Eberl

COMPLETE PIANO SONATAS

Luca Quintavalle

fortepiano

BRILLIANT CLASSICS

Anton Eberl 1765-1807
Complete Piano Sonatas

Sonata Op.1 in C minor (1792)
dedicated to Madelaine de Jacobi

1.	Adagio	2'42
2.	Allegro con moto	8'40
3.	Andante espressivo	5'55
4.	Finale – Allegro molto	5'03

Sonata Op.5 in C (1796)

5.	Allegro	5'43
6.	Andante	2'02
7.	Rondo – Allegretto	2'12

Grand Sonata Charactéristique Op.12
in F minor (1802)
dedicated to Joseph Haydn

8.	Grave maestoso	1'52
9.	Allegro agitato	8'16
10.	Andantino	2'24
11.	Finale - Allegro Assai	8'22

Grand Sonata Op.43 in C (1805-06)

12.	Introduzione - Andante molto	1'57
13.	Allegro con spirito	11'44
14.	Intermezzo – Andantino	2'42
15.	Rondo vivace	5'50

Grand Sonata Op.27 in G minor (1805)
dedicated to Luigi Cherubini

16.	Allegro appassionato e vivace assai	11'57
17.	Andante con espressione	8'54
18.	Finale - Presto assai	8'03

Grand Sonata Op.16 in C (1802)
dedicated to Josephina Auernhammer

19.	Allegro con fuoco	9'00
20.	Andantino	4'01
21.	Rondo - Allegretto un poco Vivace	6'22

Grand Sonata Op.39 in G minor (1806-07)
dedicated to Maria Pavlovna of Russia, Grand Duchess of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach

22.	Allegro appassionato	9'39
23.	Adagio molto espressivo	9'50
24.	Allegro agitato vivace assai	11'43

Luca Quintavalle *fortepiano*
Paul McNulty, 2009, FF - c4 after Walter & Sohn, 1805 circa, provided by Marco Barletta

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Born in Vienna on 13 June, 1765, **Anton Eberl** was one of the most renowned piano virtuosi and composers of his time, deemed worthy of comparison with Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, and lauded alongside them. In 1787 already, he was praised by Gluck for his Singspiel, *Die Marchande des Modes*, and by Haydn for *Die Königin der schwarzen Insel*.

Eberl had a close, personal relationship with Mozart. The manuscript of the young Eberl's Symphony in C contains corrections in Mozart's hand suggesting that Eberl may have been his pupil. However, since his name is not amongst those of the best Mozart pupils associated with the completion of Mozart's unfinished Requiem, this may be evidence to the contrary. Mozart used Eberl's early piano variation on the Romance *Zu Steffen sprach im Träume* as a didactic piece. This composition, along with the C minor Sonata Op.1, the XII Variations on *Freundin sanfter Herzenstriebe*, the Trio w.o.n.16, the Variations w.o.n.14, and the C major Sinfonia were, for a lengthy period, published under Mozart's name. In 1791, six days after the great composer's death, Eberl completed the cantata *Bei Mozarts Grabe* to commemorate his master and friend. Three years later, he played in one of the *Akademie* together with Mozart's widow, Constanze. In 1795, he performed again with her, in Leipzig and Hamburg, alongside her sister, the singer Aloysa Lange.

According to Anton Schindler, Eberl was even considered 'one of Beethoven's most dangerous rivals'. In April 1805, Eberl's Symphony Op.33 was performed at the concert in which Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony was premiered, with the public and critics all favouring Eberl's work over that of Beethoven.

Anton Eberl came to prominence as a child prodigy, giving his first piano recital when he was scarcely seven or eight years old. It is not known with whom he studied but – considering the high social position of his family, who actually wanted him to pursue a career as lawyer – it is likely that he received the best musical instruction Vienna could offer at that period, with teachers such as Leopold Kozeluch, Josef Anton Steffan and possibly even the venerable Georg Christian Wagenseil, who died in 1777.

Eberl's career took off in Vienna, where he composed six operas, probably under the influence of his elder brother, Ferdinand. The latter was director of Theater in der Josefstadt before he died in prison in 1805, having caused several theatrical scandals. In addition to his operas, Eberl composed three symphonies, two sets of piano variations, his first Piano Sonata Op.1, two Sonatas for Piano and Violin (Op.49 and Op.50) and the Sonatina Op.5.

In 1796, Eberl married Maria Anna Scheffler and moved to Saint Petersburg shortly after Russia's Golden Age, when it had been ruled by Catherine the Great. He became *kappellmeister* there and also worked as a pianist and teacher, establishing his reputation and becoming one of the most eminent European composers working in Russia. Others at the time included Galuppi, Cimarosa, Paisiello, Sarti, Martin y Soler, Dussek and John Field. Eberl remained in Saint Petersburg until November 1799 and during this time composed *lieder*, solo piano pieces (Op. 6, 7 and 9, and w.o.n. 4), chamber music involving piano (Sextett Op.47, Trios Op.8, Trio w.o.n. 16 and Sonatas Op.10), the allegorical prologue *Der Tempel der Unsterblichkeit* (w.o.n. 24), and the cantata *La Gloria d' Imeneo* (Op.11) for soloists, choir and orchestra.

He made a brief visit to Vienna in 1801 for the premiere of his most significant opera, *Die Königin der schwarzen Insel*. This seems to have been a complete failure, which may well have prompted his swift return to Saint Petersburg. There he conducted Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* three times and composed the Piano Sonata Op.12, String Quartets Op.13, the Sonata for Violin and Piano Op.14 and the Quintet Op.41. He made a permanent move back to Vienna in 1802, however.

His remaining five years, before his death in 1807, were his most important as a composer. They were also Eberl's most prolific, with an output of over fifteen piano pieces, ten chamber music compositions involving piano, three piano concertos and two symphonies. Eberl also gave some significant concerts at this time: In 1803 and 1804 he collaborated with Josepha Auernhammer, Kozeluch and Mozart's pupil, to whom Mozart dedicated his six Sonatas for Piano and Violin. Auernhammer was

likewise the dedicatee of Eberl's Grand Sonata for piano, Op.16. In 1806, his concerts took him to Prague, Dresden, Berlin, Gotha, Leipzig, Frankfurt and Weimar where he met the great patroness of art and science, and philanthropist, Maria Pavlovna of Russia, Grand Duchess of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach. It was she who commissioned Eberl's Grand Sonata Op.39.

In January 1807, Eberl gave his last concert, together with his pupil, Hohenadl, and on 11 March died of scarlet fever at the age of 41. The *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* remarked that seldom had the early death of an artist been so widely regretted as his.

Eberl's seven piano sonatas use a limited number of only flat keys. The relationship between major keys (three sonatas) and minor keys (four sonatas) differs noticeably from Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, and shows the individual idiom of the more romantic Eberl. His compositions have some stylistic elements derived from the Mannheim school: strong dynamic contrasts, unison openings and fermatas, together with repetitive melodic notes reminiscent of the *parlando* style found in opera buffa, and Eberl's trade-mark crossing of the hands.

The first movements – or second if preceded by an Introduction – are always in sonata form. The development sections begins with the codetta of the exposition in the case of Op.1 and Op.12 and the recapitulation begins not with the main theme but rather – in Op.5, Op.1 and Op.39 – with the secondary subject in the major mode instead of the minor, and in Op.27 in an unexpected D flat major.

The first movement each of Op.27 and Op.39 has three themes; in the case of Op.39 the third theme may be considered a union of the main and secondary subjects. The last movements are often a rondo – similar to Kozeluch's sonatas – and in the case of Op.1, a rondo-sonata form. However, the last movements of Op.12, 27, are in sonata form. The slow movements to be found between two fast movements can sometimes be very brief and are generally in song form. The exception is the Siciliana of Op.43 and Op.1. The A' of Op.12 and Op.27 is particularly interesting because it contains written-out examples of Eberl's ornamentation. Even codas have an important function in these sonatas. The coda of the first movement of Op.27 is the longest, and the third movement juxtaposes its tragic and virtuosic impetus with an unexpected – and highly ironic – G major coda.

The direction to play *senza sordini* ['without dampers'] i.e. with the sustain pedal constantly engaged, in the final four bars of the coda in the Op.16 Andantino creates – for the modern ear – an unexpected sonority of dominant and tonic arpeggios vying with each other simultaneously. Eberl's lavish pedalling on the fortepiano is even more evident and experimental in the second movement of Op.39, an element which this sonata has in common with Beethoven's Op.31/2. The Introduction of Eberl's Op.1– the only surviving autograph of an Eberl piano sonata – may be influenced by Kozeluch's Op.2 No.3, by the *Adagissimo* of Anton Zimmermann's Sinfonia in C minor and even by Mozart's Fantasy K475. The third movement's B flat theme, which opens the middle section, is similar to the main theme of the *Allegretto* of Mozart's K576. The fourth movement has elements in common with the *Allegro* of Kozeluch's Op.30 No.3 and with the third movement of Mozart's K457. The triadic theme at the beginning of Op.5 is typical of the Mannheim school; it can also be heard in other composers' works including Mozart's Piano Concerto K175, third movement, and at the beginning of Beethoven's Horn Sonata.

In Eberl's Op.12 – *Charactéristique* was a sub-genre of nineteenth-century programme music – the Introduction is reminiscent of Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata but Eberl may also have been influenced by the Introductions of Kozeluch's Op.51 No.3, Op.17 No.1 and Op.38 No.3. Even the *Allegro* of these sonatas is interesting to compare with the *Allegros* of Eberl's *Op.12*, Mozart's Organ Fantasia K608, Clementi's Op.40 No.3 or the first movement of Beethoven's Sonatina WoO47 No.2.

The unison motif Eberl uses in bars 19-30 of his second movement can be found in the *Largo* of Kozeluch's Op.38. The main motif of the transition passage (bar 47 ff.), leading to the second subject, is similar to a motif in the exposition of the first

movement of Mozart's Sonata K533, and the hand-crossing in the A-flat theme is akin to that in the *Pathétique* Sonata. The really short Andantino may be inspired by the opening motif of Haydn's Sonata Hob. XVI:48. The charming and pastoral final rondo of Op.16 has some common elements with the first movement of Kozeluch's Op.17 No.2.

Op.27, dedicated to Luigi Cherubini, was probably written in 1805, the year Cherubini visited Vienna, and shows features in the piano-writing also heard in Cherubini's *Capriccio ou Etude per il fortepiano*. The first movement's initial theme exhibits typical Mannheim-school opening chords also found, for example, in the first movement of Dittersdorf's String Quintet No.6, in the fourth movement of his Sinfonia Concertante for viola, double bass and orchestra, but also in Eberl's own Op.43. The opening motif of the third movement here is also in a typical, late baroque or Mannheim school idiom, and the kernel of such a motif can be found already, for example, in the second movement of Haydn's sonata Hob. XVI:42, in the third movement of Dussek's Op.9 No.2, in the *Allegro Agitato* of Kozeluch's Op.35 No.3 and in the rondo of Eberl's duet sonata Op.7/1.

Eberl's Op.43 was long considered lost. Though it was published posthumously it may have been composed in the same year as Op.27. Its dissonances, modulations and romantic character are ahead of its time and this may be the reason why it was one of the few Eberl works to be criticized in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*.

Published shortly after his death, Eberl's Op.39 is probably his masterpiece. This, his last sonata, is characterised by a cyclical return of its second movement during the course of the Finale. Another notable feature is that all three movements are held together by a rising-sixth and falling-second motif first heard in the opening bars.

The beginning of this theme can already be heard in the first movement of Op.41. Its *Adagio espressivo* is surprisingly extended and is in the unexpected key of E major with a middle section in A flat major. Its ornamented passages have something in common with the third movement of Dussek's Op.77 and the second movement of the latter's Op.64, foreshadowing the work of John Field and Chopin. Its tremolo section is an essentially Romantic effect reminiscent of the landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich, in which the figures depicted are infinitely less important than the melancholy landscape itself. The section from bar 8, at the beginning of the second movement, may have inspired Carl Maria von Weber in the second movement of his second piano sonata. The main motif of the final movement strongly resembles Beethoven's Op.31/2 and Op. 14/2 but it develops in a completely different way, demonstrating Eberl's distinct personality and style. This is a style that can be seen to foreshadow Schubert: with octave repetitions of a cantabile melody that first appears in the top voice in opening chords; harmonic juxtapositions and modulations; quick changes between major and minor; and chordal themes harkening back to the third movement of Op.39.

Anton Eberl embodied an extremely important link between classical Viennese style and Romanticism and, as such, his music needs – and deserves – to be known, studied and appreciated.

Luca Quintavalle has collaborated with orchestras such as Les Musiciens du Prince-Monaco, Concerto Köln, Les Talens Lyriques, Balthasar Neumann Ensemble, Cappella Gabetta, Ensemble Matheus, Academia Montis Regalis, Harmonie Universelle, La Folia Barockorchester, Il Pomo d'Oro, Ensemble Resonanz, Gürzenich Orchestra, Hamburg Symphony Orchestra and Philharmonic State Orchestra Hamburg. He has performed throughout Europe and in Israel, the USA, Japan and Russia and since 2017 he plays regularly with Cecilia Bartoli (Rossini's "La Cenerentola" and Vivaldi-Europatour 2017 and 2018 as well as Rossini's "l'Italiana in Algeri" at the Salzburger Festspiele 2018).

He has recorded for the labels Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, Deutsche Grammophon, Capriccio, Onyx, Hyperion, Hänssler Classics, Pan Classics and TYXart. His solo recording debut for the label Brilliant Classics with harpsichord music by Barrière and De Bury (95428) was praised from critics

American Record Guide:
"*I don't expect this recording to be surpassed. The performance has all the bravura and grace I could hope for*"

Music wen international:
"*Recording of the Month*"

EarlyMusic Review:
"*5 stars for the performance*"

Magazine.classic.com:
"*This is the most impressive harpsichord CD I've heard in years*"

He was lecturer at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln and gave masterclasses at the Moscow State University for Art and Culture, in St Petersburg and at the Robert Schumann Hochschule in Düsseldorf. He is now currently lecturer at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen. Quintavalle studied piano with Ernesto Esposito and harpsichord with Giovanni Togni in Como. As a DAAD stipend-holder, he completed his studies with Christian Rieger at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen with "Konzert-Examen". He also attended courses given by Kristian Bezuidenhout, Jesper Christensen, Andrea Marcon, Stefano Demicheli, Christophe Rousset, Andreas Staier and Alexei Lubimov. In 2007 he won the G. Gambi basso continuo competition in Pesaro.

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