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EBERL **Sonata in c,** op. 1. ***Grand sonata characteristique,*** op. 12. **Sonatina in C,** op. 5. **Toccata in c,** op. 46. **Grand Sonatas: in C,** op. 16; **in g,** op. 27; **in g,** op. 39; **in C,** op. 43. **Fantasie in d,** op. 28 • John Khouri (fp) • MUSIC & ARTS 1221 (3 CDs: 172:55)

The full story of Anton Eberl (1765–1807) has yet to be told. He may have studied with Mozart—thus far unsubstantiated—or Mozart may have studied with him—the *Wunderkind* is known for a fact to have copied out a number of Eberl's sacred vocal works for learning purposes. Indeed, so strongly did Eberl's style suggest Mozart's influence, or vice versa, that many of Eberl's works were actually mistaken for works by and attributed to Mozart, who, it seems, was more flattered by the attribution than he was bothered by it. Eberl, on the other hand, was bothered, but bided his time until Mozart's death, after which he published a disclaimer in a widely circulated newspaper: "However flattering it may be that even connoisseurs were capable of judging these works to be the products of Mozart, I can in no way allow the musical public to be left under this delusion." It did him little good. His demise was assured either way: by virtue of having never existed in the first place—i.e., all his music was written by someone else—or for so long having kept silent in the perpetuation of a fraud. Nor did his 1795–96 concert tour of Germany in the company of Mozart's widow, Constanze, polish his crown; rather, it set tongues wagging. "All his music" was considerable: two operas, five symphonies, three piano concertos, a number of chamber works and pieces for solo keyboard, and a good deal of vocal music, including secular songs and sacred cantatas. In a footnote to history, Eberl's own E♭-Major Symphony was performed at the same concert in which Beethoven's "Eroica" was heard in public for the first time, and Eberl's work seems to have upstaged it. There ought to be a recording of it so we can hear what the audience did in 1805 and judge for ourselves. Collected in this three-CD set are Eberl's purportedly complete sonata-titled works for solo keyboard, with a sonatina, a toccata, and a fantasie thrown in as disc fillers. All but two of these pieces are said to be first recordings: the *Grand Sonata Characteristique*, op. 12, dedicated to Haydn; the Grand Sonata in C Major, op. 16, dedicated to Josephina Aurenhammer; the Grand Sonata in G Minor, dedicated to Cherubini; and the three pieces without dedicatees—the Grand Sonata in C Major, op. 43; the Fantasie in D Minor, op. 28; the Toccata in C Minor, op. 46; and the Sonatina in C Major, op. 5. Only the Sonata in C Minor, op. 1, and the Grand Sonata in G Minor, op. 39, are not asterisked as firsts; and indeed, a Christophorus recording of the G-Minor work with Yuri Martynov is on the Music & Arts label. All of this material is presumed to have been written in a 14-year period between 1792 and 1806.

The first five of the pieces listed in the headnote are played on a James Kandik and Philip Belt copy of an 18th-century pedal piano; the rest on a Jacob Pfister fortepiano (c. 1820). Undoubtedly, some readers will be rankled by what I am about to say, which is that I wish I could hear these works played on a modern piano, for two reasons:

(1) When John Khouri's chosen instruments are not sounding like wax paper has been inserted between the hammers and the strings—as they often do—and the more than occasional mistuned string doesn't jar, Eberl's music makes a very strong impression. Much closer to Beethoven than to Mozart in both style and content, with even a fleeting hint of Schubert, these pieces reveal a composer of real talent. Musical motives and materials are exceptionally well developed, and moods are effectively sustained over long arches. This is particularly the case in Eberl's extended slow movements. Just listen to the gorgeous Andante con espressione of the G-Minor Sonata, op. 27, on disc 2, a movement that spins its magic for almost 11 minutes. Fast movements are also fully developed and filled with much of the *Sturm und Drang* one associates with Beethoven's early piano sonata essays. Or listen to the last movement of Eberl's 1807 G-Minor Sonata, op. 39, which plays with a figuration almost identical to the one in the last movement of Beethoven's "Tempest" Sonata of 1802. Eberl had to have heard, and perhaps even played, Beethoven's work. If I weren't familiar with all of Beethoven's piano sonatas, I could easily mistake any one of the works in this set as a creation of the master from Bonn himself.

(2) For all of its pretense at authenticity, there's hardly anything authentic in Khouri's rationalization for adding pedal notes to all of the pieces, with the exception of the Toccata that he plays on pedal piano. He attributes his decision to a desire to add tonal weight and color, and justifies it on grounds that Mozart had a large pedal board custom made for his own fortepiano for the same purpose. That may well be, but a dozen years on from Mozart's death in 1791 was a light year in piano design and construction. If the point is to approximate more closely the range and sound of a modern piano, why not play a modern piano?

Without questioning John Khouri's dedication—he has made similar contributions to the Music & Arts label on behalf of Clementi, Cramer, and Hummel—or faulting his flawless technique and execution, I would submit that Anton Eberl is deserving of better than these fortepianos are capable of delivering. Recommended then for the music, but not for these decrepit, rickety sounding instruments. **Jerry Dubins**

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AllMusic Review by Uncle Dave Lewis - 4 1/2*/5*

Music and Arts' Anton Eberl: The Complete Sonatas for Solo Piano represents a

triumph of dedicated scholarship on the part of fortepianist **John Khouri** that stretches back more than five decades. Intrigued with a piano sonata attributed to **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**, but not believed to be written by him, **Khouri** finally discovered that the sonata was the work of an alleged **Mozart** pupil, **Anton Eberl**, about whom little was known, but who did not outlive his master by even two decades. Once armed with this information, **Khouri** went on the hunt for whatever he could find of **Eberl**'s major keyboard music, and Anton Eberl: The Complete Sonatas for Solo Piano is the result.

One thing that is striking here is that **Khouri** has located a composer who is clearly a key transitional figure between classical and romantic keyboard music, easily the equal of **Jan Ladislav Dussek** and more forward thinking than **Muzio Clementi**. **Khouri** discovered in short measure that rather like **Eberl**'s younger contemporary **Joseph Wölfl** -- who was close to **Beethoven** and studied with both **Mozarts** pére and fils -- **Eberl** had developed a posthumous inferiority complex owing to the way his music was handled by "experts" long after his death and to long-held assessments of its relative quality. Undaunted by such ego-driven half-interest, **Khouri** scoured the libraries of Europe to find the six sonatas, sonatina, fantasy, and toccata heard here. He plays them on two rare period instruments, a **Jacob Pfister** instrument from ca. 1820 and a copy made by **Kandik** and **Belt** of an eighteenth century pedal piano, an instrument well known to **Mozart** but out of use by the mid-nineteenth century.
What an extraordinary discovery this is -- what **Khouri** reveals is that this music sounds nothing like **Beethoven**, but that **Eberl** maintained his close contact with the influence of **Mozart** as long as he continued to compose, but gradually expanded it into a romantic idiom by virtue of expanded development schemes and adopting his technique to the newer six-octave pianos available after 1800, the likes of which **Mozart** never lived to see. The later sonatas, ergo, give us a hint of what **Mozart** might have done in the realm of the piano sonata had he lived a decade or two longer. **Khouri** plays with tremendous enthusiasm, and the recording captures these obscure keyboard instruments in a pleasantly reverberant ambience without losing the sound of the instrument or bringing it so close that we can hear the clatter of every moving mechanism on it.
While this is a worthwhile endeavor in every way, special attention should be paid to the extraordinary grand Sonata in G minor, Op. 39, written in honor of Grand Duchess Maria Paulowna, aunt to Princess Sophie of the Netherlands and a significant patroness of musicians. In its day, this sonata was recognized as "among the most attractive, most brilliant, most difficult works of this composer" and hardly seems less so now; the level of challenge is indeed very high and it is an important rediscovery; with all due respect to **Khouri**'s titanic effort on the **Pfister** Grand, one is nonetheless curious as to how this would sound on a modern grand.
The passage, in the wake of the French revolution, of classical style into the

romantic around 1800 was one of the most pivotal and cataclysmic events in the history of Western music, and dozens of composers were deep in the thick of its development. By causing the broad shoulders of **Beethoven** to bear the weight of this entire historic development, past musicologists did a poor job evaluating what happened in the period and who was involved. **Khouri** has done more than merely take out the trash in recording Anton Eberl: The Complete Sonatas for Solo Piano and making this music available; he has filled in a fitful, stubbornly missing piece of the puzzle in Western canon that anyone concerned with its history should be glad to find in place once again.

Anton Eberl Review from Early Music America Org.
The Complete Sonatas for Solo Piano
John Khouri, fortepiano Music & Arts CD-1221 (3 CDs) www.musicandarts.com
That Anton Eberl's sonatas have been frequently mistaken for W. A. Mozart's, from the 1790s up to our own time, is surely reason enough to pique our curiosity. But Eberl (1765-1807) was no mere epigone, and now, thanks to fortepianist and scholar John Khouri, we can begin to better understand this multi- faceted composer. These six sonatas (as well as a toccata, fantasy, and a sonatina), presented here com- plete for the first time, display Eberl's virtu- osic piano
writing, some rich melodic and the- matic invention, and innovative development. The compositions included on this three-CD set span a period of about 15 years (1792-1807) and thus reveal much about Eberl's growth as a composer. The early works, such as the Sonata in C Minor, Op. 1 (1792), show a distinct affinity for the late 18th-century Viennese style, unsurprising for one who was a friend and possibly a stu- dent of Mozart. The later sonatas— including what is regarded as Eberl's greatest extant work for solo piano, the Grand Sonata in G Minor, Op. 39 (1807)—reveal a more passion- ate and individual style foreshadow- ing the generation of Romantics to follow.
A specialist in keyboard music of the late 18th and early 19th cen- turies, John Khouri's repertoire includes works by composers from Haydn to Schumann. Khouri per-forms several of the Eberl sonatas on a modern replica of an 18th-century pedal piano and inserts pedal parts of his own. While Khouri makes a case for the addition—that Mozart adopted this practice and, by exten- sion, Eberl may have as well—the sound is somewhat unsettling. Eberl's sonatas are inherently dramatic in the Beethovenian vein, which Khouri clearly wishes to highlight, but as a result, the tone in some of the more bombastic passages bor- ders on harsh and percussive. In the lyrical slow movements, however, Khouri showcases the *c.*1820 Jacob Pfister fortepiano with a velvety tone and a pleasing tenderness.
Listeners using their computers may be annoyed to find that the tracks are not titled, but will find the booklet helpful and informative. Khouri includes detailed notes, illu- minating what is known about Eberl's life and career, his Mozart

influences, and specific attributes of each work. Not to be missed is Khouri's description of Op. 27: "the demonic last movement…begins with shrieking downward plunging right hand passage-work." Clearly, Anton Eberl is a composer worthy of more attention, and we thank John Khouri for making our exploration possible.
—*Angela R. Mace*