

***Choreography of music. Process of creation according to the principles of plastique animée on the example of music by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki 'Kleines Requiem für eine Polka op. 66', choreography created by Barbara Dutkiewicz and Iga Eckert***

Barbara Dutkiewicz

The article describes the work process of creating music choreography during the workshop week LTT (Learning Teaching Training) 21-25.03.2022 as a part of the international project Eurhythmics in Education and Artistic Practice implemented thanks to the program Erasmus + (module ‚Plastique animée - tradition and contemporary performing’).

The starting point for the training is a specific intellectual achievement of the Polish Eurhythmics School in the field of plastique animée, enriched by my individual approach to composing movement to music. It results from many years of experience in the eurhythmics profession completed by in-depth studies, research, theatrical and dance experience, performing activities, etc. The main assumption, however, was the desire to share the way of working on plastique animée with an international forum. The traditional method of working on musical choreography has been developed in Poland for over 100 years. This project give an opportunity to verify it practically from the perspective of contemporary artists from Austria. We undertook an attempt to transfer valuable elements of the traditional work attitude to the contemporary means of stage expression as well as structural and expressive possibilities of contemporary performing arts.

It should be emphasized that I was guided not only by an artistic but also an educational goal. This had an immense impact on the way the entire creative process was carried out and its final stage effect.

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***Choreography of music. Process of creation according to the principles of plastique animée on the example of music by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki 'Kleines Requiem für eine Polka op. 66', choreography created by Barbara Dutkiewicz and Iga Eckert***

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**The main reasons for the creation of the choreographic work**

This choreography was created during the workshop week LTT (Learning Teaching Training) 21-25.03.2022 as a part of the international project Eurhythmics in Education and Artistic Practice implemented thanks to the program Erasmus + (module ‚Plastique animée - tradition and contemporary performing’)<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, this work had both artistic and educational/cognitive aspect. The module ended with the ‚Concert of Plastique Animée and improvisation’, where the choreography has its premiere. The LTT took place in the Theater Hall of The Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, Poland. The participants were students<sup>2</sup> from Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien, Austria<sup>3</sup> and students from the eurhythmics specialty at The Department of Music Education and Eurhythmics in AM Katowice<sup>4</sup>. The entire creation process was prepared and conducted by Associate Professor Barbara Dutkiewicz<sup>5</sup> with the help of Iga Eckert, MA.<sup>6</sup>

The starting point for the training is a specific intellectual achievement of the Polish Eurhythmics School in the field of plastique animée, enriched by my individual approach to composing movement to music. It results from many years of experience in the

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<sup>1</sup> Attached to this article you may find short videos illustrating the creative process coming from the week of an intensive workshop activities.

<sup>2</sup> Austrian students: Theresa Kanak, Caterina Voegel, Emilia Forck, Antonia Luksch, Hanna Spannagl, Zurisadai Rivas, Mohadese Siasar, Sabrina Kuenig, Marta Ansone, Nicola Hudelmayer.

<sup>3</sup> MdW eurhythmics teachers: prof. Hanne Pilgrim, Jutta Goldgruber and Christoph Falschlunger.

<sup>4</sup> Polish students: Paulina Figaszewska, Blanka Moryc, Natalia Kidoń, Patrycja Widlarz, Marianna Siptarova, Oliwia Skrzypczak, Patrycja Wywrocka, Ewelina Gałysa, Natalia Janikowska, Maria Flig, Marta Jarzyna, Karolina Lisowska, Martyna Wojsyk.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Dutkiewicz (PhD, hab.) works as an Associate Professor at The Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, Poland

<sup>6</sup> Iga Eckert, MA. Masters in both Eurhythmics and Conducting of vocal and vocal-instrumental ensembles. Lecturer at The Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, Poland.

eurhythmics profession completed by in-depth studies, research, theatrical and dance experience, performing activities, etc. The main assumption, however, was the desire to share the way of working on *plastique animée* with an international forum. The traditional method of working on musical choreography has been developed in Poland for over 100 years. This project give an opportunity to verify it practically from the perspective of contemporary artists from Austria. We undertook an attempt to transfer valuable elements of the traditional work attitude to the contemporary means of stage expression as well as structural and expressive possibilities of contemporary performing arts.

It should be emphasized that I was guided not only by an artistic but also an educational goal. This had an immense impact on the way the entire creative process was carried out and its final stage effect.

### **Initial assumptions**

*Plastique animée* is a very specific, original, wonderful, difficult, useful, practical, demanding and challenging way of working with music and movement. It allows you to experience the content of music (both structure, components proportions, parameters and energetic process, emotional layer, performance nuances and expression). It also requires a lot of intellectual, emotional and physical effort in mastering movement techniques of music choreography material and memorizing it. In my opinion to experience this process as well as emotions completely the stage performance is necessary.

Both the creative process including active participation and the moment of the stage presentation with full range of emotions when a performer can achieve a specific presence experience in combination with other performers, music, audience reaction/feedback. Therefore, when working on the issue of *plastique animée*, my assumption was to prepare and present on stage, together with students, a musical choreography that would emotionally engage the learner/performer and the audience. The possibility of public presentation gives satisfaction and sense of accomplishment to the participant of the creative process. The performance closes the whole complicated and complex process of working on *plastique animée*.

### **The choice of music**

I chose a large orchestral piece consisting of several different parts, each of which brings a new challenge. But only the whole allows you to experience the entire energetic process of this composition and its emotional content. Each part of the work, at the same time, became a pretext to conduct the creative process in a slightly different way and to tackle other musical and compositional issues which became key elements in the process of composing movement to music. In the process of choreography composing, together with a team of students from another university, I also wanted to include certain issues to which we usually devote more attention in the curriculum and educational process. Therefore, I assigned a selected issue to an individual part of the musical work. Of course, the choice of music was correlated with this intention and the issues I chose resulted from the structure of the selected piece. Part One - motif, phrase. Part Two - polyrhythm, multiplanarity. Part Three - movement stylization inspired by folklore. Part Four - texture and multiplanarity. We worked on the piece 'Kleines Requiem für eine Polka op. 66' written by the former Rector of our academy, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki.

The word "polka" in Polish language can be understood in two ways. 'Polka' (written with a capital letter) is a woman of Polish nationality, and "polka" (written with a small letter) is a Czech dance. It is also significant that the composer never wrote down this title in Polish to avoid any classification, so he did not specify which polka he meant. This understatement, he was playing with, allowed us to play with the dance form and the lyrical "mournful" melody at the same time.

### **What theoreticians write about this piece of music**

*'Henryk Mikołaj Górecki - „Kleines Requiem für eine Polka’ op. 66 for piano and 13 instruments (1993)*

*A peculiar and enigmatic composition by Henryk Mikołaj Górecki. The author never revealed the origin of the title, he only mentioned that the thing is a testimony to the sadness that overtook him after the collapse of Czechoslovakia. And this is probably the right clue in understanding the piece. After all, the work seems to contain longing and nostalgia, the melancholy characteristic of our southern neighbors, often covered with apparent gaiety (cheerfulness?) and even circus buffoonery. This 'smile through tears' reflects the sound material used. Funeral content in the form of a chorale incipit Dies irae, with a lyrical melody of folk provenance, collides with lively Czech dance. Intended for piano and 13 instruments, the composition has four movements. Tranquillo opens with the ominous sound of bells and a persistently recurring figure in the piano part with empty*

*fifths in the background. The tender melodic thread in muted dynamics is then developed by the strings, only to repeat the material in a moment with the strength of a desperate scream. The expressively intense second movement, Allegro impetuoso-marcatisimo, includes a broad consonance of the piano with prominent thirds, so characteristic of Górecki, and provocative motifs of the other instruments. The link is crowned by the touching singing of the clarinet and a subtle coda of the strings. In Allegro-deciso assai reflects Górecki's penchant for simple, folk music accompanying free play. When the dizzying pace of the dance stops, the mood of the last bars of the second movement returns, which determines the final Adagio-cantabiles, with piano chords fading into nothingness.*

*,Kleines Requiem für eine Polka' was commissioned in 1993 by the Holland Festival. The recipient of the dedication is the Schönberg Ensemble, which will perform the composition in Krakow. The premiere in June 1993 in Amsterdam was conducted by Reinbert de Leeuw.'*<sup>7</sup>

### **Method of work (choreography creation process)**

Since there are many numerous approaches to music choreography I wanted to use a different approach in each part so that participants could experience these diversity of creative process in work on music interpretation.

**Part One** - (the most contemporary valuable and creative method is used) - students experience music through movement improvisation, create movement material by inventing individual movement motifs. The course of practical work deals with such issues as 'motif and phrase in motion' and 'creating music choreography'. These issues refer directly to the teaching programs of the eurhythmics method used in Polish music schools and art academies. In the curriculum for the subject 'Movement Composition of Musical Pieces', conducted in accordance with the principles of plastique animée, one of the first topics we talk about, when discussing the structure of a music piece, are motifs and phrases both musical and movement ones. Here we work on shaping the body movement in accordance to the musical motif and the broadly understood sound layer. Having done this we analyze the musical phrase, its energy course, culmination, shape of the melody, its articulation, dynamics, harmonic layer, etc. The effect of this analysis is an

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.polmic.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=877:tvp-kultura-henryk-mikoaj-gorecki-mae-requiem-dla-pewnej-polki-op-66-na-forte-pian-i-13-instrumentow-1993-premiera-tvp-kultura-17-listopada-2010-godz-2250&Itemid=50&lang=pl](https://www.polmic.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=877:tvp-kultura-henryk-mikoaj-gorecki-mae-requiem-dla-pewnej-polki-op-66-na-forte-pian-i-13-instrumentow-1993-premiera-tvp-kultura-17-listopada-2010-godz-2250&Itemid=50&lang=pl)

attempt to illustrate all sound parameters by the body movement in space. Of course, some elements are crucial for shaping body movement in the connection to the indicated musical material, others will only co-create it in an unobtrusive way.

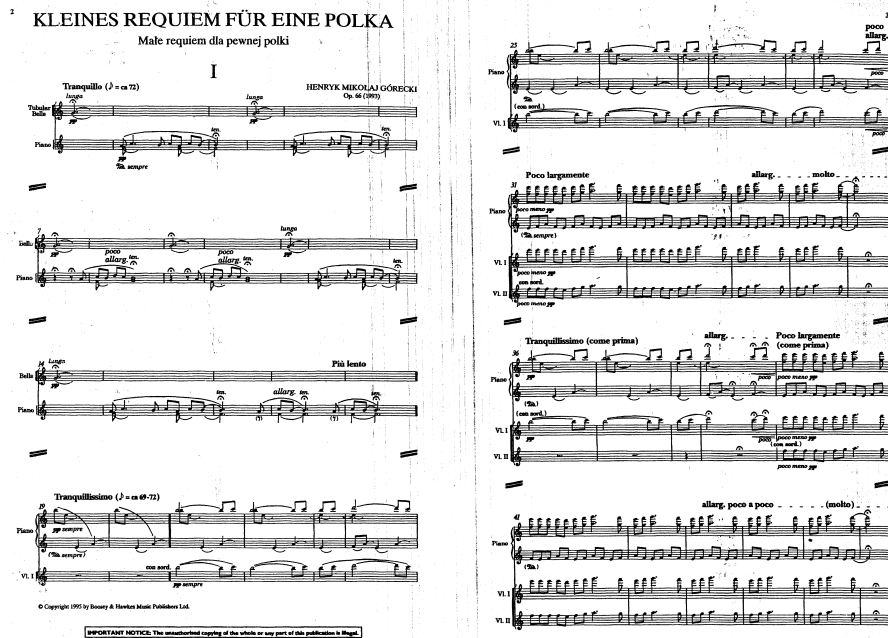


Photo no 1. The Score by H.M. Górecki

See:

**Video no. 1 'Motif, phrase in working on music choreography'** by Barbara Dutkiewicz posted on the website "Atlas of Eurhythmics" under this article (at: <https://www.kmh.se/in-english/atlas-of-eurhythmics/results-from-the-project/plastique-animee---tradition-and-contemporary-performing.html> ) or search for the video by the DOI number (at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7922029> )

For more photos see also: **Captured mo(ve)ments - plastique animée exhibition** posted on the website "Atlas of Eurhythmics" under this article (at: <https://www.kmh.se/in-english/atlas-of-eurhythmics/results-from-the-project/plastique-animee---tradition-and-contemporary-performing.html> ) or search for the video by the DOI number (at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7789474> )



Photo no 2. Correspondence between foreground and background versus contrast with the middle group.

In this Part One worked in the way I use the most often - combining my experience in the eurhythmics with dance and theater. In the warm-up I introduce some elements, later crucial for the motoric coordination in the improvisation phase aimed to generate adequate movement material expected to be achieve.

**Part Two** - (the approach most often used in eurhythmics classes concerning metro-rhythmics). We analyze music focusing on: understanding its polymetric structure, practicing the rhythmic structure, memorizing rhythmic phrases. Finally we add movement and arrange it into several simultaneously operating groups. Working on this part of Górecki's piece gave us the opportunity to refer to issues from the eurhythmics

curriculum, such as 'polymetric phrases in music and movement' and composing this structures into music choreography.

The second part is very dynamic and energetic and there are characteristic metrical and expressive accents that emphasize the polymetric structure. Working on this part I wanted the participants to get acquainted with a different way of working on choreography. The main burden of activity and activities as well as performed movement exercises concerns the metro-rhythmic issue, polymetric phrases. In such a difficult and complex compound of music we work on a given metrical phenomenon experiencing it in various movement and metro-rhythmic tasks. In addition, with the help of graphic signs, we memorize the entire structure of phrases. Only at the end of a long process of practicing with improvising music students discover, while listening to audio recording, the origin of the metric scheme taken from music literature, in this case, the second part of Górecki's 'Kleines Requiem für eine Polka'. This way all the participants could experience typical eurhythmics lesson conducted according to traditional methodology.

Thus, in various eurhythmics exercises (chain of rhythmic themes, rhythmic echo, inhibition and incitation, timing, etc.) a selected musical phenomenon appears constituting the basis for all subsequent exercises to deepen sensation and understanding of this phenomenon in an organic way. At the end of the lesson, we refer to an example from music literature where such a musical phenomenon occurs and then we improvise with movement to this example using *plastique animée*. Then, we can experience it even stronger through movement expression applying active analysis the whole musical example. At this point in the lesson, we are able to recognize the individual musical fragments (phrases, rhythms, etc.) used in the previous metro-rhythmic exercises. The students presentation of metro-rhythmic phenomena in the form of an artistic choreography should help them to consolidate the concept of rhythmic issue and understand it in a broader artistic context. This is what a typical lesson of eurhythmics looks like where *plastique animée* is literally 'an artistic superstructure of eurhythmics'. Not always does it result in a closed music choreography of the entire piece, sometimes it is only a fixed fragment or just improvisation. It summarizes the whole lesson artistically giving the possibility of personal experience of a musical work that contains a given metro-rhythmic phenomenon.

I invited a person who I often work with, Iga Eckert, to develop choreography of this part. I asked her to lead the participants of the workshop through such a typical work process, starting with metro-rhythmic exercises and gradually enriching the movement material in



order to reach the choreography of music in the end. As might be expected, Iga did it in an original way, using her own pedagogical experience. She used various forms of didactic tools such as colorful graphic elements visualizing the structure of the piece to help students memorize it. A simplified notation of musical phenomena is one of her favorite tools in her work with children and teenagers during eurhythmics lessons at a primary and secondary music school.

See:

**Video no. 2 'Exercises with polymetric structure in working on music choreography' by Iga Eckert and Barbara Dutkiewicz** posted on the website "Atlas of Eurhythmics" under this article (at: <https://www.kmh.se/in-english/atlas-of-eurhythmics/results-from-the-project/plastique-animee---tradition-and-contemporary-performing.html> ) or search for the video by the DOI number (at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7916295> )



Photo no 3. Multi planarity - polimetric structure

For more photos see also: ***Captured mo(ve)ments - plastique animée exhibition*** posted on the website "Atlas of Eurhythmics" under this article (at: <https://www.kmh.se/in-english/atlas-of-eurhythmics/results-from-the-project/plastique-animee---tradition-and-contemporary-performing.html> ) or search for the video by the DOI number (at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7789474> )

**Part Three** - the style of the music and its aesthetics is essential. In this case, we are dealing with a reference to folklore so in the movement material we try to include it through shapes, steps and movement qualities contained in folk dances. Work on the movement material begins with learning a few folk dance steps (previously selected), which is to be integrated into the structure of the music choreography. As part of working process, participants learn about an issue 'movement to stylized music'. Since this part of the piece of music is very dynamic it also allows us to experience such a problem as 'the dynamics of movement in space'. To visualize this aspect we try to show both the dynamic-motoric fragments by moving in space (travelling in space) and the dynamic load through embedded actions in place (dynamic shape of the body, jumping, partnering, changing the levels of action and shaping the movement and stage image) in the created music choreography.

In my opinion, this part of the piece is dominated by two elements: stylization, inspired by folklore and dynamics. Therefore, when working on the music choreography I took into account these two issues. Firstly, stylized movement inspired by Polish folklore where I refer to two national dances, oberek (the basic 'oberek step') and krakowiak (the 'porębiańska' figure)<sup>8</sup>. In the ostinato accompaniment, the small but energetic and quick oberek step was used to travel dynamically in space. On the other hand the melodic theme was inspired by a large dynamic krakowiak figure (containing a jump, a skip, an alternate step with a swing of the arms and characteristic arms movement). This combination of energetic footwork with a swing and arm movement creates a large dynamic stylized element. Simultaneously the impression of a caricature of rural fun is conveyed by the dance in line with an uneven/pointed oberek step. The whole part gives the impression of an ironic, caricatured, clumsy game that starts cheerfully and innocently, but is led to a distorted 'madness' with no end in sight... so the movements, the shape of the human figure and the arrangement in space and floor patterns also become absurd...

In this part, the stage was overcrowded and overloaded, too crowded to move which as a result created a caricature situation illustrating sound layer 'in a distorting mirror'. It was intensified by the sensation of tiring, loud and unbearable music and this endless tension.

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<sup>8</sup> I must point out that some of my students attend folk dance classes. This accelerated the process of assimilation of this movement material by our guests from MdW.

See:

**Video no. 3 'Movement stylization and multi planarity in working on music choreography' by Barbara Dutkiewicz** posted on the website "Atlas of Eurhythmics" under this article (at: <https://www.kmh.se/in-english/atlas-of-eurhythmics/results-from-the-project/plastique-animee---tradition-and-contemporary-performing.html> ) or search for the video by the DOI number (at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7922104> )

For photos see also: ***Captured mo(ve)ments - plastique animée exhibition*** posted on the website "Atlas of Eurhythmics" under this article (at: <https://www.kmh.se/in-english/atlas-of-eurhythmics/results-from-the-project/plastique-animee---tradition-and-contemporary-performing.html> ) or search for the video by the DOI number (at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7789474> )

**Part Four** - the most typical model of work on music choreography used in Poland. The choreographer shows the movement phrases and the team repeats them and learns by imitation, trying to remember them as quickly as possible and master the technical performance. This way of working is not very pleasant and does not give students the opportunity to develop creativity but it teaches them concentration and reflex. It is very demanding in terms of concentration and physical and mental condition but also very effective. And although it may not be creative and nice, in my opinion experiencing it is very important in an educational process. It allows us to feel the different personal attitude of other choreographers in the approach to shaping the movement material and shaping the relationship between people involved in the creative process. I scarcely use this method because it is not one of my favorite but, despite my personal reluctance to this way of working, I must admit that in many years of my professional practice it turned out in some cases to be the only possible and effective tool for working on a stage performance. Therefore, getting familiar with this work tool through experience seems to be important for the future professional work of students.

In this part of the choreography I wanted to work on such phenomena in music as 'multiplanarity in music', its texture and the opposition and relations between the solo and the group. I must point out that this issue arose already during the work on the first part of music and then we tried various spatial solutions for the location of the group and the soloist. While working on the fourth part, being the last part of the work, it was also possible to summarize the whole energetic and expressive course of the entire composition by Górecki. While merging the entire choreography there appeared additional aspects related to: concentration of attention, movement memory, spatial orientation in a group of many people moving simultaneously on the stage, emotional

readiness and expression of music and movement. We also worked on expressing musical emotions through movement presented on stage in front of the audience.

In my professional practice while looking for a specific movement material to illustrate the sound layer of a piece I take into account its expressive aspect.

I also analyze this movement material in terms of its three-dimensionality and spatiality, i.e. the possibility of its presentation on stage in a specific geometric plane towards the viewer (front, side, back, diagonally, etc.). This is usually what the creators of *plastique animée* in Poland do. I deepen it with a very broadly understood analysis of this movement in the specific arrangement of other elements on the stage such as other people, groups, props which create a compositional context for it. I consider this context in terms of the visual composition of elements, the energetic and expressive layer as well as their meaning (metaphorical sense, associations evoked by this stage image, etc.).

Additionally in my professional work I approach to the chosen movement on the motor skills layer. It means I combine the movement with a motor mechanism or with developmental movement patterns. I analyze movement phrase structure and break it down into prime factors on the level of motor skills and applied movement technique or style. It is quite a complex process and I use it in the case of technically complex movement material motorically differentiated in terms of lateralization, motor patterns and sense of balance. I chose a very simple movement to illustrate this way of working in the video to make it clear.

See:

**Video no. 4 'A short exercise on body awareness / movement technique in working on music choreography' by Barbara Dutkiewicz** posted on the website "Atlas of Eurhythmics" under this article (at: <https://www.kmh.se/in-english/atlas-of-eurhythmics/results-from-the-project/plastique-animee---tradition-and-contemporary-performing.html> ) or search for the video by the DOI number (at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7916598> )

For photos see also: ***Captured mo(ve)ments - plastique animée exhibition*** posted on the website "Atlas of Eurhythmics" under this article (at: <https://www.kmh.se/in-english/atlas-of-eurhythmics/results-from-the-project/plastique-animee---tradition-and-contemporary-performing.html> ) or search for the video by the DOI number (at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7789474> )

Lights and costumes completed the work on the choreography of the piece. The costumes themselves were quite modest, only the color was standardized.

When I wanted to emphasize the contrast or conflict between the group and the soloist I used the color contrasted costumes. Sometimes the dimension of a chamber theater stage limited the possibility of separating individual settings in space. And although initially I planned to diversify the number of performers in individual parts of the piece and in individual movement phrases, in the end due to the educational aspect of the entire project I did not make such a reduction. I followed the overriding desire to guide all participants of the LTT week organized at the Academy of Music in Katowice through the entire creative and performative process.

While working on the choreography, I tried to imagine its final presentation during the closing Conference in Stockholm presented on a much bigger stage without side wings. We shall see. Following the Conference my wish is to attach some photos to this article to compare these two events.

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Photos by Robert Rogucki

In the photos created we can see selected choreographic scenes performed by the following Austrian and Polish students: Theresa Kanak, Caterina Voegel, Emilia Forck, Antonia Luksch, Hanna Spannagl, Zurisadai Rivas, Mohadese Siasar, Sabrina Kuenig, Marta Ansonne, Nicola Hudelmayer, Paulina Figaszewska, Blanka Moryc, Natalia Kidoń, Patrycja Widlarz, Marianna Siptarova, Oliwia Skrzypczak, Patrycja Wywrocka, Ewelina Gałysa, Natalia Janikowska, Maria Flig, Marta Jarzyna, Karolina Lisowska, Martyna Wojsyk.

## VITA

**Barbara Dutkiewicz** (PhD, hab.) works as an Associate Professor at The Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, Poland where she teaches: Eurhythmics, Methodology of Eurhythmics Teaching, *Plastique animée* - Movement Choreography of Music, Movement Techniques, Piano Improvisation in Eurhythmics Method.

She is the author of over 70 choreographies performed e.g. in Poland (at The Krzysztof Penderecki European Center for Music in Luślawice; Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice, The Świętokrzyska Philharmonic, the Radio Katowice Concert Studio, The Silesian Theatre in Katowice, The Korez Theatre in Katowice, The Rozrywka Theatre in Chorzów and at the Music Academies in Katowice, Łódź, Poznań, Gdańsk) and abroad in the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and USA.

She often leads workshops and master classes in Europe, Asia and America. She is the author of over 20 articles published in Polish and foreign journals. As post-doctoral theses (habilitation) she published a book entitled: *'Polistylistics or Discourse with the Past - Choreography of Music in the Light of Postmodernism on the Basis of Chosen*

*Musical Works'* (2012). She was awarded the first prize at the First European Eurhythmics Competition in Trossingen, Germany in 1994.

See more <http://www.barbaradutkiewicz.pl/index.php/en>  
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Her artistic activity is complemented by compositions for over 20 performances (an honorable distinction at the 30th National Festival of Puppet Theaters) and radio plays. She cooperates with institutional theaters as well as private, informal artistic groups. She is a co-founder of the Poddańczy Theater association where, apart from artistic challenges, she is involved in social campaigns.

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