

Quarter-Tone and Sixth-Tone Musical Instruments Built according to Designs by Alois Hába

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For Alois Hába's conception of microtonal music to be implemented in practice it was necessary to produce some special musical instruments. The first of them, presented in Prague in 1924, was a quarter-tone grand piano. Subsequent years saw the building of quarter-tone and sixth-tone harmoniums as well as quarter-tone pianinos, all by the firm of August Förster in Jiříkov (Georgswalde). Also produced, however, were quarter-tone clarinets, trumpets, and a guitar. These microtonal instruments were used in many solo and chamber compositions by Hába and in his opera *Matka* (Mother). A total of twelve of them have survived to this day – in the Czech Museum of Music, the Prague Conservatory, and the Music and Dance School of Prague's Academy of Performing Arts. The article presents an overview and brief characterization of them and describes some of the historical circumstances of their origin.

Alois Hába – August Förster – microtones – quarter-tone piano – quarter-tone pianino – quarter-tone harmonium – sixth-tone harmonium – quarter-tone clarinet – experiments in music of the twentieth century

Implementation in practice of Alois Hába's conception of microtonal music, on which he worked starting already in the early 1920s, required production of some special musical instruments. Whereas microtones can be produced on instruments having flexible tuning and also by the human voice, instruments with fixed tuning lack this capability. Deposited in the Czech Museum of Music today are nine instruments made according to designs by Alois Hába for the purpose of performing microtonal music. Another two are preserved in the collections of the Prague Conservatory, and one is now deposited in the Music and Dance School of Prague's Academy of Performing Arts.

CZECH MUSEUM OF MUSIC (ČESKÉ MUZEUM HUDBY = ČMH), AS PART OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM (NÁRODNÍ MUZEUM = NM):

Quarter-tone grand piano, 1924 (inventory number NM-ČMH E 1342)

Quarter-tone pianino (small upright piano), ca. 1931 (E 2526)

Quarter-tone pianino, ca. 1931 (E 2821)