

BODY EXPRESSIVENESS, MOTOR SKILLS, AND ARTISTIC PRESENCE IN GYMNASTICS AND DANCE

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ABSTRACT. In artistic sports such as gymnastics and dance, body expressiveness functions as a powerful form of nonverbal communication and a decisive factor in performance quality. Motor skills—including coordination, strength, flexibility, and postural control—provide the technical foundation that allows athletes to convey musical themes, emotions, and complex artistic ideas with authenticity and precision. Musicality, understood as the ability to interpret, represent, and embody the music through movement, is equally essential: it transforms choreography into a vivid, emotionally engaging performance. Artistic presence, encompassing originality, fluid transitions, and emotional engagement, plays a critical role in modern scoring systems, where even minor differences in technical execution can be offset by superior artistry and expressive musical interpretation. Drawing from sports dance techniques and diverse choreographic approaches, coaches and athletes can access a wide range of movements, rhythms, and dynamic accents that amplify both the visual and emotional impact of a routine. By integrating musicality, body expressiveness, artistic presence, and motor development, athletes can elevate execution quality and enhance their potential for achieving top rankings in gymnastics and dance competitions.

Keywords: dance; gymnastics; artistic presence; body expressiveness; motor skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Body expressiveness and artistic presence have become central to contemporary performance in both dance and gymnastics. Artistic sports no longer rely exclusively on technical perfection but require athletes to communicate emotion and narrative through movement (Chappell et al., 2021). Dance, traditionally associated with aesthetic communication, provides an ideal framework for understanding how gestures, postures, and motor control support expressiveness (Dianhuai, 2023; Chirazi, 2022). Gymnastics, although rooted in athletic execution, has gradually integrated artistry as a decisive factor in evaluation, particularly in disciplines such as aerobic and rhythmic gymnastics (Ghezea, Stoica, Bota, Teodorescu, & Gherghel, 2025). Ballroom dancing is making an increasingly significant contribution to gymnastics choreography, particularly Latin American dances, which are more physically demanding than Standard dances (Liiv et al., 2012), improves aerobic endurance and develops coordination, stimulating memory and body control (Van et al., 2024).

Recent reviews show that dance and expressive movement contribute not only to aesthetic value but also to athletes' psychological well-being and social-emotional development (Narikbayeva et al., 2025), stimulating multiple intelligences (Tomescu, Bălan, Aivaz & Zahiu, 2025).

This article provides an integrative synthesis of research addressing the intersection of motor skill development, artistic expressiveness, and performance presence in gymnastics and dance.

BODY EXPRESSIVENESS AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Body expressiveness is a complex, nonverbal communication system where gestures, postures, and spatial dynamics transmit meaning beyond verbal language (Chirazi, 2022). It enables performers to translate emotions, intentions, and narratives into physical form, creating a silent yet powerful dialogue with the audience. In dance, this ability is foundational for conveying choreographic intention, allowing performers to interpret music and themes with authenticity and subtlety. This sport involves cognitive processes, motivations, attitudes, mental states, and various personality traits (Manos, 2016). Choreographers often rely on the dancer's capacity to embody abstract ideas, while spectators decode these physical signals through cultural and emotional lenses (Năstase, 2010).

In gymnastics, body expressiveness serves a different but equally crucial role: it transforms highly technical sequences into emotionally engaging performances. Without expressiveness, routines risk appearing mechanical and purely athletic. When athletes integrate fluid transitions, nuanced dynamics,

and expressive gestures, their execution acquires depth and artistic identity. This expressive dimension has become increasingly relevant in disciplines such as aerobic and rhythmic gymnastics, where scoring systems reward not only technical precision but also presentation, interpretation, and creativity (Ghezea et al., 2025).

Moreover, Chappell et al. (2021) highlight that expressive movement enhances both aesthetic quality and psychological well-being across the lifespan. It fosters self-awareness, creativity, and emotional release, benefits that extend beyond the performance stage and support long-term athlete development (Bota, Urzeală & Mezei, 2012). Through body expressiveness, athletes bridge the gap between athletic skill and artistic storytelling, a quality audiences and judges alike perceive as artistry.

MOTOR SKILLS AND TECHNICAL FOUNDATIONS

Motor abilities such as coordination, balance, flexibility, and strength form the essential physical base that allows artistic elements to emerge authentically (Dianhuai, 2023). Psychomotor training and movement re-education shape the gymnasts' personality by linking action with the discovery of the environment for learning purposes (Tanasă et. al., 2024). Coordination enables athletes to execute complex movement sequences with timing and precision; balance ensures fluid control over posture and spatial orientation; flexibility expands the body's expressive range, while strength provides the dynamic power required for explosive jumps, sustained lines, and controlled landings. (Dianhuai, 2023)

Specialists in the field consider it necessary to educate the expressive aspects of motor skills. Dance allows the development of creativity, originality, sociability, and aesthetic posture through movement, contributing to the psychomotor development of athletes (Macovei, 2013). In gymnastics, postural control and dynamic strength are indispensable. Athletes must demonstrate stable support positions, explosive power in jumps, and precise rotations while maintaining composure and grace. Without a well-developed motor foundation, expressive movement risks instability or loss of control. Dancers, conversely, rely heavily on fine motor control to execute smooth transitions, intricate footwork, and expressive upper-body gestures. Fluidity and subtle emotional cues depend on muscular endurance and refined kinesthetic awareness.

Ghezea et al. (2025) underline that aerobic gymnastics increasingly rewards the seamless integration of technical mastery with creative, expressive movement. Judges evaluate not only the difficulty and accuracy of elements but also their artistic framing and musical coherence. This reflects a paradigm shift: physical preparation is no longer sufficient on its own but must serve as the platform for artistic innovation.

ARTISTIC PRESENCE AND EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Artistic presence refers to the performer's charisma, emotional projection, and ability to captivate the audience. It is a synthesis of confidence, authenticity, and energetic connection that transforms well-executed routines into memorable experiences. Stage presence involves more than smiling or posing; it requires internalizing the choreography's emotional tone and delivering it with conviction. As a creative process, dance involves the intellect for the correct representation of movements; emotions, as a natural form of expression; the body, as the external means of conveying the artistic form of dance; and personality, which animates the other components (Vişan, 2005).

Narikbayeva et al. (2025) report that dance-based training enhances social skills and emotional intelligence, which directly influence a performer's ability to connect with audiences and judges. Emotional intelligence supports the interpretation of music and narrative, enabling athletes to express vulnerability, strength, or joy through movement. Gymnasts who develop this expressive charisma often achieve superior scores, even when technical differences between competitors are minimal (Ghezea et al., 2025).

Artistic presence also contributes to psychological resilience. Performers who feel confident in their expressive identity cope better with competitive stress and engage audiences with authenticity. This element often distinguishes elite athletes, as technical mastery alone rarely guarantees long-term recognition without a compelling artistic voice (Manos, 2016).

INTERDISCIPLINARY SYNERGY: DANCE AND GYMNASTICS

Dance training enriches gymnastics by providing tools for musical interpretation, expressive transitions, and choreographic originality (Chappell et al., 2021). Ballet and contemporary dance, for instance, teach gymnasts fluidity, line extension, and dynamic phrasing, while modern dance fosters improvisation and personal expression. Such cross-training encourages gymnasts to approach routines not merely as a series of elements but as artistic compositions.

Conversely, gymnastic conditioning supports dancers' strength, power, and stability. Techniques such as plyometrics, core strengthening, and balance exercises from gymnastics help dancers achieve higher jumps, improved alignment, and injury prevention. This bidirectional exchange creates well-rounded performers capable of combining athletic power with expressive nuance (Macovei, 2013).

By integrating both fields, coaches can design training programs that cultivate physical excellence alongside creativity. This approach reflects contemporary judging trends in both gymnastics and dance, where versatility, innovation, and artistry increasingly define competitive success.

DISCUSSIONS

Reviewing the available literature reveals a strong consensus: performance quality in artistic sports emerges from the synergy of physical capability and expressive artistry. Dance research demonstrates the psychosocial and aesthetic benefits of movement creativity, highlighting its impact on confidence, social integration, and emotional well-being (Chappell et al., 2021; Dianhuai, 2023). Gymnastics literature (Ghezea et al., 2025) confirms the growing weight of artistry in scoring systems, emphasizing the necessity of combining physical training with expressive coaching.

Narikbayeva et al. (2025) further illustrate that creative dance fosters emotional intelligence, empathy, and social adaptability—skills that empower athletes to perform with authenticity under competitive pressure. Together, these findings suggest that traditional training models focused solely on strength and precision should evolve toward holistic methods that integrate psychological and artistic development.

CONCLUSIONS

This review highlights that motor skills, body expressiveness, and artistic presence form an inseparable triad in modern gymnastics and dance. Athletic excellence emerges not only from physical conditioning but also from the ability to communicate meaning and emotion through movement. We consider that coaches and educators should integrate dance-based techniques into gymnastics training to cultivate expressiveness, musicality, and emotional projection while maintaining technical rigor. Such interdisciplinary approaches can help athletes achieve competitive success and foster a richer, more meaningful experience for performers and audiences alike.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Spînu A., Ene-Voiculescu C. and Tomescu G. contributed to the design of the research and to the writing of the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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