

Gadamer’s Hermeneutic Universality of Play: The Greatest Form of Human Play is Art and its Signification to Movement Education

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Given that playful movement can be long-lasting and lead to health and well-being, the purpose of this concept-based paper was to showcase Gadamer’s hermeneutic universality of play, including the reasons the highest form of human play is art. Specifically, Gadamer’s universal elements of play are discussed, including its seriousness, non-purposeful nature, unique spirit, self-representation, and ideality via arts. The highest form of human play takes precedence in the arts because it represents the true before a participating audience. Subsequently, artistic play is timeless like the celebration of the festival whereby its playful nature sustains over time regardless of the way it is represented and experienced. In this paper, we also showcase how performing arts like dancing, aerial dancing, and physical theater encompass the universal qualities of play which assist with understanding the links among performing arts, the love of movement, health, and well-being. Therefore, key implications in movement education are proposed, including the need to incorporate corporeally expressed artistic, creative pieces (highest form of human play) within different settings like schools, sports clubs, recreational venues, and rehabilitation centers.

Keywords: *Universality of play; art as the ideality of play; Gadamer; performing arts; movement education*

Introduction

In his attempt to challenge the notion that universality in knowledge can be achieved only via the scientific method used in natural sciences (see also Wilson, 2022), Gadamer in his magnum opus *Truth and Method* showcased that there is universality in social sciences like in understanding human play (Gadamer, 1975/2012). Play constitutes movement and playful movement is part of culture and society; it is part of human nature (Gadamer, 1975/2012; Huizinga, 1950; Kosma, 2021; Sartre, 2003). Based on Gadamer (1975/2012), the highest form of human play is art, like the played festival, which is timeless and enduring. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to showcase Gadamer’s universal elements of play, including the reasons the highest form of human play is art. Given that performing arts incorporate all elements of human play like its seriousness, non-purposeful nature, fluid structure, timeless self-representation, and artistic expression of the true before a participating audience, implications for movement education are proposed. It is key to re-imagine movement programming by incorporating artistic, expressive, bodily elements across a variety of settings

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(e.g., schools, retirement and rehabilitation centers, recreational venues, and health and sports clubs). In this way, movement programs can be exciting for people to participate. Understanding the playful nature of physical culture via artistic play within movement programs can lead to meaningful, long-lasting physical activity participation linked to the love of movement, health, and well-being (Kosma & Erickson, 2020a, 2020b; Kosma et al., 2023a, 2023b; Kosma et al., 2021a, 2021b).

This concept-based paper is divided into five sections that showcase Gadamer's universality of play and its strong links to arts and performing arts. In this way, effective exercise programs can be developed and implemented for the love of movement, health, and well-being. In the first section, Gadamer's hermeneutic universality of play is explained by showcasing that the nature of play has key characteristics for *all* cultures (e.g., play is serious; it has no purpose; it has its own spirit/world; it is self-represented with its higher form being art). In the second section of the paper, I discuss in detail why art is the highest form of human play. Artistic work represents the true nature of play like in drama and festivals with strong links to real life as recognized by both the performers and spectators. In the third section, I showcase that artistic events like the festival are timeless; thus, their play is also timeless/contemporaneous. In the last two sections, I examine how performing arts encompass the universal qualities of play which assist with understanding the links among performing arts, the love of movement, and health. Subsequently, key implications in movement education are shared, including the importance to incorporate artistic, creative, and corporeally expressive activities within different settings that involve skill development and learning, fitness, games, recreation, and rehabilitation. Creative and arty movement programs can encompass the highest form of human play; thus, leading to the love of movement, health, and well-being.

The Universality of Play

Contrary to the emphasis on the subjective experiences of play in Kantian thought and modern research inquiries, Gadamer (1975/2012) showcased that hermeneutically play has universal elements and a holistic structure that reaches ideality in the arts. Based on Gadamer's magnum opus, *Truth and Method*, play has universal elements that attract the players to its magic. Although the subjective experiences of the players may vary, it is the universality of play that results in such a variety of practices and understandings. Therefore, Gadamer's key universal elements of play will be described below that explain the love of playful movement (Kosma, 2021). Inspired by the work of Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (1950), Gadamer's key elements of play are as follows:

1. Play is serious.
2. Play has no purpose; its to-and-fro movement is endless/infinite.
3. Play's outcome is unknown, so there is risk.
4. Play has its own spirit (e.g., rules, regulations, and a playing field).
5. Play is self-represented.

6. Play represents the true and involves participating spectators, thus its highest form is art.

Based on Gadamer (1975/2012), an important element of play that justifies its hermeneutic universality – vs. the players’ subjective views as studied mainly in modern scientific inquiries – is that **play is serious**. Although the player may think that play is not serious (Kosma et al., 2023a), play is very serious, and this is why it “gives play its ‘purpose’”, which is nothing else than for its own sake, for “recreation” (Aristotle, 350 BCE/1962; Gadamer, 1975/2012. p. 102; Huizinga, 1950; Kosma, 2021; Kosma et al., 2023a).

“Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in play is necessary to make the play wholly play. Someone who does not take the game seriously is a spoilsport. The mode of being of play does not allow the player to behave toward play as if toward an object. The player knows very well what play is... but he does not know what exactly he ‘knows’ in knowing that” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 103).

One cannot rely on the subjective reflections of the player to understand the nature of play. Rather, “play has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 103). The players simply represent play, but they are “not the subjects of play” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 103). “The actual subject of play is not the subjectivity of an individual who, among other activities, also plays, but is instead the play itself” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 104).

Gadamer’s second universal element of play is its purposelessness. The essence of play is its “*to-and-fro movement* that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end.; rather it renews itself in constant repetition” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 104). Ball games are an excellent example of the infinite to-and-fro movement because “the ball is freely mobile in every direction, appearing to do surprising things of its own accord” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 106). This *endless* to-and-fro movement is proof of play’s *absence of purpose* (Gadamer, 1975/2012; Huizinga, 1950; Kosma, 2021; Rodriguez, 2006). People do not play to increase skill, fitness levels, and improve mental health. Although all that may be positive side effects of play, the players enjoy the game because of its very nature (e.g., the to-and-fro movement in soccer, basketball, volleyball, etc.) (Kosma, 2021). Not only is play’s movement without purpose but also it is without “strain.” “The ease of play is... experienced subjectively as relaxation. The structure of play absorbs the player into itself, and thus frees him from the burden of taking the initiative, which constitutes the actual strain of existence” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 105; Kosma, 2021).

Gadamer’s third universal element of play is that *when at play there is always something at risk*. Players may have different playing strategies and possibilities, but the *outcome is unknown*; it may not be successful or continue to being successful (Huizinga, 1950; Kosma, 2021). Yet, this is “the attraction of the game. Whoever ‘tries’ is in fact the one who is tried... What holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there is the game itself” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 106).

Another universal element of play is that *it has its own spirit*, thus it is attractive to the player. “The variety of mental attitudes exhibited in playing various games, and in the desire to play them, is the result and not the cause of the differences among the games themselves” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 107). The nature or spirit of a game and “the way the field of the game is filled” is based on its “**rules and regulations**” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 107). “This is true universally, whenever there is a game” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 107; Huizinga, 1950; Kosma, 2021). In other words, the game has a “certain structure which determines its movement from within” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 107; Kosma, 2021; Mitchell, 2018; Rodriguez, 2006). There are universal rules and regulations for different games like soccer, basketball, baseball, which determine their structure and variety in experience.

The *unique spirit of human play* that encompasses its structure is that “it plays *something*” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 107). Different games have a certain quality that attracts the player; the player chooses game A vs. game B because of the different structures of the games. Playing with waves while swimming or surfing has a different quality from playing tennis. “**Human play requires a playing field**”, which is also part of the play’s structure (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 107; Huizinga, 1950; Kosma, 2021). The playing field is a “closed world”, which is very different from real life whereby there is purpose and goals to be achieved (Gadamer, 1975/2012; Huizinga, 1950; Kosma, 2021; Mitchell, 2018; Rodriguez, 2006). The rules of the game and playing field give the player a task (i.e., “playing of something”). However, the purpose of the game is not “to resolve any task” but “order and shape the movement of the game itself” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 107).

Certainly, when a task in a game is solved, there is a sense of “lightness and relief” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 108; Huizinga, 1950; Kosma, 2021); however, never is the goal to solve the task; rather this is a way to “present” the game or play (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 108). This “*self-representation*” of play is “a universal ontological characteristic of nature.” The games always represent something (e.g., “Tinker, Tailor, soldier, Sailor... children playing cars”) (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 108). Understanding the “form of living things” in nature has nothing to do with a “biological purpose” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 108, Huizinga, 1950). Therefore, “human play is self-represented via the players’ conduct, which is tied to the make-believe goals of the game. The meaning of the game though is not to achieve those goals; “rather, in spending oneself on the task of the game, one is in fact playing oneself out” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 108).

The *highest order of play is seen in art*, which is Gadamer’s last universal characteristic of play. Play finds its ideality and full structure in art because it involves the existence of an audience – it is presented to someone – and, at times, it represents the true (i.e., real life like in comedy and tragedy). We will elaborate below on these points as we examine in more detail the artistic element of human play.

Art is the highest form of Human Play

Human play is transformed into structure via art (its greatest form). Transformation is not alteration because in alteration “what is altered also remains the same and is maintained” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 110); however, in transformation “something is suddenly and as a whole something else, that this other transformed thing that it has become is its true being, in comparison with which its earlier being is nil... Thus transformation into structure means that what existed previously exists no longer. But also, what now exists, what represents itself in the play of art, is the lasting and true” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 111). In other words, artistic play has “absolute autonomy”, “it is repeatable and thus permanent (Bellah, 2011; Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 110; Huizinga, 1950; Kosma, 2021).

Play’s transformation is represented by the players not through their subjective experiences but through the art they represent. Play’s significance is not the personal perspectives of the players, including actors, playwrights, composers, because they only represent play’s nature. They are disguised, not transformed; their main goal is not to change their being but to pretend that they are somebody else, so the audience think that the actors are indeed a play’s character (which is the true in play). The nature of play is universal regardless of who is representing its “work or ergon.” The audience is not concerned with the player’s true identity, but with the meaning of their representation – the meaning of play, which has its own world (Gadamer, 1975/2012).

It is the play of art that transforms reality “into its truth” via imitation (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 112; Tate, 2009). The artists imitate reality, true existence that everybody recognizes. It is what they represent that counts via their disguise. “When the children dress up... they do not want to be discovered behind their disguise. The child intends that what he represents should exist, and if something is to be guessed, then this is it” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p.113). When the actor is representing a play their “private, particular being of the actor” disappears; the actor’s identity is not important. The spectator as well as the actor are interested in what is represented in the play, which is true and valid. When the actor imitates and represents the story of a play, they have essential knowledge of what they represent; it is knowledge of the true.

Although artistic play has its unique, universal world, like in sports, one of the reasons play finds its complete structure in arts is because it is a reminder of reality (Gadamer, 1975/2012; Rasmussen & Gürgens, 2006; Tate, 2009). The difference between reality and a dramatic play is “superseded” because “the pleasure of drama is the same in both cases (play or real life): it is the joy of knowledge” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 112, parenthesis added). What is played is familiar to real life; it represents “the comedy and tragedy of life”; aspects we “desire”, “fear”, or are undecided about in the future (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 112). The play of art reaches its full “transformation into structure” or “into the true” by representing reality. As Aristotle exemplified, the tragedy in play is also the tragedy in real life evoking such overwhelming emotions to the spectator as “eleos” (pity) and “phobos” (fear).

“Phobos is a cold shudder that makes one’s blood run cold, that make one shiver... the shivers of apprehension that come over us for someone who we see rushing to his destruction and for whom we fear” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 126).

Similarly, “eleos” or sensations of misery is not just “an inner state of mind”, but rather the unity between the spectator and the tragic like the life of Oedipus (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 126). These sensations of “eleos” and “phobos” “are modes of ekstasis, being outside oneself, which testifies to the power of what is being played out before us” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 126).

This “tragic pensiveness” is therapeutic and cathartic in nature; it has a metaphysical meaning that overtakes the spectator (Emunah, 2020; Gadamer, 1975/2012; Pendzik, 2006; Shapiro & Hunt, 2003; Solbakk, 2006). The spectator is not just an observer at a distance enjoying an artistic work (aesthetic consciousness). but they actually participate by recognizing the tragic events within their own stories and lives (Gadamer, 1975/2012; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2023). These tragic events have taken place in the spectator’s history, tradition, religion, language, or culture. This recognition is true also for the creator of art and the performer. They want to have an effect on people (the spectators) by showing how the work of art links to the existing world, culture, and society (Gadamer, 1975/2012). Play brings a state of “self-realization, sheer fulfillment, *energeia* which has its *telos* within itself” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 112; Huizinga, 1950; Kosma, 2021).

Therefore, the second reason play finds its complete structure within art is because it involves spectators. In fact, “play is experienced properly by, and presents itself (as it is ‘meant’) to, one who is not acting in the play but watching it. In him the game is raised, as it were, to its ideality” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 109). In other words, in artistic play not only are the players playing their roles and are absorbed in the play as an end in itself, but mainly this type of play “puts the spectator in the place of the player. He – and not the player – is the person for and in whom the play is played” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 109). Both the player and the spectator experience the whole nature of play, which has “meaning to be understood” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 110) – it is meaningful for both of them and any differences between the two are “superseded” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 110).

To summarize, play finds its ideality and full structure within art because it represents reality via its players who present it to a participating audience. The work of art is presented to the spectator, who also “belongs to play”, only “in being played” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 115). The performance of a play is part of the play’s true essence and being – they are inseparable. The aesthetic consciousness (subjective experiences) of the play is not the true being of the artistic work. “The work of art is encountered only through its performance... a drama really exists only when it is played” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 115). The being of play takes place during its presentation and the aesthetic consciousness is simply “part of the *event of being that occurs in presentation*, and belongs essentially to the play as play” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 115, emphasis on the original). In other words, an artistic work (e.g., drama) comes into existence only via its play. Ontologically, this means that

“play is structure... it is a meaningful whole which can be repeatedly presented... and the significance of which can be understood. But structure is also play... it achieves its full being only each time it is played” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 116).

It does not matter how a poet forms a poem or how the actor represents it or how the audience recognizes it; the end result is the “same thing (the artistic work) that comes to existence” regardless of the subjective conceptions of the creator of art, the actor, and the spectator, which are secondary in essence (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 116). The true being of artistic work has a structure that comes to life only when it is played.

Certainly, performances and interpretations of a play can vary. This only shows “the work’s own possibilities” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 117). The different variations of an artistic work are not “free and arbitrary. In fact, they are all subject to the supreme criterion of “right” representation” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 117). This does not mean that there is a fixed criterion to represent an artistic work. Although there is a traditional model of the work as represented by its creator, there is “free creation” and “re-creation” or “interpretation” of the work in a way that the work’s “identity and continuity” over time holds strong (Gadamer, 1975/2012, pp. 117-118; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2023). The artistic representation (performance or total mediation) of the work of art occurs when it becomes one with the work without losing its identity: “... the performance is not thematic, but the work presents itself through it and in it” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 118; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2023). A work of art is “*contemporaneous with every age*”; its identity is maintained throughout time – it is timeless and unique (“part of itself”) even if it is next to other works of art in a gallery (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 119).

The Timelessness of Play as seen in Art

To understand the timelessness of artistic play it is important to answer the following question: “what kind of temporality belongs to a work of art?” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 120). As discussed, the presentation of an artistic work is part of the work itself (the work “cannot be detached from its presentation”); thus, when the artistic work is presented “the unity and identity of a structure emerge... This means that however much it is transformed and distorted in being presented, it still remains itself” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 120). Although the representation (via play) of an artistic work has to hold up to its standard (structure), this repetition of the work is never the same. In fact, “each repetition is as original as the work itself” because it is part of the structure of that work (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 120). If we use the repetition of festivals as an example, the uniqueness of a festival is not its “historical temporality” – its experience each time of succession – but the fact that its unique structure/nature does not change (“it still remains one and the same festival”) regardless of how it is celebrated – “in such and such a way, then differently, and then differently again” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 121).

The historical experiences of a festival are secondary. The identity of and originality of the festival is that it is to be celebrated on a regular basis, even if it is not celebrated exactly the same way as before and/or since its inception. In fact, the “original essence of a festival is always to be something different” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 121). Its representation is expected to vary, but it is the same festival (“*sui generis*”). The being of a festival does not relate to the subjective experiences of those celebrating it; rather “the festival is celebrated because it is there” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 121).

In other words, the contemporaneity of the work of art (like the festival) is not its aesthetic consciousness (e.g., how different objects of art are aesthetically experienced at the same time) but its full presence via its presentation that links the past to the present. Contemporaneity in theology does not mean to “exist at the same time” but to merge “one’s own present and the redeeming act of Christ” in such a way that the latter is seriously experienced “at present” and not “in a distant past” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 124).

The festival is celebrated via the presence of spectators with their whole being (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 121). When a spectator is present, they are actually participating in the artistic work by being completely devoted to the task at hand like the *Theoros* in Greek metaphysics (Gadamer, 1975/2012). So, when the spectator attends a ceremony, they forget everything else, including their very “own purposes”; they “give oneself in self-forgetfulness”; they are “outside oneself” because their “whole being is with something else” (the festival) (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 122; Prendergast, 2004).

In other words, the mode of being of the work of art is its full presence before the spectator in such a way that results in the “spectator’s ecstatic self-forgetfulness” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 124; Prendergast, 2004), whereby they are completely absorbed in the artistic work – even though its presentation may vary – and find meaning within their own being. The presence of the artistic work before a spectator reflects “its very essence” – “the spectator is an essential element in the kind of play we call aesthetic” (Gadamer, 1975/2012, p. 125; Prendergast, 2004).

Performing Arts is Play

Given that the highest form of play is artistic work, in this section we will showcase how certain movement-central performing arts activities are captivating to both the performer and audience because of their universally playful nature. This is key because in the next section implications for movement education programs will be proposed considering the importance of performing arts to the love of movement, health, and well-being (e.g., Kosma, 2023; Kosma et al., 2023a; Kosma et al., 2021a, 2021b).

In several empirical studies, it is shown that dancing like aerial dancing and/or physical theater (artistic expression via mainly bodily movement) improve mental and physical health; lead to the love of movement and healthy lifestyles like increased physical activity and healthy diet; and they are viewed as playful and enjoyable by both the performers and spectators (Kosma & Erickson, 2020a,

2020b; Kosma et al., 2023a, 2023b; Kosma et al., 2021a, 2021b). During these activities, performers find meaning and joy not only in the creation of the expressive artistic pieces but also in their sharing with an audience; a process that keeps them excited and captivated to the art of movement (Kosma & Erickson, 2020a, 2020b; Kosma et al., 2023a, 2023b; Kosma et al., 2021a, 2021b). Such artistic endeavors evoke sensations of flow, ecstasy, and deep connection with others (Kosma & Erickson, 2020a, 2020b; Kosma et al., 2023a, 2023b; Kosma et al., 2021a, 2021b). Certain arty creations in performing arts also reflect reality that captivate both the performers and spectators; they evoke tragic emotions and instead of escaping reality – a Kantian approach in art – these artistic pieces come close to real life experiences like sensations of suffocation, drowning, struggling, surviving, and thriving (Kosma et al., 2023a; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2023). This is evidence of how human play comes to its full structure via artistic representations – in this case performing arts - that capture the true.

It is the universally playful nature of performing arts that attracts the performer. Beyond its self-representation and presentation of the true before an audience, performing arts captures all elements of play as exemplified by Gadamer, including its seriousness, to-and-fro movement, unknown outcome, and its unique spirit and world. Although in performing arts the individual performances and aesthetic consciousness may vary, the artistic expressions – full mediation of play – capture the universal nature of dancing, aerial dancing, and physical theater. There is a “model” of excellence, which is not thematic, and each performance is timeless, portraying the true nature of dance, aerial dance, and/or physical theater. The reliance on physical expression via the use of two pieces of fabric (aerial silks) and other equipment (e.g., stools, swords, and tables); the similar but also unique interactions with the silks and others; and the creative pieces are all based on the universal nature of physical theater, which is represented in acting, dancing, and/or aerial dancing (Kosma & Erickson, 2020a, 2020b; Kosma et al., 2023a, 2023b, 2023c; Kosma et al., 2021a, 2021b). The playful structure of physical theater is recognized by the performers. It gives them a sense of freedom, respite, childhood, close community, risk, and a venue to express before an audience (Kosma et al., 2023a, 2023b, 2023c; Kosma et al., 2021a). When creating a performance every performer tries to follow the “model” structure in performing arts’ play even though each performance is unique as expected within the universality of artistic play.

Examples of such playful and universal structures in performing arts include the ways one climbs, inverts, and ties knots in aerial skills; the need for the floating aerialists to freely move from one position to another; the existence and nature of poses; the bodily and facial expressions; the interaction with the audience; the playing field (e.g., studio and theater stage); the seriousness of each performance (even though subjectively certain performers may think that physical theater is not serious); and the risk of the unknown in performance (the quality of each performance and its accurate interpretation are not known in advance) (Kosma & Erickson, 2020a, 2020b; Kosma et al., 2023a, 2023b; Kosma et al., 2021a, 2021b). This artistic, ultimate form of human play captivates the performers and the audience. The presentation and self-representation of performing arts is

magical and charming because of its very universal, playful nature (Kosma, 2021; Kosma et al., 2023a; Kosma et al., 2021a, 2021b).

Implications for Movement Education and Conclusion

Given that the ideality of play is in art like performing arts, movement educators are in a pivotal position when it comes to programming. Although most Kinesiology experts in North America are vastly detached from performing arts, it is crucial to return to our roots and re-examine movement education. Kinesiologists need to collaborate with experts in performing arts and identify movement programs that can have artistic elements in them, fulfilling the outmost nature of play and making movement education a meaningful, engaging, enjoyable, and long-lasting experience for all age groups.

Playful artistic elements in movement education include opportunities to create physically demanding creative pieces to share a story within different settings like schools, sports clubs, recreational venues, and rehabilitation centers. Encompassing seasonal skits and plays at schools (e.g., during religious holidays) via bodily movement can be a way to reach the highest form of human play. This can be facilitated by physical educators. Older adults can engage in dancing and bodily theatrical movement by emphasizing freedom and creativity in expression vs. only technical aspects. Children can imitate superheroes during school recess. In rehabilitation settings, clinical populations can improve their body schema (e.g., body posture, awareness, confidence, and physicality) via playful, artistic expressions (Kosma et al., 2023c). Such artistic expressions can be individualized and group-based before a real or even an imaginary audience. Incorporating spectators when learning, creating, and performing a variety of sport skills can be another way to link the beautiful and artistic play of sports to their highest form.

In conclusion, the purpose of this paper was to showcase Gadamer's universal elements of play, including the reasons the highest form of human play is art. Given that performing arts incorporate all elements of human play like its seriousness, non-purposeful nature, fluid structure, timeless self-representation, and artistic expression of the true before an audience, implications for movement education were proposed above. Based on this philosophical framework, it is critical to re-imagine movement programming by incorporating bodily, creative, playful, artistic expression in a variety of settings like schools, retirement and rehabilitation centers, health and sports clubs, and recreational endeavors. If movement becomes creative and artistic, it reaches the highest form of human play, leading to the love of movement, health, and well-being.

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