

Fine Nuances between Tones: The Testimony of Papers from the Estate of Alois Hába

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The Czech Museum of Music acquired its papers from the estate of the composer Alois Hába (1893–1973) in several stages from 1984 to 1992. They constitute an important source not only for knowledge of the life and work of the composer himself but also for documenting the development of Czech music in both the Czech and the international context, as well as Hába's search for innovations in musical language, his numerous activities in artistic organizations, and his teaching. His extensive correspondence with the most varied prominent figures, institutions, and organizations, manuscripts of his theoretical writings and lectures, clippings of reviews, etc., provide valuable testimony and are often completely unique sources of information in cases where relevant archival material is missing.

Alois Hába – Czech music in the twentieth century – microtones – International Society for Contemporary Music – music and anthroposophy – quarter-tone department of the Prague conservatory – correspondence – estate of Alois Hába

Materials from the estate of an artist constitute a fundamental source for knowledge of his life, his process of creation, and period contexts, shedding light on her or his direct contacts as well as on secondary relationships. In the case of such a multifaceted figure as was Alois Hába (1893–1973), this applies in full measure. The extensive materials from his estate deposited in the Czech Museum of Music (as part of the National Museum) provide an immense wealth of information – in many cases one can say crucial information – concerning musical life between the two world wars as well as during the post-war period, and also cover issues outside the realm of music. Assembled in them are items documenting social, cultural, and political contexts of the time through their evolutions and turnabouts. The following essay characterizes the collection as a whole as well as the topics it covers, and gives some concrete examples pertaining to little-known facts.¹

1) Unless stated otherwise, letters and other documents cited are found in the collection of materials from Hába's estate in the Czech Museum of Music, which are currently in the process of being classified, registered, and described. The individual items have not yet been assigned inventory numbers or shelf marks.