

Vivaldi's Bohemian Manuscripts

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On 30 September 1729, the violinist Giovanni Battista Vivaldi (1655–1736) was granted the permission of the procurators of S. Marco, Venice, to take a year's leave of absence in order to accompany a son of his to 'Germania'.¹ This son was surely Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741), by then already a celebrated composer of opera and instrumental works, who seems to have relied a great deal on the services of his father. A close professional relationship between the two men had existed for many years. Giovanni Battista had been Antonio's violin teacher and had helped to establish his career in Venice before becoming his most trusted copyist. Blessed with longevity, he remained his son's principal assistant until as late as 1733.²

The primary purpose of the Vivaldis' visit to German-speaking lands remains uncertain, and we do not know details of their itinerary. In general terms, the trip may have been an attempt by Antonio to refresh or enhance his association with Charles VI, the Habsburg emperor, first formed in 1727 when the composer dedicated to him the Op. 9 collection of concertos, *La cetra* (published in Amsterdam by the firm of Le Cène), and pursued in 1728 with the similarly dedicated manuscript collection of twelve concertos, also entitled *La cetra*, preserved in Vienna.³ The composer had for some time enjoyed contacts with other persons, including Prince Philip of Hesse-Darmstadt, governor of Mantua from 1714 to 1735, and Count Wenzel von Morzin (1676–1737) to whom the Op. 8 collection of 1725 was dedicated, which suggest that it is entirely logical to view the visit of 1729–30 to 'Germania', like Vivaldi's final journey to Vienna where he died in July 1741, as but one among many sometimes related

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¹ Venice, Archivio di Stato, Procuratori di S. Marco de Supra, Chiesa, Registro 153, fol. 117v.

² See Paul Everett, 'Vivaldi's Italian Copyists', *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani, Bollettino dell'Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi*, 11 (1990), 27–88: 33–7.

³ Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 15996.

episodes in the composer's career that are connected with the Habsburg empire.⁴ Whatever it involved, the trip appears at least to have fostered further patronage, from Francis Stephen (1708–65), duke of Lorraine (later the emperor Francis I) and the Viennese Joseph Johann Adam (1690–1732), prince of Liechtenstein.

It has been assumed, but perhaps too readily,⁵ that Vivaldi was in Prague for the production of a version of his opera *Argippo*, RV 697,⁶ at the theatre of Count Franz Anton von Sporck during the autumn season in 1730 and perhaps for the revival there of *Farnace*, RV 711, in the spring of the same year; certainly, the composer's provision of music for Antonio Denzio's company of singers in Prague during the period 1724–38 is established.⁷ But whether Vivaldi was present or not, we know that these two operas were attended by the Bohemian Count Johann Joseph von Wrtby (Jan Josef z Vrtba, 1669–1734), who certainly had contact with the composer. That Wrtby was a patron of Vivaldi during the visit of 1729–30 was long ago inferred from the fact that three autograph manuscripts, of works scored for lute and other instruments, exhibit inscriptions to him (quoted under RV 82, 85 and 93 in Table I, below). Indeed, this implies that Wrtby himself might have been a player of the lute. But such annotations are not necessarily to be thought of as dedications when they appear not on copies presented to a patron but on Vivaldi's own drafts of the music which he retained, and they do not necessarily indicate patronage of the conventional kind involving employment. Vivaldi regularly sold manuscripts of his instrumental pieces individually or in sets, and these autograph inscriptions may simply show that a scribe was directed to

⁴ Fully summarized in Michael Talbot, 'Vivaldi and the Empire', *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani, Bollettino dell'Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi*, 8 (1987), 31–51. See also Theophil Antonicek, 'Vivaldi in Österreich', *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift*, 33 (1978), 128–34; and Oskar Prinz zu Bentheim and Michael Stegemann, 'Vivaldi und Böhmen. Wenige Fakten, viele Fragen', *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani, Bollettino dell'Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi*, 9 (1988), 75–89.

⁵ As noted by Michael Talbot in 'The Fortunes of Vivaldi Biography, from Pincherle to the Present', in *Chigiana*, 41 (1989): Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, 'La prima "Settimana musicale Senese" e la Vivaldi Renaissance (1939–1989)' (Florence: Olschki, 1991), 113–35: 126.

⁶ 'RV' work-reference numbers follow Peter Ryom, *Verzeichnis der Werke Antonio Vivaldis (RV); kleine Ausgabe* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1974), and Ryom, *Répertoire des oeuvres d'Antonio Vivaldi. Les compositions instrumentales*, (Copenhagen: Engstrøm & Sødring, 1986).

⁷ See Pravoslav Kneidl, 'Libreta italské opery v Praze v 18. století', *Strahovská knihovna*, 1 (1966), 97–131; Tomislav Volek and Marie Skalická, 'Vivaldis Beziehungen zu den böhmischen Ländern', *Acta Musicologica*, 39 (1967), 64–72; Reinhard Strohm, 'Vivaldi's Career as an Opera Producer', in *Essays on Handel and Italian Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 122–63: 156; and Daniel E. Freeman, *The Opera Theater of Count Franz Anton von Sporck*, Studies in Czech Music, 2 (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992).

provide copies for Wrtby who might therefore have been a customer or client on a temporary basis.

Neither the rarity, among Vivaldi's works, of music for lute nor the fact that the autographs of RV 82, 85 and 93 employ a non-Italian paper, unusual for him, went unnoticed in scholarship of the 1970s,⁸ and on that basis it was concluded that these pieces were perhaps specially commissioned by Wrtby and almost certainly composed while Vivaldi was in Bohemia or at some other location north of the Alps during 1729–30. Because RV 82 and 85 are labelled '2' and '5' respectively, it was also recognized that Vivaldi might have furnished Wrtby with a whole set of trios involving the lute and that the remaining autographs are lost.⁹ But it was later discovered, when the whole corpus of Vivaldi's manuscripts preserved in the Foà and Giordano collections in the Biblioteca Nazionale of Turin was thoroughly investigated in the 1980s by the present writer, that these three sources were not isolated cases: eleven further manuscripts (of RV 155, 163, 186, 278, 282, 288, 330, 380, 473, 500 and 768) were found to comprise similar materials.¹⁰ All are autographs except that of RV 155, which is a copyist's score with some autograph annotations. Shelfmarks, superscriptions and identifications are shown in Table I; Table II gives the incipit of the first movement of each work.¹¹

We cannot conclude that these eleven concertos were also written in connection with Wrtby (for they lack explicit inscriptions to that effect), but it is highly probable that they are scores prepared at about the same time as the lute works from a limited stock of music paper that Vivaldi acquired while on tour. They hint that the composer

⁸ Michael Talbot, *Vivaldi* (London: Dent, 1978, second edition, 1993), 59.

⁹ Because the numbers are each not part of the inscription to Wrtby and may have been added some time after the scores had been completed, and because Vivaldi quite regularly added numerical markings to his scores whose functions cannot yet be adequately explained, this view may not be correct. Besides, the autograph of RV 93 also carries the number '2' in one corner of its first page. See Paul Everett, 'Vivaldi's Marginal Markings: Clues to Sets of Instrumental Works and their Chronology', in Gerard Gillen and Harry White (eds), *Irish Musical Studies. 1: Musicology in Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990), 248–63: 254 and 256–7.

¹⁰ First reported in Paul Everett, 'Towards a Chronology of Vivaldi Manuscripts', *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani, Bollettino dell'Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi*, 8 (1987), 90–107.

¹¹ It is not the intention of the present article to dwell on the textual contents of these sources, which is properly the concern of literature devoted to Vivaldi's music. Of particular interest, however, is the inclusion in this group of one of the composer's concertos with special titles, 'Conca'; for a full discussion of the concerto RV 163, see Michael Talbot, 'Vivaldi's Conch Concerto', *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani, Bollettino dell'Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi*, 5 (1984), 66–82, which provides a facsimile of the first page of the manuscript.

was occupied with providing instrumental music, perhaps for imminent performances, and therefore that the purpose of the visit might not have been to oversee operatic productions after all. It is unlikely to be merely accidental that no vocal music written on similar paper is preserved among the Foà and Giordano manuscripts, Vivaldi's personal archive that he retained until his death.

TABLE I

RV 82	<i>I-Tn</i> ; Foà 40, fols 6–9. Trio in C major, for lute, violin and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed 2[?] <i>Trio P[er] Leuto, Violino, e Basso</i> [space] <i>Originale del Viualdi / P[er]. S[ua]. E[ccellenza]. S[ignor]:e Conte Wr[t]tbij</i> . Paper X, 3/65.5.
RV 85	<i>I-Tn</i> ; Foà 40, fols 2–5. Trio in G minor, for lute, violin and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed <i>Trio P[er] Leuto, Violino, e Basso</i> 5[?]. [space] <i>Originale del Viualdi / P[er] S[ua]. E[ccellenza]. Il:[?]</i> <i>Conte Wr[t]tbij</i> . Paper X, 3/65.5.
RV 93	<i>I-Tn</i> ; Giordano 35, fols 297–302. Concerto in D major, for lute, two violins and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed <i>Con:^{to} con 2 Violini Leuto, e Basso</i> [space] <i>Del Viualdi / P[er] S[ua]. E[ccellenza]. Il:[?]</i> <i>Con[te]: Wr[t]tbij</i> . Paper X, 3/65.5.
RV 155	<i>I-Tn</i> ; Giordano 35, fols 188–193. Concerto in G minor, for two violins, viola and basso continuo. Non-autograph score with autograph annotations, superscribed <i>Con:^{to} Del Viualdi</i> . Paper Y, 1/10.6.
RV 163	<i>I-Tn</i> ; Giordano 35, fols 251–254. Concerto in B flat major, 'Conca', for two violins, viola and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed <i>Conca</i> [space] <i>Con:^{to}</i> [space] <i>Del Viualdi</i> . Paper Y, 1/10.6.
RV 186	<i>I-Tn</i> ; Giordano 35, fols 261–268. Concerto in C major, for principal violin, two violins, viola and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed <i>Con:^{to} Del Viualdi</i> . Paper X, 2/36.5 (fols 261, 262, 267 and 268) and X, 2/34 (fols 263–266).
RV 278	<i>I-Tn</i> ; Giordano 35, fols 225–240. Concerto in E minor, for principal violin, two violins, viola and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed <i>Con:^{to} Del Viualdi</i> . Paper Y, 1/10.6.
RV 282	<i>I-Tn</i> ; Giordano 35, fols 212–224. Concerto in F major, for principal violin, two violins, viola and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed <i>Con:^{to} Del Viualdi</i> . Paper X, 2/36.5 (fols 212–223) and X, 3/65.5 (fol. 224).
RV 288	<i>I-Tn</i> ; Giordano 35, fols 194–201. Concerto in F major, for principal violin, two violins, viola and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed <i>Con:^{to} Del Viualdi</i> . Paper Y, 1/10.6.
RV 330	<i>I-Tn</i> ; Giordano 35, fols 202–211. Concerto in G minor, for principal violin, two violins, viola and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed <i>Con:^{to} Del Viualdi</i> . Paper X, 3/65.5.
RV 380	<i>I-Tn</i> ; Giordano 35, fols 241–250. Concerto in B flat major, for principal violin, two violins, viola and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed <i>Con:^{to} Del Viualdi</i> . Paper Y, 1/10.7.

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- RV 473 *I-Tn*; Giordano 35, fols 313–320. Concerto in C major, for bassoon, two violins, viola and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed *Con:^{to} P[er] Fagotto [space] Del Viualdi*. Paper X, 3/65.5.
- RV 500 *I-Tn*; Giordano 35, fols 305–312. Concerto in A minor, for bassoon, two violins, viola and basso continuo. Autograph score, superscribed *Con:^{to} Del Viualdi / P[er] Fagotto*. Paper Y, 1/10.6.
- RV 768¹² *I-Tn*; Giordano 35, fols 303–304. Concerto in A major, for principal violin, two violins, viola and basso continuo. Autograph score lacking superscriptions of the work's identification: a draft made when the composer converted the concerto RV 396 for solo viola d'amore (autograph score, I-Tn; Foà 29, fols 324–331) into the present version for violin. Paper Y, 1/10.6.

TABLE II

RV 82		RV 282	
RV 85		RV 288	
RV 93		RV 330	
RV 155		RV 380	
RV 163 'Conca'		RV 473	
RV 186		RV 500	
RV 278		RV 768	

¹² Formerly classified as 'RV 744'. Ryom, *Répertoire*, 70–1, 443–4 and 705.

The hundreds of autographs in the Turin collections overwhelmingly prove that Vivaldi normally used batches of music paper acquired in Venice or elsewhere in northern Italy: paper of excellent quality with the generic three-crescents watermark (*tre mezze lune*), purchased as folded but uncut quires with staves already ruled on the pages. Patterns of stave-ruling, or ‘rastrographies’, show that the commercial provision of music paper was considerably more advanced in the Veneto than in other regions of Italy and elsewhere in Europe early in the eighteenth century, both in terms of the quality of the product and the technology it involved.¹³ In contrast, the two varieties of paper—which we may call ‘X’ and ‘Y’—exhibited by the fourteen manuscripts of putative Bohemian provenance are of inferior quality with stave-rulings in a relatively unsophisticated style: rulings of only one, two or three staves at a time, made using hand-held *rastra*.¹⁴

Distinguishable only by their watermarks, paper-types X and Y are as sufficiently similar as one can expect of varieties of a single regional provenance. Both are particularly dense papers with minimal translucency, red-brown though mottled in colour, with a sheet size of around 430 x 340 mm (horizontal and vertical dimensions, respectively). The sheets of both types exhibited by the present manuscripts were imposed in folio format: i.e. each was folded only once to give two upright leaves. It is because they are upright that they were bound into Foà 40 and Giordano 35; the remaining twenty-five Turin volumes which contain Vivaldi’s manuscripts are all oblong, the four-leaf quire in oblong quarto format (most frequently with ten staves across each page) being the standard unit of music paper to which he was accustomed. Three-crescents papers have a considerably larger sheet size (around 630 x 470 mm) than types X and Y; even when imposed in upright quarto format, they give a spacious leaf-width of about 235 mm. The upright leaves of types X and Y, being roughly 215

¹³ The kinds of music paper that Vivaldi most frequently used have ten staves per page (i.e. 50 lines) ruled in a single stroke, probably by machine. Information on the range of papers and their rastrographies is given in Paul Everett, ‘Vivaldi Concerto Manuscripts in Manchester: II’, *Informazioni e studi vivaldiani*, *Bollettino dell’Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi*, 6 (1985), 3–56 (especially 8–10), and Everett, ‘Towards a Vivaldi Chronology’, in Antonio Fanna and Giovanni Morelli (eds), *Nuovi studi vivaldiani; edizione e cronologia critica delle opere*, 2 vols (Florence: Olschki, 1988), 729–57 (especially 737–47).

¹⁴ A list of 25 surviving *rastra* (singular ‘rastrum’, Latin for ‘a rake’), with photos of some of them, is given in Jean K. Wolf and Eugene K. Wolf, ‘Rastrology and its Uses in Eighteenth-Century Manuscript Studies’, in Eugene K. Wolf and Edward H. Roesner (eds), *Studies in Musical Sources and Styles: Essays in Honor of Jan LaRue* (Madison: A-R Editions, 1990), 237–91. Four are preserved in the National Museum, Prague: Muzeum český hudby (Czech Museum of Music), Sign. 31 K, 32 K, 33 K and 136 K.

mm wide, must have seemed to Vivaldi rather narrow for their height and inconvenient to use. Evidence showing that he was having to cope with music paper of an unfamiliar kind indeed exists. For the score of RV 155, he used the leaves upside-down. The lower edges of the manuscripts of RV 186 and 330 were severely trimmed (perhaps in an attempt to make their height conform to the dimension of Italian manuscripts with which they may have been kept) to the extent of removing the lowest (twelfth) stave from the pages of RV 330 with a consequent loss of text on fols 204*v* and 211*v*. That this mishap occurred during the composer's lifetime, before the sources were bound in their present volumes, is demonstrated by the fact that Vivaldi rectified the mistake on fol. 211*v* (but failed to spot the problem with fol. 204*v*) by adding the missing notes of the bass part on an otherwise void first-violin stave with the remark 'Questo è il Basso perche sotto è stato tagliato' (*this is the bass because below it was cut out*).

Because of the density of the paper, it has proved to be impossible to discern the watermarks clearly, and the drawings presented here are sketches based, as shown, on measurements. (Vertical lines indicate chain indentations which surround and cross the mark, spaced apart by the horizontal distances indicated in millimetres; the dotted lines in Figure 2a are conjectural.) It is hoped that they are sufficiently definitive, nevertheless, to allow other scholars to associate with them similar or related marks that might be found elsewhere. Paper X possesses only one mark, a design of some kind, positioned at the centre of the sheet so that portions appear near the gutter in conjugate leaves in upright folio format: Figure 1 is the lower left-hand portion. Paper Y has a principal watermark at the centre of the left half-sheet (when the paper is viewed from the indented, 'mould' side), and a countermark positioned centrally in the right half-sheet. The former (Figure 2a) is probably a crowned double-headed eagle, a common feature of paper manufactured in the Empire; the latter, a device that I could not identify, possibly comprises the paper-manufacturer's initials (Figure 2b).¹⁵

¹⁵ Many watermarks featuring the double-headed eagle are reproduced in Georg Eineder, *The Ancient Paper Mills of the Former Austro-Hungarian Empire and Their Watermarks* (Hilversum: Paper Publications Society, 1960), especially tracings 228–575, *passim*. This study's section on paper-making in Bohemia (pp. 105–32) confirms that several paper mills were active in Vivaldi's day in the region of Prague, notably to the north and north-west, for example near Aussig (Ústí nad Labem). See also Józef Dąbrowski, *Paper Manufacture in Central and Eastern Europe Before the Introduction of Paper-making Machines* (2008), published online by the International Association of Paper Historians at <http://www.paperhistory.org/dabro.pdf> (accessed 16 April 2013).

Figure 1:

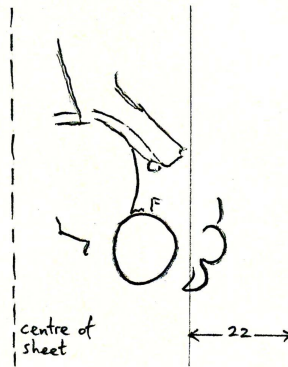


Figure 2a:

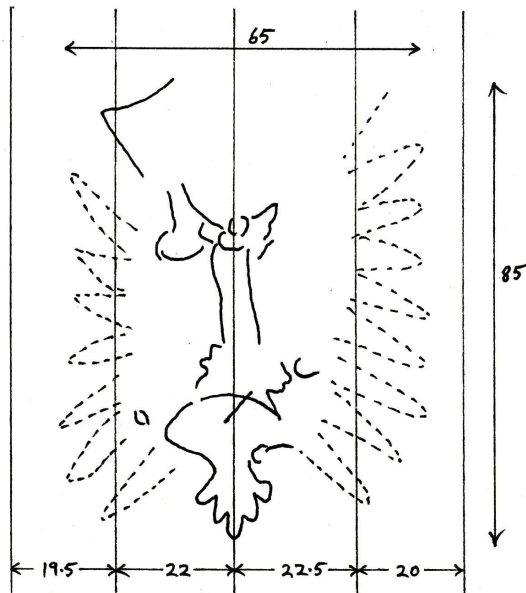
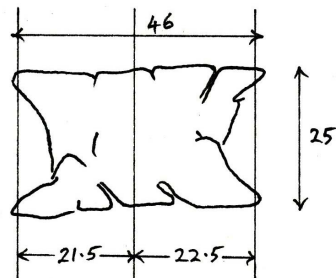


Figure 2b:



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It remains only to discuss the stave-rulings exhibited by these manuscripts and their important implications. Each stave-ruling or 'rastrogaphy' may be recorded by noting the number of staves drawn in a single stroke, the span-measurement between the highest and lowest lines drawn, and—most crucially—by taking a cross-section of all the lines drawn; by this means one may discover the appearance of identical rulings in two or more manuscripts.¹⁶ In Table I, a classification is given for each manuscript; '3/65.5', for instance, refers to a rastrogaphy with three staves in a stroke with a span-measurement of 65.5 mm. Twelve staves—or thirteen in the case of paper Y with 1/10.7 rastrogaphy (for RV 380)—were ruled on each page as follows:

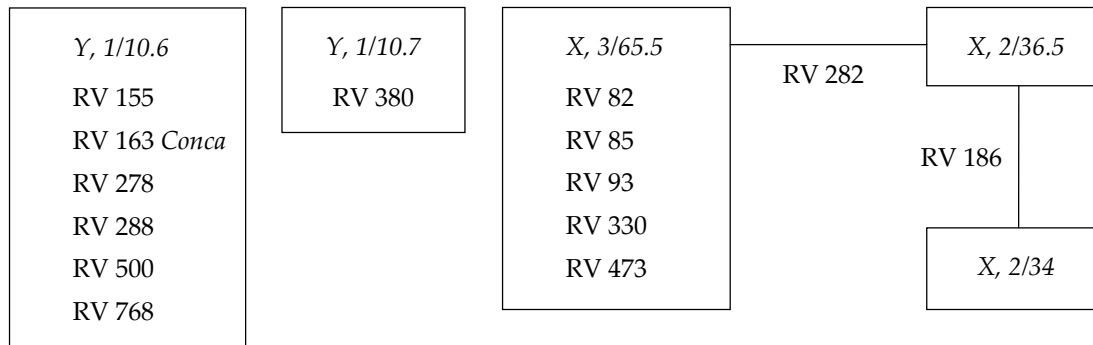
Y, 1/10.6:	12 staves ruled in 12 strokes per page.
Y, 1/10.7:	13 staves ruled in 13 strokes per page.
X, 2/34:	12 staves ruled in 6 strokes per page.
X, 2/36.5:	12 staves ruled in 6 strokes per page.
X, 3/65.5:	12 staves ruled in 4 strokes per page.

Because certain manuscripts possess precisely the same rastrogaphies as others, possibly significant groupings of sources may be distinguished: see Figure 3. With these sources, as with others of the music of Vivaldi and his contemporaries, we may assume that the use of identical music paper (characterized, that is, not by paper-type alone but by one particular rastrogaphy) suggests the approximate contemporaneity of the documents. In theory at least, Vivaldi would normally have acquired from a dealer or stationer a supply of music paper sufficient for imminent tasks—a quantity likely to have exhibited only one rastrogaphy or very few distinct rastrogaphies—and would exhaust it within a short period.¹⁷ Indeed, the similar rastrogaphy (3/65.5) of the manuscripts of RV 82, 85 and 93 seems to confirm the notion of contemporaneity implicit in these three documents' references to Wrtby, and it follows that the scores of

¹⁶ For an introduction to this method of source analysis, see Paul Everett, 'The Application and Usefulness of "Rastrology", with Particular Reference to Early Eighteenth-Century Italian Manuscripts', in Marco Di Pasquale (ed.), *Musica e filologia* (Verona: Edizioni della Società Letteraria, 1983), 135–58. The interpretation of rastrogaphical evidence in specific manuscript repertoires is demonstrated in the same writer's *The Manchester Concerto Partbooks*, 2 vols (New York and London: Garland, 1989); 'A Roman Concerto Repertory: Ottoboni's "what not"?', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 110 (1983–84), 62–78; 'Vivaldi Concerto Manuscripts in Manchester: II' and 'Towards a Vivaldi Chronology' (as note 13).

¹⁷ Many caveats must qualify this argument, of course; it would be unwise to believe, for instance, that Vivaldi always exhausted a batch of paper within a short time. See Everett, 'Towards a Vivaldi Chronology', 744–9.

Figure 3:



RV 330 and 473, compiled from the same batch of music paper, may share the same approximate date. As shown in Figure 3, the use of two varieties of music paper for each of the scores of RV 186 and 282 enables us to extend the argument; we may conclude that at least two batches of music paper of type X were simultaneously available to the composer. The lack of links of this kind which would associate directly the groupings of type-Y manuscripts with each other or with the X group does not necessarily preclude the contemporaneity of all these sources; the rarity of the materials, among the hundreds of Turin manuscripts, itself suggests that the documents share a common and unusual origin. Thus, although we possess no precise dates for these manuscripts of putative Bohemian provenance or actual proof that they were compiled during the trip of late 1729 and 1730, a clear sense of their close relative dating emerges nonetheless. The impression created accords perfectly with the idea of Vivaldi producing a number of compositions in a short period while absent from Italy.

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