

"Maud Powell's name is well known to me and believe it or not, my students know who she was and what she stood for."

Jascha Heifetz



"I like to think that she bequeathed a legacy to me: the very truth she had lived and died for and her commitment to her violin, to her music and to humanity."

Yehudi Menuhin

"Maud Powell is the violinist I most admire."

Rachel Barton Pine, Honorary Chair

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All Invited to Participate in Maud Powell's 150th Anniversary Violinist Rachel Barton Pine Chairs Worldwide Celebration

The Maud Powell Society for Music and Education announced today its invitation to celebrate Maud Powell's Sesquicentennial in 2017/18 — the 150th year of her birth. The Maud Powell Society invites everyone to participate in the world-wide celebration of this legendary American violinist's life and legacy.

The Celebration Theme is **"Music is a Bridge that Spans the Universe,"** highlighting Powell's lifelong devotion to music and humanity and her belief in the power of music as a mighty force for good in the world. The Society is asking people worldwide to engage in "150 Bows for Maud" — 150 events occurring around the world in her honor during the 2017/18 season.

Participation is open to people who love music (not just musicians). Anyone can participate by dedicating a concert or a performance of a particular piece of music or by dedicating a special "event" to Maud Powell in keeping with the Celebration Theme. "Events" include school presentations, concerts, lecture/recitals, essays, poetry, works of art, state history projects, exhibits, compositions, and more.

Participants can sign up on the Maud Powell Society web site: www.maudpowell.org and then register their event information on the web site 150th Events Calendar. Highlights from events will appear on the web site Showcase page and will gain further publicity from the Society's Facebook page.

Support materials (books, recordings, transcriptions, photographs, programs, biographical and tour information) are available from The Maud Powell Society as well as programming ideas and suggested units for school presentations.

For thirty years, the Maud Powell Society has upheld Maud Powell as an inspirational role model for all people. Internationally acclaimed violinist Rachel Barton Pine, honorary chair of Powell's Sesquicentennial Celebration, is one of Maud Powell's foremost champions. "Maud Powell is the violinist I most admire," Pine declared. "Her lifelong devotion to serving music and humanity has been an inspiration to me as I explore new ways to reach out to young people as well as seasoned concert-goers with my art."

"Praised as 'the most powerful force for musical advancement in America,' Maud Powell was also hailed as one of the greatest violinists ever heard in Europe, ranking with Kreisler and Ysaÿe," explained Karen Shaffer, Powell's biographer and founder and president of the Maud Powell Society.

"Born on August 22, 1867, in Peru, Illinois, on the edge of the western frontier, she transformed violin playing and musical life during her 52 years," Shaffer continued. "She followed in the footsteps of her pioneer heritage. Her father, William Bramwell Powell, was a nationally known, innovative educator while her uncle John Wesley Powell was known for his scientific explorations of the Grand Canyon, founder of the Cosmos Club, director of the U.S. Geological Survey, and founder with his brother of the National Geographic Society.

"With the backing of her mother, Wilhelmina Bengelstraeter Paul Powell, whose gifts as a composer and pianist had not been allowed to develop, and with the encouragement of woman suffrage champion Susan B. Anthony, Maud Powell became a dynamic trailblazer who defied convention and went on to become one of the most revered performers and personalities of her day. Her road to success was often littered with obstacles but she never let them block her path," Shaffer noted.

The first American-born violin virtuoso of international stature of either gender, Maud Powell was a visionary woman who blazed a trail of "firsts":

- pioneered the violin recital in North America
- premiered major violin concertos in America by Tchaikovsky, Sibelius, Dvořák, Coleridge-Taylor and many more
- promoted contemporary European & American composers, including women composers & composers of African descent
- broke significant barriers to the full participation by women in the music profession
- initiated and performed outreach concerts for school children
- benefitted humanitarian causes
- performed for soldiers in World War I, overcoming official skepticism
- founded and led her own trios and quartets with which she toured

- pioneered violin recording (1904) (reissued on Naxos label) (GRAMMY Lifetime Achievement Award 2014)
- inspired the formation of orchestras and created widespread interest in violin playing and classical music

Shaffer continued: “Maud Powell carried her music far and wide across North America, covering hundreds of thousands of miles and touring under difficult conditions to bring classical music to people who had never heard a concert before. She performed with all the great orchestras and conductors in Europe and America and carried her art as far as Russia, South Africa, and Hawaii. She died on tour with her violin in her hands at age 52, on January 8, 1920.

“Our theme, **Music is a Bridge that Spans the Universe**, is the principle to which Maud Powell dedicated herself and her music and the ideal for which she sacrificed her life. Serving humanity was the motivating spirit of her life. No path was too daunting, no audience too small, no obstacle too difficult to overcome for her to fulfill her mission to uplift humanity with her art.

“It is important that we celebrate Powell, particularly at a time when our world is going through many challenges,” Shaffer concluded. “Her influence as a supreme artist and humanitarian left an indelible mark on all who heard her play. And today, her enduring legacy continues to inspire musicians and music lovers throughout the world.”

For more information on how you can participate in the Maud Powell Sesquicentennial Celebrations, visit: www.maudpowell.org

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“It is as bitter as gall and savage as wilderness”! wrote New York critic W. J. Henderson upon hearing the Sibelius violin concerto for the first time. Maud Powell had just performed the American premiere with Wassily Safonoff conducting the New York Philharmonic on November 30 and December 1, 1906. “The first movement of the concerto is enough to appall almost any violinist. Now anyone who knows anything knows that Maud Powell is the last of players to seek out a medium for bald technical display. She is too true an artist for that. She must have found something else in this extraordinary concerto to induce her to master its frightful passages. She played it superbly. Her tone was full and brilliant. Her style had virility and breadth and dash. Her finger work was admirable and her bowing glorious. But why did she put all that magnificent art into this sour and crabbed concerto?”

Did Maud Powell give up? No. “The message was there, and I would not give it up until I had made others feel what I felt when I played it.” She wrote to Sibelius, “I have not lost courage and shall play it again with the splendid orchestra in Chicago, also in Cincinnati and I hope with the Boston Symphony under Dr. Muck....” Triumph followed as Maud Powell won acceptance and acclaim for the Sibelius violin concerto which became one of the most beloved in the violin repertory.