

## The itineraries of Ludvig Kumlien and the dissemination of Swedish gymnastics in France (1895–1921)

*Itinerários de Ludvig Kumlien e a divulgação da ginástica sueca na França (1895–1921)*

*Los itinerarios de Ludvig Kumlien y la divulgación de la gimnasia sueca en Francia (1895–1921)*

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### ABSTRACT


Swedish gymnastics was among the proposals for physical education present in Europe during the 19th century, which spread through different mediating agents. The Swede Ludvig Gideon Kumlien was one of the persons involved in this process. Kumlien's activities for disseminating Swedish gymnastics in France, mainly in Paris between 1895 and 1921, were analyzed for this paper. The sources used include newspapers, magazines and manuals from physical and digital collections. The conclusion herein is that Kumlien assumed multiple roles in the popularization of Swedish gymnastics. He made his gymnastics known, in and outside of France, via print media and translated into manuals, taught and practiced in his gymnastic classes and exhibitions.


**Keywords:** Swedish Gymnastics. Ludvig Gideon Kumlien. Gymnastic methods.


### RESUMO

A ginástica sueca fez parte de uma das propostas de educação do corpo presentes na Europa ao longo do século XIX, que circulou por meio de diferentes agentes mediadores. Entre os sujeitos envolvidos nesse processo, estava o sueco Ludvig Gideon Kumlien. Analisam-se as ações de divulgação da ginástica sueca realizadas por Ludvig Kumlien na França, principalmente em Paris, entre 1895 e 1921. Utilizaram-se como fontes jornais, revistas e manuais, localizados em acervos físicos e digitais. Concluímos que Kumlien assumiu múltiplos papéis na divulgação da ginástica sueca. Fez sua ginástica circular na França e fora dela de forma impressa e traduzida em manuais, ensinada e praticada em suas aulas e exibições de ginástica.

**Palavras-chave:** Ginástica sueca. Ludvig Gideon Kumlien. Métodos ginásticos.

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## RESUMEN

La gimnasia sueca formaba parte de una de las propuestas de educación del cuerpo, presente en Europa a lo largo del siglo XIX, que circuló a través de diferentes agentes mediadores. Entre los sujetos involucrados en este proceso se encontraba el sueco Ludvig Gideon Kumlien. Analizamos las acciones de difusión de la gimnasia sueca realizadas por Ludvig Kumlien en Francia, principalmente en París entre 1895 y 1921. Usamos como fuentes artículos de periódicos, revistas y manuales, localizados en colecciones físicas y digitales. Concluimos que Kumlien asumió múltiples labores en la promoción de la gimnasia sueca. Él hizo circular su gimnasia en Francia y en el extranjero en forma impresa y traducida en manuales, enseñó y practicó en sus clases y exhibiciones de gimnasia.

**Palabras clave:** Gimnasia sueca. Ludvig Gideon Kumlien. Métodos gimnásticos.

## INTRODUCTION

Swedish gymnastics was a systematization created by Per-Henrick Ling (1776–1839), who sought to shape a harmonious and healthy body. Ling's system was based on scientific assumptions and characterized by symmetrical and precise movements. This constituted a practical and rational method of corporal education. Ling organized his gymnastics into military, medical, pedagogic and aesthetic type (Ling, 1840; Georgii, 1854; Ljunggren, 2011; Lundvall, 2015; Pereira, [195?]). The process of creating this model of gymnastics took place during the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1813, Ling, in partnership with the Swedish crown, created the Royal Gymnastics Central Institute (RGCI) (Lundvall, 2015), a place for training people to teach Swedish gymnastics (Moreno and Baía, 2019).

After Ling's death in 1839, his followers dedicated themselves to expanding his gymnastics and, together with the Swedish crown, endeavored to spread it around the world. This turned the RGCI into a reference for those interested, Swedish or foreign, in learning or studying Ling's gymnastics (*ibidem*). In this dissemination process, the RGCI sent its students to different countries,<sup>1</sup> as well as received and invited foreigners interested in getting to know it.<sup>2</sup> Swedish gymnastics then spread to different parts of the world through mediating agents, in addition to manuals, gymnastics exhibitions, creation of institutes/institutions, among other ways (Bloomfield, 2005; Sarremejane, 2006; Bazoge, Saint-Martin and Attali, 2011; Moreno, 2015; Baía, Bonifácio and Moreno, 2019).

This gymnastics dissemination movement was, therefore, the fruit of different mediations and mediating agents. Ludvig Gideon Kumlien (1874–1934), a Swede from Eskilstuna, was among the persons involved in this process. He studied at the RGCI, moved to Paris, France, in 1895, and undertook different Swedish gymnastics dissemination activities (Baía, Bonifácio and Moreno, 2019).

Coming from a family that enjoyed certain social and economic prestige, Kumlien probably had contact with gymnastics in the school environment and in social areas in his native city, Eskilstuna, Sweden (Bonifácio, 2019). Not only L.G. Kumlien, but one of his sisters also had gymnastics as a profession. For Bonifácio (2019), this indicates a certain family involvement with this practice. In any case, on leaving Eskilstuna for Stockholm, the RGCI headquarters, Kumlien made his first itinerary. He enrolled in the institute in 1893 and graduated in 1895, the same year that he moved to Paris (Bonifácio, 2019).

1 Bolling and Yttergren (2015) identified the Swedish gymnastics activity based on the training at the RGCI in different countries, among them: England, Germany, France, Finland, The United States, Chile, Portugal, Poland, Belgium and Denmark.

2 Bazoge, Saint-Martin and Attali (2011) and Sarremejane (2006) identified the French going to the RGCI. Pereira ([195?]) states that the first foreign visitors received by the RGCI were Danes, Norwegians and Finns. Thereafter, foreigners of other nationalities arrived at the RGCI from The United States, Belgium, Chile, England, France, Greece, Holland, Japan, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, Spain, Turkey and Austria.

Moving from Stockholm to Paris was not a casual, disinterested decision. According to Bonifácio (2019), different elements contributed to it. For example, the support of the Kumlien<sup>3</sup> family and the RGCI actions that facilitated and encouraged the transit of its students are noteworthy. Bolling and Yttergren (2015) also state that the training in medical gymnastics offered by the RGCI enabled a profitable career, both in Sweden and abroad.

Another factor contributed significantly to this move: the visit of the Frenchman Hugues Le Roux to the RGCI. Robert Charles Henri Le Roux, known by the pseudonym Hugues Le Roux, was a writer and journalist. The King of Sweden and Norway, Oscar II, invited the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Public Instruction of France to assign Le Roux the mission of going to Sweden to learn about Ling's gymnastics and confirm the results of the method.<sup>4</sup>

During his trip to Sweden in the summer of 1893, Le Roux met Kumlien and, convinced of the benefits provided by Ling's gymnastics, identified in Ludvig the "worker" of the mission that King Oscar II had given him when he left: "Your task must have a practical result [...]" (Roux, [1901], p. 5, ou translation). Two years later, in 1895, Kumlien moved to Paris. Then, Kumlien and Hugues Le Roux took several actions to disseminate Swedish gymnastics.

This dissemination took place in three steps: gymnastic exhibitions, instructional activities and the publication of manuals. The latter stands out because of its circulation in different countries—Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Italy, Mexico and Portugal—and its translation from French into three languages: Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. One of the factors that exemplifies this is the classification done by Xavier Torredadella Flix and Javier Betrán (2012), of one of Kumlien's manuals, as one of the hundred works that helped to legitimize and institutionalize Physical Education in the academic, social and professional circles in Spain.

The aim of this article is therefore analyze the actions of disseminating Swedish gymnastics carried out by Ludvig Kumlien in France, mainly in Paris between 1895 and 1921.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to understand the social insertions and the place occupied by Kumlien in the process of circulating Swedish gymnastics and, with this, to understand the dynamics of the ideas that circulated in this environment.

Kumlien is analyzed, here, based on the proposal of Ângela de Castro Gomes and Patrícia Santos Hansen (2016, p. 10), as the subject "of the production of knowledge and communication of ideas, directly or indirectly linked to political-social intervention". Understanding him in this way means looking at the different actions for the dissemination of gymnastics used by him and understanding that, at the same time that he communicated these ideas, he also produced them in contact with a new culture and in new spaces (Gomes and Hansen, 2016). Further, given the scope of his interventions, he achieved an important centrality in the circulation of Swedish gymnastics in France and in other countries.

Along Kumlien's trajectory, cultural transmission is materialized in the classes taught at his institute, the manuals he wrote and the gymnastics exhibitions he promoted. All these activities made it possible to spread knowledge about the Swedish gymnastics that he proposed to other places, inside and outside of France.

The period analyzed begins in 1895, the year that Kumlien moved to Paris and made a significant investment in the dissemination of Swedish gymnastics in France. This research ends in 1921, the year in which the records located about Kumlien in French newspapers became less frequent.

3 According to Bonifácio (2019), this support may have been financial, given the economic situation of the family, as well as related to the fact that Kumlien had a cousin living in Buxy, France, a city about 400 km from Paris.

4 Le Roux was a journalist and writer specialized in travel literature and books about the French colonies. A traveling ambassador of French thought, Le Roux supported the idea that France had a civilizing mission (Bonifácio, 2019).

5 Although the main focus was Paris, it is understood that the papers circulated beyond the capital, reaching other French cities.

As sources, we used newspapers, magazines and manuals, located in physical and digital collections. All the sources were read and categorized according to the actions carried out by Kumlien: exhibitions, publication of manuals and gymnastics teaching activities. In addition, the names of the subjects who carried out the actions together and/or were spectators, readers and students were highlighted.

## ANNOUNCING HIS ARRIVAL: THE GYMNASTICS EXHIBITIONS

In this topic we aim to list the Swedish gymnastics exhibitions that Kumlien took part in, analyzing how they worked to convince spectators of the benefits of Swedish gymnastics, as well as enabling partnerships for the Swedish teacher. Records show that Kumlien promoted and/or participated in six gymnastics exhibitions between 1897 and 1904. Traces of these occurrences were found in French newspapers and in the preface to Kumlien's manual, *La Gymnastique Suédoise* (1901), written by Hugues Le Roux. This text contains the first record of the presentation, which took place at the *Union chrétienne des jeunes gens* in 1897. The next exhibition, also mentioned in the preface, dates from 1899 and it occurred at the Gymnastics Institute founded by Kumlien in Paris.<sup>6</sup> Colonel Dérué,<sup>7</sup> Georges Demeny,<sup>8</sup> Hugues Le Roux and Dr. Michaux<sup>9</sup> participated in this exhibition. Demeny and Le Roux were responsible for clarifying, according to some theory, the practical demonstrations promoted by Kumlien (Roux, [1901]).

Participation in the National Gymnastics Competition of France in July, 1899, was a result of the success of this exhibition—an event that, although strictly national, allowed the participation of a foreign gymnastics systematization for the first time (Roux, [1901]). Headquartered in the *Jardin des Tuileries*,<sup>10</sup> the event was attended by French government authorities and served as a type of public review of the gymnastics practiced in French schools. It seems that Kumlien and his group also participated in a later edition of this event, as a report published in 1901 indicates the group's successful participation in the 14<sup>th</sup> National Gymnastics Competition (Le Concours, 1901).<sup>11</sup>

In 1901, Kumlien held an exhibition at the Childhood Exhibition (*Exposition de l'enfance*). Reports of this exhibition highlighted the presence of a member of the Swedish government, gymnasts from Sweden and their resourcefulness in the presentation (Échos, 1901; Exposition, 1901; E. A, 1901; Milton, 1901). There was also the record of a lecture given by Dr. Michaux in 1901 at the institute founded by Kumlien, about the effects of Ling's method. The article states that the event had Colonel Dérué and Senator Pauliat,<sup>12</sup> as well as doctors and medical students, as spectators (Conférence, 1901).

6 Kumlien founded a gymnastics institute in Paris called the *Gymnase Suédois Ling* in 1899. The following year, a branch was opened which, over time, changed location.

7 Lieutenant Colonel François Jules Dérué was involved in the practice of fencing and the publication of works about gymnastics, the army and fencing. He also acted as the Inspector of Physical Education in schools in the city of Paris.

8 Georges Demeny founded the Rational Gymnastics circle in Paris and, together with E. J. Marey, founded the physiological station of the Park of the Princes. Demeny organized the physical education program at the *École Normale de Gymnastique et d'Escrime de Joinville Le Pont*, and was appointed professor of physiology. Along the way, he sometimes supported the Swedish method and, at others, he criticized it and supported a French method.

9 Paul-Marie Michaux (1854–1923) entered the College of Medicine of France in 1872, becoming a renowned surgeon, and worked in several hospitals throughout the country. Based on the idea of moral and religious education, he conducted different movements to promote physical education for disadvantaged youth. He was engaged in the dissemination of gymnastics and of sports, creating the *Federation Gymnastique et Sportive des patronages de France* and organizing gymnastics and sports activities at several institutions in France. He was a supporter of Swedish gymnastics, which notably gained greater appreciation, without contradicting his support of sports. Cf. Jung (2000).

10 The *Jardin des Tuileries* is a garden that was built in 1664 at the request of French royalty and hosted luxurious parties. Between abandonments and reconstructions, the garden is currently a public space visited by Parisians and tourists. It is located in the center of the city of Paris and separates the Louvre Museum from the Concord Square.

11 No information was found regarding the features and organization of this National Gymnastics Competition of France, as well as the conditions for the participation of Kumlien's gymnastics group. At any rate, foreign participation in a French national competition indicates the insertion of Swedish gymnastics in Paris.

12 Louis Pauliat (1845–1915), journalist and four-term French senator, was involved in budgetary issues and linked to the colonization, especially in Madagascar. He published books and articles/texts/columns in newspapers. See more at: [https://www.senat.fr/senateur-3eme-republique/pauliat\\_louis0443r.html](https://www.senat.fr/senateur-3eme-republique/pauliat_louis0443r.html). Accessed on: May 05, 2019.

In addition to these exhibitions, one gymnastics presentation by Kumlien in the ballroom of the newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1904 stands out. It was reported in long and illustrated publications, in different Parisian newspapers, and they all emphasized “the elite audience”.<sup>13</sup> Among those present were people from Parisian society — politicians, journalists — representatives of the Swedish government, and “the meeting of the most important persons of the army, sports and medicine”.<sup>14</sup> The event opened with a speech by Professor Poirier from the College of Medicine of Paris.<sup>15</sup>

In general, the exhibitions had speeches from doctors and/or Hugues Le Roux, followed by the presentation of the Kumlien gymnasts. There were also invited spectators who received special attention, among them French and Swedish journalists, politicians, sports figures, doctors, Swedish authorities, publishers, military people, professors, among other persons involved in the French conflicts about the official method.<sup>16</sup>

It is believed that, while these events were intended to convince their spectators about the benefits of Swedish gymnastics, they enabled Kumlien to establish partnerships that allowed him to take other disseminating actions. One example of this is the contact with Dr. Michaux, a doctor who met Kumlien at one of these events and, afterward, began opening other exhibitions, organizing conferences for his students at which Kumlien introduced himself, and wrote the introduction to one of the manuals published in Sweden, *La Gymnastique Suédoise* (1901).

Along with Michaux, Raoul Fabens and Per Lamm<sup>17</sup> were partners that Kumlien possibly met at these events and, later, worked with. Fabens, also a journalist, was the coauthor of a manual and Per Lamm was the editor of the only solo work published by L.G. Kumlien. Emile André, in turn, probably met Kumlien through Hugues Le Roux, since they were both journalists at *Le Figaro*. Over time, in addition to having published different announcements and reports about the Swede, Emile and Ludvig published a manual together, *La Gymnastique Suédoise* (1901).

The exhibitions promoted by Kumlien were intended to convince their spectators of the benefits of Swedish gymnastics and there were some strategies to reach this goal. Promoting exhibitions with Swedish gymnasts was one of them. All the newspapers that reported exhibitions with their presence praised them for their performance and physical condition, which is one way to show that the people who practiced these gymnastics were admirable. Thus, in addition to the gymnasts, there were people who certified the scientifically proved benefits of the gymnastics so that, as well as the performance, they also showed the scientific bases of the practice to the public. However, it was not enough to promote exhibitions without a suitable audience.

Therefore, different authorities linked to the debate about French physical education were invited. These included members of the army, doctors, professors, representatives of the *École de Joinville Le Pont*,<sup>18</sup> and politicians.

Analysis of the exhibitions also shows that Kumlien did not have much influence on the composition of the spectators at the events in which he participated as a guest. On the other hand, the presentations he promoted had a defined audience, aligned with the debate about physical

13 The exhibition was reported in the *Armée et Marine: revue hebdomadaire illustrée des armées de terre et de mer* and *La Vie au grand air*.

14 Among them, the presence of the Consul General of Sweden and Norway, Mr. Norling; the Baron of Adelward, military attaché representing the Minister of Sweden; Colonel Dérué, Inspector of Physical Education in the schools in the city of Paris; Commander Blandin, director of the *École Normale de Gymnastique et Escrime de Joinville Le Pont*; Professor Poirier, of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris; and Emile André, French sports journalist.

15 No further information was found about the biography of Professor Poirier. However, he appears in several records of the International Physical Education Congresses, held throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

16 For debates about the official method, see Sarremejane (2006).

17 Per Lamm was a Swedish publisher who founded, together with Karl Nilsson, the Librairie Nilsson publishing house in 1885. The publishing house specialized in illustrated publications, and popular and classic novels.

18 Founded in 1852, the *École de Gymnastique de Joinville Le Pont* aimed to train monitors capable of teaching military gymnastics. The *École de Joinville Le Pon* became an important locale for debate about French physical education and concentrated, above all, on the interests of the army. For more information, see Sarremejane (2006).



education in France and with the interests of Kumlien in publicizing his work and Swedish gymnastics. In relating to this public, in these two configurations of presentations, Kumlien was establishing and strengthening different partnerships that contributed to the realization of other activities: the publication of manuals and teaching.

## THE MANUALS: RECORDS OF HIS GYMNASTICS

The aim of this topic is to present the works published by the author, showing how they served the dissemination of the gymnastics as well as how he changed the way that the Swedish method was conceived and presented. In 1901, Kumlien published his first manual, *La Gymnastique Suédoise. Manuel de gymnastique rationnelle. A la portée de tous et à tout âge* (Figure 1).

There are two different versions of the manual, and in neither of them is there any information about the year of publication. Both are divided into three parts: the first includes pedagogical gymnastics; the second, military gymnastics; and the third, medical and orthopedic gymnastics and

Figure 1 - Swedish Gymnastics (*La Gymnastique Suédoise*):  
1901 version on the left, 1904 version on the right



Source: Kumlien and André, [1901]<sup>19</sup>; André, [1904].<sup>20</sup>

19 Available at: <https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b2239798x>. Accessed on: July 08, 2018.

20 Available at the National Library of Sweden.

massage. The manuals begin with a preface, then there is an introduction, a description of the main movements of Ling's method, observations, a brief history of gymnastics, and the main divisions of the Swedish method.

There are differences between the two editions. In the first, the authors are Kumlien and Emile André. In the second, Emile André is the author and the cover of the work contains information based on Kumlien's method.<sup>21</sup> This change of authorship was also noticed in the records about this manual in French newspapers from 1904 onward. *Le Journal*, for example, published the following announcement:<sup>22</sup> "A new, illustrated edition (eight thousand) of Swedish Gymnastics (*La Gymnastique Suédoise*) (Kumlien Method), by Emile André, has just been published by Flammarion" (*Échos*, 1904, p. 1, our translation).

According to Bonifácio (2019), this change in authorship may be related to the intense French debate about the official method of Physical Education. If, at first, Swedish gymnastics were celebrated, at the time of the publication of the second edition of the manual it was criticized for being a foreign proposal.

The announcement also reveals aspects related to the circulation of the manual, by informing of a possible circulation of eight thousand copies. In addition, in Image 1, on the right, there is a note at the top indicating second thousand (*deuxième mille*) which is believed to refer to the number of copies of this edition of the work. *La Gymnastique Suédoise* (1901) was translated into Spanish. The publication of these works was found in Mexico in 1909, in Argentina in 1957, and in Spain as an undated publication.<sup>23</sup> According to Mollier (2008), the publishing house of the manual, Flammarion, had been exporting his works since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, it may be said that this manual circulated through different territories and languages, which indicates the scope of the investments in the dissemination of Swedish gymnastics conducted by Kumlien and his partners.

The manual, *La Gymnastique Suédoise*, brought elements about the analysis of movements, the installation of gymnasiums, the organization of numerous classes, the qualities necessary for teachers, the commands in Swedish Gymnastics, among other aspects that allowed the reader to have an idea, even a minimal one, of how to conduct the sessions. This was even useful for the institutes, which supports the assumption that it would have been a manual developed for persons interested in teaching gymnastics. This was changed in the publication of his second manual, *Gymnastique pour tous*.

In 1906, Kumlien published *La Gymnastique pour tous* (Figure 2), edited by Per Lamm (1854–1908).<sup>24</sup> In relation to the first manual, it changed not only the title, removing the term "Swedish" and highlighting the foundation of a practice designed for everyone, but how it was organized. It was divided into two parts: the first was dedicated to the introductory aspects, and the second to the series of exercises for children of both sexes, women and men. This is different from the first manual, which began with exercises and was divided among pedagogic gymnastics, military gymnastics, and medical and orthopedic gymnastics.

*La Gymnastique pour tous* is aimed at the general public who wanted to practice gymnastics in different places, including the home. In an excerpt from the first part of the manual, for example,

21 In addition to the change in authorship, it was noted that in the third part of the work a complementary chapter was added, *Les progrès de la gymnastique suédoise en France*. This chapter was incorporated into the manual in the 1904 edition, according to the writings contained therein.

22 Available at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k76264279.item>. Accessed on: July 10, 2019.

23 The publications done in Mexico and Spain were located in the collection of the National Sports Museum Library in Lisbon, Portugal. The publication done in Argentina was located in the library of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (Belo Horizonte, Brazil). The first two are titled: *La Gimnasia Sueca. Manual de gimnasia racional Al alcance de todos y para todas las edades*, and the second is *Gimnasia Sueca. Al alcance de todos*.

24 *La Gymnastique pour tous* (1906) was translated into Spanish and published in Spain, into Italian and published in Italy, and into Portuguese and published in Portugal.



Figure 2 - Covers of different editions of *Gymnastics for everybody (La Gymnastique pour tous)*



Source: Kumlien, 1906.<sup>25</sup>

Kumlien specifically addresses different audiences: “young people”, “teachers”, “fathers of families”, “mothers”, “sports lovers”, “people from offices”, “field workers”, among others. For each of them, he points out why it is necessary to practice gymnastics.

In this sense, it is believed that the illustrations were Kumlien’s biggest wager in this new manual. Lamm, the editor of the manual, and Swedish like Kumlien, had the publication of illustrated books as one of his specialities (Bonifácio, 2019). At the end of the book, there was a type of booklet/ appendix with several illustrations of the series of exercises, which was folded over because it was composed of larger pages than those of the manual (Figure 3). There were three tables of exercises: one for children, another for women, and one for men. There was also reference to these illustrations in nearly all the announcements located regarding the work cited.

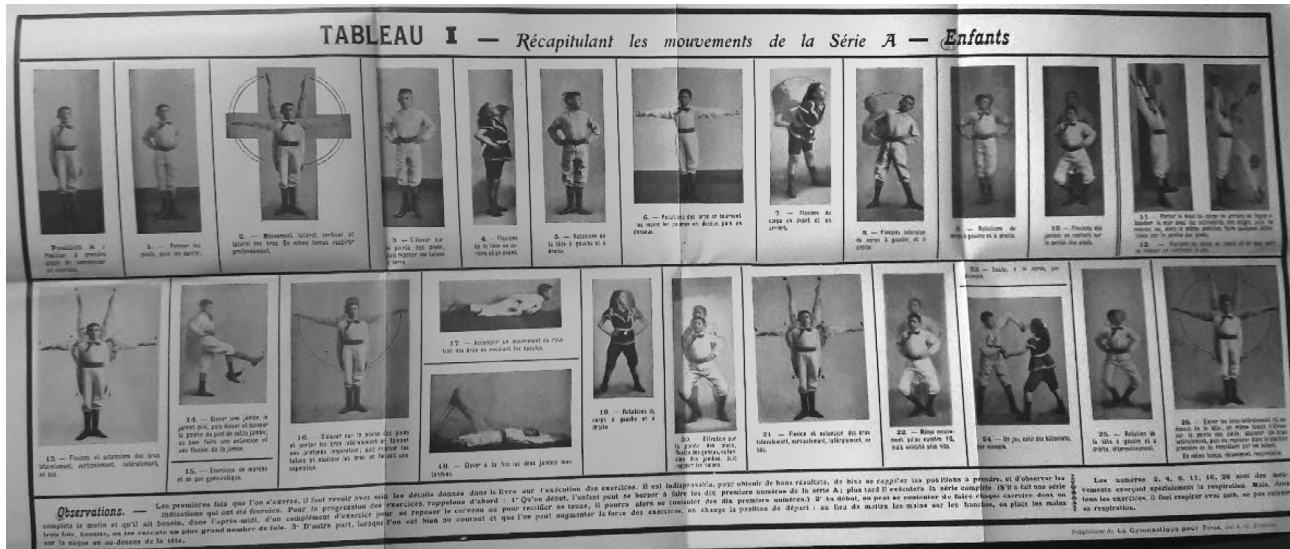
In addition to the editor, Per Lamm, Emile André and Dr. Michaux were also part of the production of the manual. Unlike the 1901 manual, the one from 1906 is signed only by Kumlien. Emile André is cited as assisting him in writing the first part, as he had experience writing sports works. Dr. Michaux was responsible for the introductory text to the work.

In general, the advertisements about *La Gymnastique pour tous* emphasized its illustrations, the participation of Emile André, the three series of exercises it contained, and the possibility of being used in families and schools. There are two versions of this work in French, and only one difference between them was identified: on the right side of the cover of the manual it reads, “work adopted by the Ministry of Public Instruction” (Figure 2).

<sup>25</sup> Available at the National Library of Sweden.



Figure 3 - Gymnastics for everyone (*La Gymnastique Pour Tous*) exercise booklet



Source: Kumlien, 1906.<sup>26</sup>

In the same year that the manual was published (1906), some news articles indicated that L.G. Kumlien had received the *rosette d'officier de l'instruction publique* (Distinction, 1906; Divers, 1906). Receiving this academic decoration meant recognition from the Ministry of Public Instruction, which distinguished eminent functions and rewarded services rendered to teaching. Given the importance of this award for the Ministry, it was the Minister himself who awarded it. This award has undergone numerous changes since it was created in 1808 and has contained different honorific titles.<sup>27</sup> This award seems to have been important in French society. The *École des Roches* (1924),<sup>28</sup> the school where Kumlien was a gymnastics teacher, when listing him in its newspaper among the teachers at the institution, also cites the award he received.

Unlike previous works, the following published manual did not have gymnastics as the central theme, although it was still a trend topic; they also changed the writing partner and the editor. So, Kumlien published the *Cours complet d'éducation physique* in 1909 with Raoul Fabens, a sports journalist, for the *Librairie Armand Colin* (Figure 4). On the other hand, the strategy of illustrations, used in the 1906 manual, remained; the *Cours Complet* included an appendix at the end, with different series of exercises, in the same format as the previous book. The work published in 1909 and a new edition published in 1921 are available; both have the same organization and the same number of pages. No searches have yielded any translations and/or publications in other countries.

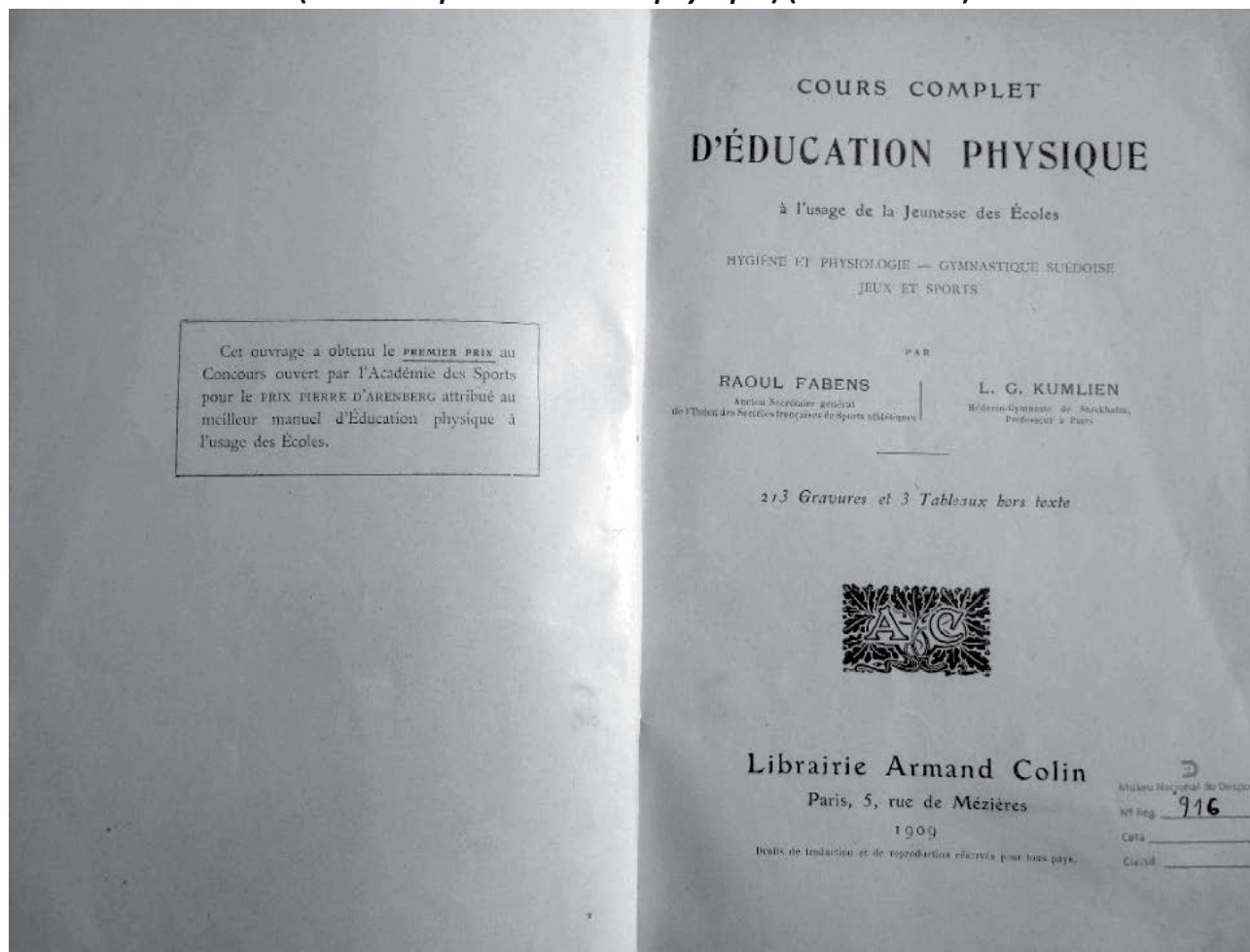
According to Mollier (2008), the editor of the manual, Armand Colin had broad experience in publishing scholastic manuals, and there is evidence that the work was published in this format. For example, the title shows that it was intended to be a complete course of physical education. The places where the advertisements were published were also an indication of that, since, in addition to being advertised in the newspapers, the manual was also advertised in educational

26 Available at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6255911h/f3.item.r=La%20Gymnastique%20Pour%20Tous>. Accessed on: April 04, 2018. Also available at the National Library of Sweden and the National Sports Museum Library (Lisbon, Portugal).

27 All the information about this title is drawn from the Ferdinand Buisson Dictionary. Available at: <http://www.inrp.fr/edition-electronique/lodel/dictionnaire-ferdinand-buisson/document.php?id=2522>. Accessed on: May 23, 2019.

28 Founded in October, 1899, by Edmond Demolins (1852–1907), the School of the Rocks (*École des Roches*) was the prototype of the new school in France, although it broke with this movement at the end of the Second World War. Based on total training (intellectual, physical, and moral), the school aimed to train the new elites—particularly, entrepreneurs (Duval, 2006).

**Figure 4 - Back cover of the Complete Course in Physical Education  
(*Cours complet d'éducation physique*) (1909 version)**



Source: Fabens and Kumlien, 1909.<sup>29</sup>

bulletins, as will be shown below. Furthermore, in the same year that it was published, the manual won a competition.

#### Prince of Arenberg Award

The Sports Academy (*Académie des Sports*) organized a competition, under the initiative of the Princes of Arenberg, to reward the best memory for teaching gymnastics in primary and secondary schools.

The first prize, in 1909, was won by Messrs. Fabens and Kumlien, for their book entitled Manual of physical education (*Manuel d'éducation physique*)<sup>30</sup>.

As the Sports Academy (*Académie des Sports*) intended to popularize sports, they decided to offer copies of this book to the directors of training schools and professors. (Prix, 1910, p. 5, our translation)<sup>31</sup>

If they wanted the book to become a scholastic manual, participating in the competition and winning it was a way to gain access to the scholastic institutions. This attempt is clear in the newspapers.

<sup>29</sup> Available at the National Sports Library (Porto, Portugal).

<sup>30</sup> The *Cours complet d'éducation physique* was also known as the *Manuel d'éducation physique*.

<sup>31</sup> Available at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k288696r.item>. Accessed on: June 11, 2017.

Different attempts have been made in schools in France, since 1870, to establish a practical system of physical education for youth. The *Cours d'Éducation Physique* by Mr. Raoul Fabens and L.G. Kumlien seems to have solved the problem. (Coutil, 1909, p. 4, our translation)

Similarly, H. Kleynhoff<sup>32</sup> signed a publication in *L'Humanité* in 1913, in which he argued for the importance of having physical education classes in schools, both for the development of the brain and for bodily hygiene. In speaking about how the physical education courses should be organized, Kleynhoff (1913) indicated Kumlien and Fabens' manual as a response. He praised the work and argued that the contents were sufficient to guarantee proper physical education for the youth.

Analysis of the records provides evidence of how Kumlien changed his publications over time.<sup>33</sup> Initially, he published a manual entitled "Swedish gymnastics". Over the years, he changed his marketing strategy. He appointed Emile André as the author, despite keeping the same name, pointing out that it was written according to Kumlien's method. In the second publication, "Swedish gymnastics" is no longer highlighted in the name. It presents, in contrast, gymnastics that can be practiced by everyone. Kumlien claimed sole authorship of the manual. Finally, in his last publication, he removed "gymnastics" from the title and set out to write a physical education course, again establishing a writing partnership.

This suggests that Kumlien changed the strategies outlined in his publications to somehow overcome the resistance he met and, to some extent, monitor the debates about French physical education going on at the time. The conflict centered around the creation of a French method<sup>34</sup> or the adoption of a foreign proposal. In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Swedish gymnastics was so well accepted by the French community that it became the official method of the *École de Joinville Le Pont* (Sarremejane, 2006). Nevertheless, it lost acceptance due to a growing shift to the creation of a French national method (*ibidem*).

In other words, when, at a certain time, Paris accepted Swedish gymnastics, he published a manual using this name. When, at another time, the French resisted adopting a foreign proposal, he proposed gymnastics for everyone, no longer Swedish. When the official method still had not been defined, he selected the important models and contents that were in question, and included hygiene and physiology, gymnastics, and games and sports in his manual.

The writing partner also changed in the same way. If, before, it was Emile André, with whom he established other partnerships in favor of Swedish gymnastics, later it was Raoul Fabens, who was involved with the French Olympic sports movement. This movement was very present in France due to the activities of Pierre de Coubertin, one of the most important names in the Olympic Games of the modern era and for whom Fabens worked as a member of the first edition committee based in Athens, Greece, in 1896. Pierre de Coubertin also made it possible to bring the second edition of the games to Paris in 1900 (Bonifácio, 2019). Dr. Michaux, in turn, wrote the introduction to the first manual and the preface to the second, which shows an interest in the legitimacy of the medical discourse. Meanwhile, Le Roux, with his image linked to Swedish gymnastics, wrote only the preface to the first manual.

So, it is believed that as Kumlien was establishing new partnerships, he came into contact with different audiences and spoke of his gymnastics in different ways. He sometimes resorted to demonstrations, teaching sessions, and writing about it in a manual in an attempt to overcome

32 We do not have information about this subject.

33 We acknowledge that this was not an initiative undertaken only by Kumlien, but also by the editors of the manual.

34 The French method was a systematization elaborated by Francisco Amoros (1770–1848), of military and acrobatic inspiration. Once acclaimed, it came to be criticized for not being scientific. Different subjects got involved in proposing a new French gymnastics and engaged in intense debates in this regard (Soares, 1998; Sarremejane, 2006).

resistance, reach different audiences and disseminate the practice of his gymnastics. It can be seen how he and his companions wagered heavily on the printed material—newspapers and manuals—without being restricted to it.

Publishing the manuals also showed that everything Kumlien did to publicize Swedish gymnastics was not limited to Paris. The material circulated in different parts of the world, in different languages. Moreover, these publications gained relative prominence while they won awards, were reedited, translated. It is also believed that they had various uses: as guides for teachers, manuals for common practitioners, reference works, among others (Vago, 2002; Baía, Bonifácio and Moreno, 2019; Bonifácio, 2019).

## MEETING POINT: EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The aim of this topic is to show how the instructional activities at different institutions brought prestige to Kumlien, proving to be some of the most important actions for the dissemination of his work. When dealing with the exhibitions of Swedish gymnastics promoted by Kumlien, there is mention of the creation of his institute in 1899, four years after his arrival in Paris in 1895. Records in French newspapers confirm this information; there are suggestions of activity at the institute in a report published in 1899, and in advertisements from 1900 and 1901. Following this period, new mentions appeared in 1907, and continued until 1911, on and off. The largest number of advertisements was found between 1914 and 1916, and they are found occasionally until 1925.

In general, the advertisements called the institute *Gymnase Suédois Ling*, naming Kumlien as the director, diplomate of the Stockholm Institute, and the activities offered were: orthopedic and pedagogic gymnastics, medical massage, and *culture physique* classes<sup>35</sup> (Établissements, 1901; Établissements, 1907; Massage, 1907). Regarding the public, it was possible for people of different ages and both sexes to take classes at the institute founded by Kumlien. The institute did not intend to provide teacher training but, rather, gymnastics classes and massage sessions.

In addition to the regulars, the institute received important visitors who were involved in the debate on physical education in France. One of them was Georges Hébert (1875–1957), a Frenchman, a sailor in the French navy, who was dedicated to systematizing the natural method of gymnastics (Philippe-Meden, 2012; Jubé, 2017; 2020). Philippe-Meden (2012) claims that Hébert's first contact with Swedish gymnastics was at the Kumlien Institute, and that this visit inspired him to develop his method.

This contact between Kumlien and Hébert would have been a result of Dr. Chaillou of the *École Saint-Geneviève* who, in October of 1902, decided to send Kumlien candidates from *Saint-Cyr*, a French military school that trained army officers. The good results obtained with their training led them to send more students to have classes with Kumlien. Moreover, Philippe-Meden (2012) states on two occasions that the Kumlien Institute would be the only establishment in Paris completely in agreement with Ling's method.

In addition to Georges Hébert, the institute was visited by G. De Lafreté, a French journalist, who claims that his first contact with Swedish gymnastics was at the Kumlien Institute, and that he was surprised by the differences between this and the French gymnastics. Like him, Colonel Dérué, Mr. Hugues Le Roux and Dr. Phillippe Tissié<sup>36</sup> were also convinced of the efficiency of Ling's gymnastics (Lafreté, 1899). Lafreté (1900) also points to the dynamics of the classes offered at the Kumlien Institute.

35 No information was found that allowed us to say that they were physical culture classes.

36 Philippe Tissié (1852-1935) was a doctor and deepened his studies of Swedish gymnastics, becoming one of its defenders within the French territory.



[...] the pedagogic part of Ling's method, [that] can also be practiced by women and children because it is progressive. Apart from that, there are already numerous Parisians who go to Mr. Kumlien's gym on Rue de Londres, either to exercise or to bring their children, boys or girls. Sometimes, the two work at the same time, almost side-by-side, and this show gives some hope to those who dream of physical regeneration for our race. (Lafreté, 1900, p. 250, our translation)

In addition to teaching gymnastics to men, women and children, Ludvig Gideon Kumlien advertised in the newspapers different "services" at his institute, such as sessions with *masseurs* and classes in *Gymnastique Suédoise* and *culture physique*. It seems that this was a strategy designed to meet the different interests linked to Swedish gymnastics, keeping in mind that this gymnastic model had different aspects, such as pedagogic and medical, and both activities were part of his training course at the GCI.<sup>37</sup>

It seems that L.G. Kumlien gained a significant clientele, considering the operation of two units of the Institute since 1900, the year following its founding. The first unit, at *Rue de Londres* 58, was located between the eighth and ninth *arrondissements* of Paris. The other unit, although it changed addresses, remained in the central region of Paris, very near the sixth and seventh *arrondissements*.<sup>38</sup> Thus, it is believed that the offer of different activities at the headquarters of the Institute, as well as its location in Paris, contributed to the institute becoming an important space for publicizing the gymnastics and the dissemination of the practice.

Kumlien did not run gymnastics sessions only at his institute. He was also a teacher at the *École des Roches* from 1913 until about 1925. As a teacher, he inaugurated, in October of 1913, a Swedish gymnastics gymnasium at the said *École* (Figure 5).

The inaugural event, reported in the school newspaper, featured the exhibition of Swedish gymnastics and speeches by Hugues Le Roux and Kumlien. Among other aspects, both emphasized the benefits provided by the practice of Swedish gymnastics. They pointed to sport as a complementary activity, which did not suffice for the formation of a "rational physical culture", and reinforced that this understanding was shared by the school, since the practice of gymnastics was mandatory (Kumlien, 1913; Roux, 1913).

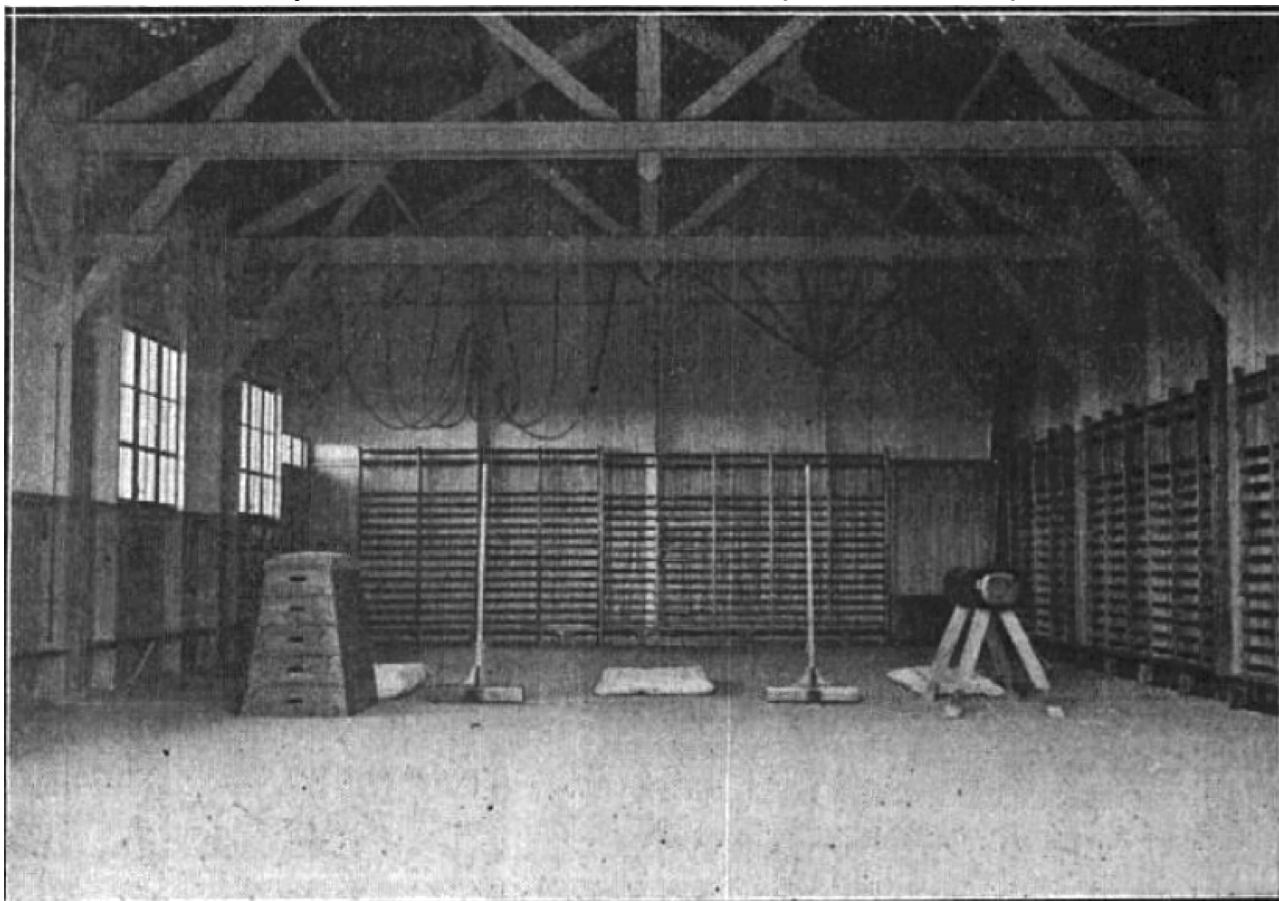
Hugues Le Roux made it clear in his speech that disputes over the official French method remained alive, while Kumlien began his speech stating that there were other systematizations of gymnastics. However, the only rational gymnastics, developed from the scientific study of the body, was Ling's. Afterward:

Swedish gymnastics has just achieved a resounding success at the recent Congress of Physical Education in France. The only rival method, the "natural method", contrasted to the Swedish one, not only did not "grab the victory" in the practical demonstrations before the congress members, but ended up very weakened. In general, methods called "natural" are the very negation of any method. The students, on their own initiative, run, jump, climb with no concern for the organs and muscles put into action. They exercise their bodies according to their whims, stimulated by the need to escape the weather, by their personal satisfaction or even by the desire to surprise the crowd. The result is complete disproportion, lack of harmony in the development of the organism: certain muscles are too strong, others remain weak from lack of exercise. (Kumlien, 1913, p. 89, our translation)

37 About this training course, cf. Moreno and Baía (2019).

38 The branch's first address was at *Rue du Bac*, 83, in the seventh *arrondissement*. This branch moved to *Rue des Sts-Pères*, 76, between the sixth and seventh *arrondissements*. That is, both were in the central region of Paris.

**Figure 5 - Gymnasium of Swedish gymnastics inaugurated by Kumlien in the School of the Rocks (*École des Roches*)**



Source: *La Gymnastique*, 1914, p. 98.

Kumlien refers to the International Congress of Physical Education (*Congresso Internacional de Educação Física*), held in Paris in 1913, where different authors indicated the “victory” of the Natural Method developed by Georges Hébert over Swedish gymnastics, contrary to what Kumlien states (Sarremejane, 2006; Philippe-Meden, 2012; Scharagrodsky and Gleyse, 2013; Jubé, 2017). As a consequence of what was debated in the congress, the Swede seemed to feel threatened by this proposal and based his speech on the scientific principles of Swedish gymnastics and on how medical gymnastics professionals were trained. In addition, he brought out data indicating its benefits for the population of Sweden, such as a nine-year increase in life expectancy, a three-centimeter increase in the average height of the population, and a 14% reduction in the number of those unfit for military service (Kumlien, 1913).

Anyway, Kumlien gained the recognition of his peers within the *École des Roches*:

Last year, I could not—for which I was deeply sorry—congratulate and thank Mr. Kumlien for the admirable work that he is doing here. The progress he has made in the development of all our students, and especially those—more numerous than we imagined—who have small deformities, is the best response to those who accuse us of not being timely in maintaining the “Swedish”. [...] All Parisians who know the value of the gymnasium on *Rue de Londres* consider us particularly lucky for bringing its founder to teach the Ling method here. Do all the Rocks (*des Roches*) parents know that Mr. Kumlien began here, alone, with the help of a few students,

to build the most solid gymnasium equipment, that assembles and disassembles with a precision and speed that we marvel at? Even now, when he is not dedicating himself to the gymnastics, he oversees the carpentry and forge work, giving us all the example of tireless work and absolute dedication (La Gymnastique, 1914, p. 11, our translation).

In addition to building the equipment, Kumlien was also recognized for his skill in promoting events and festivals that avoided monotony and aroused attention. He gained such recognition not only among his peers, but also among those interested in practicing Swedish gymnastics, since the possibility of having him as a teacher in the activities promoted at his institute was also celebrated.

Despite this effort to defend the benefits of Swedish gymnastics, in 1928, three years after Kumlien left the School of the Rocks (*École des Roches*), Mary Butts (1928 apud Duval, 2006, p. 68), when visiting the institute, stated that three afternoons per week were dedicated to “physical culture”, and the students were divided into three groups: the most “delicate” did Swedish gymnastics, the “normal ones” did Hébert’s method, and the most “robust and athletic” did sports.

Given the above, it appears that Kumlien’s work with Swedish gymnastics brought him a certain prestige, as his institute gained more and more students and a new unit was opened, and the school in which he worked allowed him to build a gymnasium focused on Swedish gymnastics. At the same time, teaching Swedish gymnastics allowed this practice to be disseminated and adopted by different people. Teaching kept Kumlien connected to the debate on physical education in France, whether in the reception of people involved in this debate at his institute and the publication of this event in the newspapers, or working at the *École des Roches* and commenting on the ongoing debates at the International Congress of Physical Education in 1913.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The aim of the present article is to analyze the dissemination of Swedish gymnastics conducted by Kumlien in France, especially in Paris, between 1895 and 1921. Following the thread of his work led to the highly revealing plot of a cultural transmission process; that is, the process of circulating Swedish gymnastics around the world. Analyzing the trajectory of a subject meant understanding the role he played, the strategies he followed, the relationships he established, the places he occupied and the ways he acted that enabled his ideas on Swedish gymnastics to circulate in gymnastics exhibitions, teaching activities and, above all, in manuals in different territories and languages.

Kumlien traced his career path relative to gymnastics, starting in Eskilstuna, in Sweden. Later, he moved to Stockholm where he was trained at the GCI; and, finally, moved to Paris, France. When he arrived in France, he conducted three main activities: gymnastics exhibitions, teaching, and publishing manuals. In all these activities, Kumlien had different partners: journalists, doctors, politicians, editors, people involved in sports, science and/or the school.

Weaving this network with people belonging to different groups who were involved in the debate about French physical education was an important strategy to insert Kumlien into different spaces. Another strategy outlined by this group was the publication of articles, advertisements and notices about Kumlien’s presence in French newspapers aimed at the most different audiences and with significant circulation throughout the French territory.

Thus, in contact with a new culture and different persons, facing various forms of resistance and disclosing his gymnastics in different ways, Kumlien assumed multiple roles in the dissemination of Swedish gymnastics. He worked sometimes as a teacher in schools and in his institute, sometimes as a presenter in the exhibitions, writing manuals and publishing in newspapers. In this way, he got

his gymnastics to circulate in printed and translated manuals and taught and practiced in his classes and exhibitions in different territories.

Finally, the belief emerges that the path of other people dedicated to the dissemination of Swedish gymnastics — GCI's students or not — needs to be investigated, analyzing their tenures, distances, and transformations to disseminate and teach Swedish gymnastics, as well as the practices that inspired them to promote these changes. Thus, there would be important empirical material for understanding the circulation of this cultural object, which was part of the development of physical education in different territories.

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