

Digital Mando (XXV.2) Vivaldi, Mandolin & YouTube
by John Goodin

One of the wonders of the Internet is the way that it brings audio and video from around the world right to our home computer. The amount of this material, even if restricted to mandolin-oriented music, is vast. I thought it would be interesting this time to narrow my focus to freely available video performances of works by Antonio Vivaldi that feature the mandolin.

Like many of us I have a special affection for the concerti that Vivaldi composed which included the mandolino. I realize (thanks to Tyler and Sparks' book, *The Early Mandolin*) that the instrument which Vivaldi knew was quite different from our modern mandolin. Still the solo concerto in C major (RV425) and the concerto for two mandolins in G major (RV532) are frequently arranged, performed and recorded by all sorts of ensembles.

A quick search of the popular video sharing site YouTube for "Vivaldi mandolin" yields a number of interesting results. A similar search for "Vivaldi mandolino" turns up some more performances. Here are a few highlights:

One of the first videos I found features the German virtuoso Detlef Tewes playing his own arrangement of RV425 (published by Edition49) with the Mandolinenorchester Ettlingen.

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StNAG4gCIxY>)

All three movements are expertly performed by this fine plucked string orchestra and can be easily found once you watch the first movement. Detlef Tewes' solo playing is excellent and it is a pleasure to watch the group enjoy themselves.

Digging a little deeper I came across another recording of the opening movement of RV425. This performance was recorded in October of 2007 by the Mandolines de Malmedy.

(<http://tw.youtube.com/watch?v=bYFxBFWODkU>)

A fun and fascinating alternative approach to the first movement of RV425 can be found at this URL: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhOOhIale6M>).

This video captures a performance of Vivaldi's orchestral work in an arrangement for two mandolins by Evan Marshall. The soloist is the young American Scott Gates. Those of us who have attended Evan's workshops at past CMSA conventions will not be surprised to see him play the role of the orchestra.

The Marshall/Gates version is quite different from the Tewes/Ettlingen rendition. The instruments are American F5 mandolins (although very nice ones) and Scott Gates is using a pickup for amplification. Still, the playing is excellent and the piece retains its freshness even in this relaxed environment. Evan and Scott are clearly having fun and you can imagine that the audience is too.

Vivaldi's concerto for two mandolins, RV532, is well represented at YouTube also.
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZEIy1e9xYY>)
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLwabnytf14>)

The first of these links takes you to a fine 1995 performance by the Het Consort, an excellent plucked string ensemble from the Netherlands. The second link leads to a 2005 video of the Orchestra da Camera Benedetto Marcello, a bowed string chamber ensemble with mandolins playing the solo parts.

The Het Consort's performance is measured, almost stately, and very confident. All three movements can be easily found and enjoyed. The solo parts are beautifully played by Paul Liklikuwata and Alex Timmerman.

In contrast, the Orchestra da Camera Benedetto Marcello performs the piece at a considerably faster tempo. This certainly makes the concerto seem more exciting and the soloists (Norberto Gonçalves da Cruz and Emanuele Buzi) seem at times to be racing to keep up. At other times they seem to almost be egging the orchestra on. The first movement here is nearly 30 seconds shorter than the Het Consort version. Nonetheless the playing is very fine and the bowed strings sound great.

Vivaldi also composed a small part for a pair of mandolinos in his concerto RV558 which includes roles for six different pairs of instruments (including theorbos and salmoes). Fabio Biondi's Europa Galante can be seen having almost too much fun playing the first movement of this piece.
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9QQQ0CU3CE>)

Europa Galante is a powerhouse of an early music band and their video presents them as a young group (casual dress, rock star poses) who very much enjoy what they do. The playing, however, is impeccable. This is also the only video mentioned here where Vivaldi's music is performed on actual mandolinos rather than mandolins. The soloists (uncredited) really shine in their featured measures even though it's a challenge to be heard. This performance will definitely be a highlight of your day.

This is just a small selection of the Vivaldi mandolin music available on video through YouTube. There are many other performances and many other places to find mandolin videos on the web. Happy hunting!