

Digital Mando (XXV.3) marilynn mair mandolin
by John Goodin

Most CMSA members are aware of the many talents and achievements of our own Marilynn Mair. Mel Bay Publications has recently published her *The Complete Mandolinist: a comprehensive method*, the “most comprehensive American mandolin method to be published in nearly a century,” and many of us have already purchased a copy. This column is not a review of her new book or her many recordings but will focus instead on the content of her excellent “marilynn mair mandolin” website.

The home page of “mmm” (<http://www.marilynnmair.com/>) is full of recent news. At the top (as of mid-June 2008) is a photo of the new method book with links to help you buy a copy online. Below that is a link to “upcoming concerts” followed by a nice photo of the AMGuSS Winter Weekend participants. This is followed by an entertaining embedded three minute YouTube video of Marilynn discussing her life with the mandolin.

Scrolling further down the home page you will find interesting news about Marilynn’s current ensembles and recordings including a link to her fascinating Brazil Logs and Photo Gallery. You can easily spend a couple of hours visiting Brazil through her eyes and learn a tremendous amount about current musical life in Rio de Janeiro and choro music in particular. If you have any interest in choro at all then these travel logs are a real goldmine.

My favorite part of the “mmm” site is the wonderful collection of articles that Marilynn has written for magazines over the years. Under “information” on the home page is a link to “articles & sheetmusic” that includes links to the full text of over thirty articles covering a wide range of topics. This is the equivalent of a small book of some of the best writing you will find anywhere on mandolin, especially classical mandolin.

These articles originally appeared either in Norman Levine’s *Mandolin Quarterly* or, more recently, in the *Mandolin Magazine*. My particular favorite article is the one titled “[Dancing on the Head of a Pin: the World of Classical Mandolin](#).” This piece, which bears rereading every few years, uses an experience at a CMSA convention as the jumping off point for a series of very thoughtful paragraphs regarding what is “classical”, especially when discussing mandolins. It could serve as an excellent foundation text for a group discussion at some future CMSA convention.

Several of Marilynn’s articles discuss the history of choro music and the biographies of some of the most important figures in the genre. Other articles include discographies and bibliographies which are now slightly out of date but still very useful. Even though many of us have the magazines where these articles first appeared it is very handy to have these articles all collected in one place at our electronic fingertips.

As with almost all websites not everything here is completely up to date. Sometimes a link leads to a dead end. For example, the links to the fun online conversations that Marilynn held with the members of the CoMando listserv as its “Guest of the Week” in

both July and November of 2003 are currently inaccurate. Luckily, these conversations, which were moderated by CMSA's Max McCullough and are full of valuable information and insights can still be found at this address:

<http://www.mandozine.com/resources/CGOW/> (courtesy of John Baxter's fine Mandozine site).

Along with the articles and interviews found under the "information" link there is also a selection of sheet music which includes a few classical pieces and some choros, mostly referred to in one or another of the articles. These are presented in pdf format and are easy to download and print if your computer is equipped with the free Adobe Acrobat reader.

When you visit Marilyn's website you also have the option to sign up to receive her periodic electronic newsletter. This usually appears in my mailbox every two months or so and is always interesting. If you would rather not receive the newsletter this way you can always follow the "newsletter" links under "information" and read any of the past newsletters (currently 26, dating back to 2004) directly from the site.

Finally the "mmm" website contains a great deal of information about Marilyn's many recordings and the many groups that she leads and/or performs with. It also links to vital information about the American Mandolin and Guitar Summer School (AMGuSS) which many CMSA members have attended since its beginnings in 1986. If you haven't visited "marilynn mair mandolin" recently I think you might find it worth your while.