

**Violin Playing For Women
by Maud Powell**

The Ladies' Home Journal
**Philadelphia
February 1891**

There are three essentials necessary to violin playing for a woman: musical talent, health and application. The first is God-given; and unless a girl possesses perfect physical strength, she can never endure the extremely rigorous practice necessary in such a training – a training which requires from two to four hours of practice daily, standing with a violin in position, in order to acquire even ordinary execution; and from four to seven hours, to attain to the highest artistic excellence. For a girl in good health the training is most beneficial if the position held during practice is the correct one. For then the shoulders are so thrown back that the lungs and chest secure proper expansion and development. As standing motionless, for even the space of five minutes, is so intensely wearying, the usual methods of practicing should be while quietly and gently walking about. This calls into play all the muscles of the arms and back. The exercise tends to impart a graceful carriage, a flexibility and grace in the use of the arms, wrists and hands, and a roundness and firmness to the flesh of the arms.

“But may I not sit to practice?” I hear some would-be student ask. You may indeed; but it is not wise to make a habit of so doing. The draperies of your gown are apt to entangle your bow and the position thus taken is not one of equal freedom or grace. Women do sit in *ensemble* playing, *i.e.*, trios, quartets, etc., but for ordinary practice and solo work the standing pose is the better one.

So much for the second essential, which seems to have led very naturally into the third and last – application. In addition to the fatigues caused by the long hours of practice and study – back of which must be a genuine love for the work – devotion and sacrifice are necessary. Many social pleasures must be denied, and intense must be the application of the girl who would become proficient.

And to her who would become a professional *artiste*, let me say with “Punch” when addressing those about to marry – “Don’t.” The life is one of such incessant work – at least to the true artist – of nervous strain, of such denial and loss social life, of home and family, that the rewards are but lightly to be weighed against it.

From the Archive of The Maud Powell Society for Music and Education