhood..

Regarding ballet, Ribeiro (2010, p. 180) justifies that:

[...] because it is an ancient culture, its importance is also related to the fact that RG is based on the movements of Ballet in its Code and has been influenced by dance in its origin in a non-competitive way.

Thus, ballet is considered the structural basis for the performance of gymnasts. The presented answers clearly show that gymnasts's weaknesses in the execution of the elements can be corrected through the practice of ballet as it trains their body awareness and specific movements.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the present research show that the contents delivered in classical ballet classes in RG training are taught and grounded in specific ballet methods or combinations of them (Vaganova, Royal, French and Cuban). However, RG classes do not follow the classical ballet methodology faithfully; instead, their content and teaching methods are adapted to the demands of RG and the RG Code of Points. One of the coaches noticed that these classes are used to a larger extent to improve the technique of execution of the difficulties and to teach elements listed in the CoP, rather than for body training, and refinement and clarity of movements.

There is a very important emphasis in the structuring of classes, in which the bar and finalization parts dominate in all class structures described by each club.

This occurs because they are the two most important parts in training RG elements, such as body consciousness, balance, flexibility, and strengthening of muscles, in which most RG elements are based. Both parts are more related to the CoP and linked to performance and training of RG, and not to facilitate the development of artistic components.

When we think of ballet instructors and RG coaches, we believe that their goals are different because they have very different professional qualifications. It is common to find ballet instructors with only a classical ballet qualification, and coaches with a physical education degree. However, our study showed that the goals of the ballet classes are very much aligned with the athletes' RG training. This is because the ballet instructors in the three clubs are proficient in a CB method while also holding a physical education degree. This shows the importance of cooperation between instructors and coaches, and how physical education helps in better understanding and aligning the objectives between them.

Looking at ballet as a type of dance (and art), ballet classes should go beyond teaching the elements listed in the CoP. Ballet as an art should teach athletes the relationship between music, movement, expressiveness, musicality, development of body and facial expression, concentration, lightness, interpretation, and improvisation, so that athletes could be more creative in their compositions and explore ballet to help them improve their RG performance.

In this way, the question remains as to whether the instructors and trainers in RG are concerned and look at these issues that go beyond the CoP.

It can also be concluded that coaches and instructors are still very concerned with the use of ballet to improve the movement execution in order to get a higher score for the routines. More attention should be paid to how classical ballet is used since it can also contribute to other aspects related to the artistic component of RG. Also, instructors and trainers should be reminded that ballet has seven methods that should be further explored. It is impossible to state which method is the best for RG training as each has features that could be helpful if applied to the training of the discipline.

Finally, we believe this study is extremely important for the area even though the number of participants in the research is low. Such data and qualitative values are important to start a discussion and bring reflections on the use of ballet as a tool that can go beyond the technical objective of the modality, and the role of the professional who works in it. Furthermore, since there are no other studies of this kind, it might contribute to an improvement in the sport performance and classical ballet classes used in RG.

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