

**Work: Anton Eberl, *Grande Sonate opus 10 no.2*
Publisher: Van Sambeek Edities, 2009, VSE 13**

**Work: August Eberhard Müller, *Caprice op.4*
and the *Grande Sonate op.39*
Publisher: Van Sambeek Editions, VSE 01
Reviewed by Frederic La Croix**

Van Sambeek Editions have given themselves the mandate to unearth forgotten works written by "piano composers of the late Classical and Romantic period who are unjustly scarcely known". It has been successfully demonstrated by the record company Hyperion's extensive and celebrated survey of the Romantic Piano Concerto (to name one example), that there are many beautiful, imaginative, and well-crafted works that have been undervalued over time because they were written by

34 Harpsichord & fortepiano

composers who have had the misfortune of being forsaken from the canon of composers.

I had the pleasure to explore works by Anton Eberl and August Eberhard Müller, two footnotes in music history. Firstly, Eberl piqued my curiosity because he elicited favourable comparisons with Mozart and Beethoven during his lifetime. Eberl's adherence to classical ideals of beauty was often prized when compared to the "difficult, shrill, and singular" works of his peer, Beethoven.¹ Anton Eberl's *Grande Sonate op.10 no.2* for piano with *obligato* clarinet or violin (surprisingly, no violin part is given in the present edition nor an explanation for its absence) and optional bass (cello) is written in the accompanied keyboard sonata tradition that was so fashionable at the height of the classical era.

Although this sonata outshines the usual commercially motivated, vapid concoctions of the time, the relationship between the clarinet and the piano lacks the intricacy and the subtlety that one finds in the piano-violin dialogue in the sonatas of Mozart and Beethoven. Eberl flavours this pleasantly tuneful work with some particularly entrancing colours (including a beautiful use of Flat-VI in the finale) which balance the occasional awkward harmonic progressions and rhythm. While a work of this genre was intended foremost for pianists in the classical era, the current publication is also a welcome addition to the clarinet repertoire.

The *Caprice op.4* and the *Grande Sonate op.39* by August Eberhard Müller are published together by Van Sambeek Editions. Müller, an able keyboardist, flutist, composer, and pedagogue, can partly be credited with spearheading the creation of the current canon of composers, as he tirelessly promoted the works of Mozart, Haydn, and to a certain extent, Bach, at a time when self-promotion was the norm. The *Caprice* is a fascinating work, written with the same creative spirit as Beethoven's sonata-fantasies. An extensive one-movement form, it contains an introduction, a sonata-allegro, a slow movement, and a fugue. This well-crafted music offers many surprises and contains sufficient technical and musical challenges to reward pianists and to merit a place in their repertoire. At first, the *Grande Sonate op.39* seems to be composed in a similar vein as the *Caprice* but unfortunately there is a clear lack of creativity in the last two movements, where ideas are simply repeated rather than developed.

From the yellowish colour of the paper to the presentation of the music in oblong format to the inclusion of editorial notes, Van Sambeek editions have done their utmost to imbue their publications with characteristics that convey authenticity. Yet the choice of font and the space given to the music is very modern, pleasing to the eye and easy to read. The use of the oblong (landscape) format suits the works for solo piano but in the Eberl sonata, I find that I am constantly turning the pages since so little music fits on the pages as they are presently laid out.² Personally, I wish that each publication was accompanied by a brief historical commentary about these rather obscure works and composers. In the end, Van Sambeek's publication of hitherto unknown music of good quality aids immeasurably those musicians who strive to diversify their repertoire and expands the scope of the greater music-loving public's musical experiences.

¹ Mary Sue Morrow, "Of Unity and Passion: The Aesthetics of Concert Criticism in Early Nineteenth-Century Vienna", in *19th-Century Music*, 23/3 (Spring 1990) 198. Quoting from *Der Freimüthige* 182 (September 11, 1806): 212.

² Publishers of the classical era chamber music usually printed each part separately (the piano part would then be laid out more effectively in oblong format), whereas modern practices print all parts in the piano score.