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Rondas Escolares and Physical Education: Between Traditions and Transitions in the Innovative Pedagogical Proposal of Music and Movement (Argentina, 1910)

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This research aims to investigate the pedagogical proposal of the “Rondas Escolares” (school rounds), an Enrique Romero Brest initiative as part of his Argentine System of Physical Education. This idea was developed especially during the 1910s, based on analyzing the book “Elementos de Gimnástica Fisiológica” (1911) and the *Revista de la Educación Física* in 1912. Despite being an innovative proposal in physical education and education in general, and appealing for its articulation of musical techniques with body techniques that condensed powerful discourses about the body and subjectivities, it did not significantly transcend beyond the tasks carried out by Romero Brest himself or his disciples.

How can music be used to educate the body? How does artistic movement techniques harmonize with those of physical exercises? How to conceive of a physical culture that embodies gymnastics, games, and dance? These are some of the questions that this proposal would seem to answer. Consequently, we will briefly analyze its structure, the use of sequenced images for its explanation, and the production of differentiated discourses around the introduction of childhood to a world of work, entertainment, and recreation.

These are physiological classes adapted to childhood, “special exercises grouped in the form of a circle and accompanied by songs” (Romero Brest, 1911, p. 506) that pursue hygienic, educational, aesthetic, physiological, and psychic objectives. Its structure always follows the same scheme: all classes must last 20 minutes and are made up of three moments. One in which slow marches must be developed, with varied evolutions until forming a circle, followed by the moment of the round itself where the song appears, the movements (mainly maintaining a circle), and the song of childhoods. Finally, a third moment of completion, in which slow marches and a series of deep breaths are made. Each movement is stipulated in advance in each round and is directed under the voice of command of the teacher.

The use of sequenced images to graphically explain the rounds is also an innovative aspect of the time. Some show generality and others individuality, but all record body movements for educational purposes. Childhoods – mostly female – who fictionalise for the camera, temporally and spatially fixing a way of moving (Pereyra & Galak, in press).

Finally, two types of discourses are identified: one that demonstrates the introduction of childhoods to the world of work of the dominant Argentine agro-export model at the time, and the other that does not. As if the singing, the music, and the movements also had the objective of dramatizing – like a story, with happy and heroic tones – the activities carried out by, for example, the carpenter, the fireman, the sailor, the day labourer who works in the tannery, and the peasant at work. At the same time, and to a lesser extent, there were those aimed at recreation, entertainment, and games, such as “A Jugar”, “Los juegos” and “El Lobo”.

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