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## Sport History

### *Gymnastics – Rhythmic*

#### **Origins and the sport today:**

The contemporary roots of rhythmic gymnastics point to the 1800s and 1900s, through the ideas of Frenchmen Jean-Georges NOVERRE, Francois DELSARTE and Rudolf BODE, who believed in movement expression and exercise. The sport's evolution owes a lot to classical ballet, along with the traditional German system of using apparatus work to develop muscles and the Swedish method of free exercise to develop rhythm.

Isadora DUNCAN provided the final piece of the jigsaw, credited as the 'mother of modern dance'. She brought the freedom of expression and creativity to rhythmic gymnastics that defines the discipline today.

The sport found its first home competitively in the USSR, where national championships began in 1948. Rhythmic gymnastics was recognised by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) in 1961, with the first world championships in Budapest, Hungary, in 1963.

#### **Rhythmic gymnastics at the Commonwealth Games:**

Rhythmic gymnastics is an optional sport at the Commonwealth Games, meaning it is up to the host federation to decide whether it should be on the program.

Consisting of individual all-around, team, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon, the Gold Coast 2018 women-only competition promises to be a feast for the eyes. Historically, rhythmic gymnastics first appeared at a Commonwealth Games at Auckland 1990, with the rope also making four appearances since then. Ribbon is the only individual discipline to have appeared at every Commonwealth Games since Auckland.

Canada has been the most successful nation, winning three of the five team gold medals since 1994. Patricia BEZZOUBENKO (CAN) is also the defending Commonwealth Games champion in the all-around, ball, hoop and clubs.

Frankie JONES (WAL) has been a huge success story at recent Commonwealth Games, winning one gold in the ribbon and six silver medals across the Delhi 2010 and Glasgow 2014 Games.

#### **Rhythmic gymnastics in Australia:**

Australian rhythmic gymnasts have enjoyed regular podium finishes at the Commonwealth Games, with Kasumi TAKAHASHI a particular standout. At just 14 years of age, she won five gold and one silver at the Edmonton 1994 Commonwealth Games, helping lift the sport's profile in her home country – TAKAHASHI reportedly helped boost milk sales by 50 per cent when her face was placed on the packaging. However, injury forced her to retire in 1997.

Naazmi JOHNSTON won three gold (team, all-around and ball) and two silver medals (ribbon and rope) at the Delhi 2010 Commonwealth Games and is also considered one of Australia's all-time elite gymnasts. Four years earlier, at the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, Kimberly MASON took silver with the ball, and two bronze, in the club and team event.