STRUGGLES WHICH LED TO SUCCESS

Distinguished Musicians Tell of Their Battles for Fame and Prosperity

Miss Maud Powell
America's Most Distinguished Violinist

Published in *The Etude*
October 1911

The earliest fiddleistic struggles I seem to remember nothing whatever about. To get up at six-thirty, practice an hour before breakfast or to come home after school to practice another hour before supper seemed perfectly natural and right because the habit had been formed – mother's word was law. To play with my teacher was a joy; to play in the local orchestra of sixteen or more pieces was an ecstacy of delight. To play in an occasional concert was interesting, except that I hated the grand clothes necessary for those occasions. When I went abroad I fell right into the foreign way, loving the new impressions and sensing the artistic atmosphere at once.

Conscious nervousness overcame me first when I rehearsed the first time with an orchestral accompaniment. This was at the Gewandhaus in Leipsig when I was thirteen. I broke down, wept, went home in disgrace, but came back the next day to pull through triumphantly. Since that time I have always suffered more or less from the torments of nervousness. Fortunately the worst moments of nightmare are those immediately preceding the first entrance upon the stage, for, once lost in the music, nervousness readily turns to inspiration.

The unhappiest period of my life was perhaps after I returned from my studies abroad. I missed the student life, the sound of music all about me, the talk of music and comparing of ideas with fellow-students. I missed the architecture, the parks, the organized life of well-governed cities. In fact I was miserably homesick. I felt lost and was like a rudderless ship. I was only sixteen [seventeen], but had made my bow as a professional violinist with some distinction under Theodore Thomas' baton at the New York Philharmonic, so must henceforth stand on my own feet artistically.

Many were the times when I longed to seek advice in both a musical and a business way, but I was morbidly shy and foolishly proud, so I pegged away alone, often wondering if I were on the right track. These years of uncertainty were six or eight. I practiced and studied a good deal. All the time I tried to keep a level head. I sought inspiration wherever I could find it and tried to cultivate taste.

I read more than I have ever had the time to read since. People thought me cold. But despair was in my heart, and I wondered constantly if I was a fool to keep on. I doubted my talent (at times), I doubted my strength and endurance, I doubted the ultimate reward of my labors. Yet I kept on, simply because of the "something" within that drove me on. I had a reverence for art – instilled into me in Germany – and I had the real artist's yearning for self-expression. And so I passed through the dark years and gradually came into my own.

I believe the successful outcome was a matter as much of character as of talent. Through all, in spite of praise or censure, whether just or unjust, I kept a certain poise of self-judgment and self-criticism. I have ever sought artistic truth according to the light that has been given me. Whatever conviction carries with my work <u>is</u> because it has been developed and *is* myself.

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

MUSICAL FUTURE OF AMERICA

by
MAUD POWELL

Published in *The Violinist*
September 1911

Time was when the weird incantations, the battle songs, and the burial chants of the Indian were the characteristic music of the people who inhabited this country. They were not of our race, but their history is part of our history and the most romantic element of it. And their folk-lore and their music have been diligently collected and conserved for us.

The Indian was an intensely musical being in his own uncivilized way; but the white man who displaced him was not. Our Colonial forbears were psalm singers. The pioneers who opened up the wilderness were too busy even for that pious but unmusical diversion. Years passed before any phase of our national existence found musical expression. It was the Negro, finally, another alien to our blood, who began to express the emotions of his primitive nature in song. The simplicity and originality of his melodic inspiration, springing from his unsophisticated nature, had an irresistible appeal and charm. He brought into manifestation a new and a characteristic musical idiom. But after the Civil War the unsophisticated Negro became obsolete, and melodies like "Suanee River" disappeared with them.

Inspiration of Civil War

If it obliterated the melodious darky, that same Civil War furnished the first real inspiration to our native composers. Patriotic songs, marching tunes, battle hymns, and songs of defeat and victory were turned out in endless profusion. Much of this was worthless and ephemeral; but there remains a fairly substantial residuum of crude, homely, but stirring music, endowed by patriotic associations, and valuable not only on that account, but because it is characteristically American in its musical idiom.

Almost half a century has elapsed since the close of the Civil War, and in that period our country has undergone an expansion in the commercial arts that is without parallel in history; but we struck no new note in music until the last decade brought into vogue the reigning vulgarity of ragtime. Frown on it as we may, we must confess in the end that it has distinct individuality of rhythm. And that is a great deal; for rhythm stands at the root of all musical structure. But, above and beyond the vital importance of its structural quality, it has a soul of its own. It is a perfect expression in musical terms of our nervous vitality and of our national swagger, of the slapdash, devil may care, get there or bust method of the American.

I hope I have made clear the existence of four periods in our history, which have their own individual and characteristic musical idiom, an idiom so intimately a part of the warp and woof of certain phases of our national life, that it not only serves to recall them to memory, but to express the national mood of its time.

Remarkably vivid and instructive has been the evolution within the last half century of a national music in Russia. We may well turn to it as an object lesson to help solve our own problem. Before that time what music was written in Russian was a weak imitation of the Italian, French and German composers. Then Mikhail Glinka, who had been educated musically in Italy and Germany, determined to write music that was of and for the Russian people. His opera, "Life for the Czar," was the epoch-making outcome. The libretto reeked with patriotism, and his score was built on the popular songs of the Russian people. The success of this work, and others of like sort from his pen, prompted four enthusiastic young composers, Borodin, Mussorgsky, Balakirieff and Rimsky-Korsakov, to band together to make propaganda for a distinctly national music.

They sought inspiration or themes for musical treatment only in Russian history, poetry, romance, fairytale or folk-lore, and as the groundwork of their symphonic utterance they took the songs of the fields and the steppes and the cities, of the laborers at their toil, of the serf in his alternating moods of gaiety and despair, of the Cossack riding to battle. They voiced the tragedy and the pathos, the gaiety and the glory, of Russian life, in a language that spoke directly to the hearts of the Russian people. Within an incredibly short time they achieved a distinctly national expression in their music and established firmly a Russian school of composition. The music was individual and it was national. And to their greater glory, they infused, by their success, a new and intense note of nationalism into all Russian art.

When Russians Were Aroused

The inspiration of this movement is still active. I recall a recent striking instance to illustrate how this spirit of nationalism affects the Russian composer and finds expression in his work. The "Red Sunday" in St. Petersburg, with its ensuing wave of assassination and repression, had plunged the Russian nation into deepest gloom. Glazunoff, the great composer, head of the Imperial Conservatory, came forward at a popular Sunday concert of the St. Petersburg Symphony Society to conduct his own orchestral setting of a popular folksong. This song, known as “Ai Ouchnem,” [sic] has been sung from time immemorial by bargemen of the River Bolga. Its rhythmic accent is indicative of the swaying of the boatmen’s body as he plies the oars.

On this night the violins began it slowly and solemnly and in a minor key. The ’cellos moaned it in repetition, and through the melody was heard at intervals the crash of muted brass. Then over the insistent beat of muffled drums, the melody rose and fell in accents of poignant sorrow. The audience listened in amazement to the reckless song of the sturdy rivermen turned into a funeral dirge. Then suddenly it understood. The “Ai Oouchnem” [sic] had been transformed into the lament of maimed and bleeding Russia for her dead! The music died away to a prolonged moan and ended suddenly with a shivering crash. What did that mean—the chaos of revolution?

For a moment the audience sat stupefied; then jumped to its feet and yelled. Twelve times the number was repeated amid scenes of indescribable excitement. Then a cautious police agent notified the conductor to stop and dismiss the hysterical audience.

Could it Happen Here?

Could such a scene transpire in an American concert hall? Well, most of us may remember the scenes of wild enthusiasm evoked by the playing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" during the early days of the Spanish-American War. The broad hint therein conveyed was entirely lost on our native composers.

Events are impending which may open their eyes. Puccini, greatest of living Italian operatic composers, has turned to the romantic history of California Argonauts for the theme of his newest work. And it is good to hear that the beautiful "Poia" legend of the Blackfoot Indians has furnished material for an American grand opera--though, sad to relate, the composer was obliged to go to Germany to find recognition for his work.

It is only in this country we hear the assertion that there is no such thing and never can be any such thing as characteristically American music. Europeans enjoy our ragtime and Sousa marches more than most of us would believe. And they are no more at a loss to classify them than we are to detect a Scottish ballad.

But we have in view a higher achievement in American music than this. It will be attained only when our composers realize the value of the material afforded by the history, the literature, the folk-lore, and the wonderful natural beauties of their own country. Of such material there is an abundance and a variety to create the poetic mood, which will induce the vitalizing and transforming touch of artistic inspiration. Music thus created will be characteristically American in content as well as expression. It will be genuine American music.

PITTING AMERICAN VIOLIN WORKS AGAINST THE FOREIGN PRODUCT

by
MAUD POWELL

Published in *Musical America*
October 14, 1911

What's in a name? And yet, a name may make a difference, the fair *Juliet* to the contrary notwithstanding. If our motor boat hadn't its ridiculous name, we should not get half the fun out of it that we do. "Fiddle-dee-dee" causes a smile and often raises a good-natured "halloo" in the boats that we pass at close range. We seem to carry a talisman with us in our name and our "fiddler" ensign, that arouses a spontaneous spirit of good-will and good-fellowship wherever we speed our little craft. There is a free masonry anyway among water-folk that is good to contemplate. It matters not in the least if one's engine breaks down—there are a dozen offers of help in no time—and if one finds a sailor becalmed or his rudder disabled it is an exhilarating adventure to tow him into port, even though one gets home late to supper in consequence.

There is music in the sea, too. I had never noticed that the sea speaks in diatonic intervals, until Edwin Grasse, the blind composer-violinist, drew my attention to the curious effect. The surf ripples forward and back in diatonic scales—unlike the wind, which manifests itself chromatically. By the way, Mr. Grasse has written a fascinating and clever study called Wellenspiel (will some one suggest an adequate English equivalent?) which I shall play this Winter.

I have found several really good program pieces by American composers, which I shall use on most of my forthcoming recital programs. Arthur Bergh's mellow "Musings," Harry Gilbert's vivacious Scherzo, W. H. Humiston's brisk and concise "Suite" are all worth playing. Several other good things are awaiting their turn—indeed the signs are most hopeful for a good repertoire of American violin compositions; compositions that one can pit against the foreign product on one and the same program.

That the times are propitious musically is evidenced by the interesting material that *Musical America* printed right through the so-called dull season. My felicitations!

SAYS PIANO GETS LESS CARE THAN FRENCH MIRROR

Maude [sic] Powell, the Famous Violinist, Speaks Plain Words on Care of Instrument.

The Star, Indianapolis
March 12, 1911

"I have been amazed," said Maud Powell, the American violinist, "at the lack of care the average piano owner gives his instrument. Though a piano may be bought by some merely as a parlor ornament, it certainly should receive as good care as its owner bestows on his French mirror.

"When buying a piano many persons are more exacting than we violinists are in selecting a violin, and goodness knows we are particular enough. They look at a piano almost with a magnifying glass, as though they were buying diamonds, to see if there is the slightest defect in the varnish. They try every key from bass to treble and find, perhaps, or fancy they find, one key, the tone of which they think is not quite right. They magnify a blemish in the varnish or a fancied unequal vibration in some one key, until the poor salesman is nearly distracted. They scarcely see the nine hundred and ninety-nine good points because of the one fancied fault.

"But when they finally do buy and the piano is placed in their home, what a change! The French mirror bought at the same time is carefully and frequently cleaned, its polished surface daily wiped with a damp cloth, to take off the bluish tint which dulls its luster, and the window shades are carefully pulled down so that the direct rays of the sun do not strike it.

"But how about the piano? Too often I find beautiful instruments setting snug up against cold, damp outside walls, one end perhaps close to a hot radiator, the other against a cold window or door, while the top is covered with jarring picture frames and a miscellaneous assortment of 'things' which, even if ornamental, certainly have no place on the top of a beautiful piano.

"But even this is not the worst crime for which pianos must suffer, and their makers be unjustly criticised as a result. Ninety-nine of every hundred pianos I find in private homes are fearfully out of tune. How can the musical quality which earnest piano makers strive to give their instruments be possible when the piano is allowed to remain out of tune? And did any instrument, violin or piano ever become valuable in any market without beauty of tone? The equalized vibration of a piano in perfect tune is a delight to the ear. The bloom is upon the tone of a beautiful piano in perfect tune as attractive as any peach that ever feasted the eye or appealed to the palate of an epicure. But this bloom fades the moment a piano is allowed to get out of tune.

"A violin must, of course, be in tune or no violinist would play upon it. A violinist often

stops in the midst of his solo to adjust his strings, yet the poor neglected piano is allowed to go month after month and sometimes, think of it, year after year, without being tuned. I had rather play on a second-rate piano in tune than the best piano ever manufactured out of tune. Yet many people of taste and wealth who own the best piano the makers can produce think they have done their duty if they have their pianos tuned once a year.

"If a violin with only four strings is tuned each time it is used, and frequently during use, what careful attention should be given to the tuning of a piano containing something like 250 strings. America turns out the best pianos in the world, both in mechanism and in artistic results. It behooves piano owners to see that there is no ground for the criticism that there is a lack of artistic appreciation on the part of our public toward an American product, such as our best pianos, which are so universally recognized as perfect. Remember – to possess a beautiful object without the knowledge to conserve its beauty is the very acme of snobbishness. Besides, real culture means appreciative of the best, and in music the first step in appreciation is to train the ear. Few realize that the ear is the most sensitive of nerve organisms. The ability to recognize and appreciate the beautiful and subtle harmonies of music must rapidly deteriorate from hearing musical instruments so badly out of tune as to wholly destroy the harmony of sympathetic vibration. Under such conditions the real joy of the musical epicure is never realized.

"How do I, a violinist, know so much about pianos? Well, after traveling 'toosands and toosands' of miles as Harry Lauder would say, giving concerts under all sorts of conditions and with all sorts of pianos, I have had some things taught me by bitter experience. Besides," added Miss Powell, "I play the piano myself, and next to the violin, love a good piano more than any other musical instrument."

MAUD POWELL'S RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

The Lady
February 22, 1900

Were it possible to give a recipe for success, one might state it thus: One part talent, nine parts will-power; mix thoroughly.

In my own case, possessing perhaps the artistic nature and a reasonable share of brains and talent, together with excellent health, I have, through determined and purposeful application of energy, "arrived," or at least brought myself to a point where some of the mystery, the truth, the inner meaning of the Holy Grail of Art stand revealed.

Determination to win gives one concentration of thought and purpose; makes one alive to every opportunity for growth and advancement, gives one the eagerness to grasp and assimilate helpful, ripening knowledge and experience; it makes life vital, interesting, and work absorbing, glorious. Serious reading this, mayhap, for casual eyes, yet I feel the necessity of approaching the subject with all seriousness. To all who wish to enter the professional ranks, let me say: Don't attempt it unless you possess an all-absorbing and unselfish love for the art per se (not for its trappings), and are willing and glad to make every sacrifice for its sake. If you honestly love your art, and only then, will you have sufficient courage to combat the buffets, the injustices, the bitternesses of public life! Art is its own reward, and, looked at less selfishly, is it not worth much to be able to dispense "sweetness and light," to open human hearts, to stir the highest sympathies of one's fellow-beings? To me the following episode is worth days of toil and a dozen disappointments.

Practicing one day in my mountain cottage in the Catskills, the summer sunshine and the fragrance of the garden pouring in through open door and open window, I suddenly became conscious of the presence of a little barefooted Negro lass, who had slipped noiselessly into my room drawn thither by the sound of the fiddle. There she stood, listening with her whole being, strongly approving of the chords in the Bach "Chaconne," which she said were "like an organ," and her eyes fairly dancing out of her head at the "plunky-te-plunk-plunk" of Sarasate's "Gypsy Dances." She volunteered to dance – marvelous tricks of steps did she trip, too, – and calmly informed me I didn't play as well for dancing as her dusky mother. When we said "Goodbye," and she took herself off, I supposed the incident closed. But, no; the next morning a single glowing hollyhock blossom found its way mysteriously to my desk. Glancing out of the window, I espied the little black form scudding away down the garden path towards the gate. I have the flower still, while its touching message I shall treasure in a warm corner of my heart as long as I live.

PIANOS DO NOT RECEIVE PROPER CARE FROM THEIR OWNERS

The Studio
March 1913

Maud Powell, Famous Violiniste, Declares Herself Amazed at Way Average Owner Neglects Instrument.

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New York Deutch Journal
20 July 1913

MUSIC AS A PROFESSION FOR WOMEN

by Maud Powell

translated from the German by Helmut Schulz

My young friend,

You desire my advice as to whether you should choose music as your life's profession. I cannot answer with either yes or no. I have to ask you some questions first. Are you sure that you have a strong and expressly musical talent? Have you health, strength and a good physique? Do you possess will power, courage and determination? Above all do you have endurance and inexhaustible patience? Do you love your music more than anything else in this world? Do you have enough money to live comfortably until you have finished your years of learning and have overcome the first obstacles of your future career?

Meaningless Comparisons

You write that you surely have more talent than all your friends and at the university people consider you a musical genius. The comparisons which you and your friends make do not count. How does your gift compare with the large talents of people who have grown up in a musical environment, who instinctively choose the right things, and who with twelve years have already reached a turning point which you will only reach at twenty. Besides, while attending the university, you are wasting valuable time which you should devote to the purely mechanical side of your art. If you want to be an artist, you will have to sacrifice something of your general education to the ambition you have.

Camilla Urso once told me that she learned her ABCs only after she had mastered her scales. I left school at twelve and moved to Leipzig. If you want to become a great virtuosa, you have to do exactly what acrobats and ballet dancers do. You have to train, train, train without ceasing. Is your delicate body, your sensitive nature, up to this drudgery? Can you expect yourself to practice every day five, six and, when necessary, nine hours?

Is the game worth the effort?

And even if you could do that, I tell you the game is not worth the effort unless you love your music with every fiber of your being. If you love music for its own sake, so that you could not exist without it, then you should risk it, but in this case, you would not have asked me for advice. A thousand warnings could not have held you back.

Did I ever tell you how I became a violinist? It's a very serious story which I have to tell you. My family was torn asunder because I had to go to Europe for my education. My father who was

fond of home and adored his wife and children, was left homeless and stayed in the country by himself. For him it meant work, work, work in order to send the monthly check for my lessons, music, clothes, and board. I stayed four years in Europe. Then I returned to the home country. But after that, the time of separation did not end because I had to "work" the concert field from the East. My father's profession, however, bound him to the West. My brother returned to my father but he continued his education without the influence of the home and the careful eye of the loving mother. This life of wandering lasted fifteen years until my mother believed she could leave me on my own. She returned to her husband and they founded a new home life for themselves but who would say that after fifteen years of separation, during which they got estranged from each other in their habits and their interests, that this would be the old home again?

Art and Dilettantism

I do not tell you all this to frighten you away. But I will show you the other side of the matter while you have until now seen only the lighter side. I am particularly of the opinion that every woman should learn something useful. I am definitely of the opinion that every woman should learn something practical and definitely at the time when she is young enough to learn easily. Every woman should be capable of supporting herself in a case of emergency and if she has chosen music as a life's profession, no artistic goal should be too high for her. But this goal should not necessarily be fame.

Accomplish what you can accomplish and do this as thoroughly as you can. Believe me, the consciousness of having done something well holds an infinite satisfaction even if the deed has not been done in the glare of the lime-light. Equip yourself for the day of need and if this day happily should not arrive, then you should enrich your life and that of your friends by your artistic occupation as an amateur in the pure sense of the word – as a woman who loves art for its own sake.

The Reward of the Effort

You want to know whether the financial result of the artistic career will compensate you for the input of time, talent, money and sacrifices. In rare cases, yes. In general, decidedly not. If a woman has the power of an Amazon, if she can, apart from her activity in the concert hall, still give lessons, and if she works harder and longer than any day laborer and if her personality possesses that wonderful something – called "magnetism" – that will win success irrespective of her achievements, then the game may be worth the effort.

But you should know that the world of music is full of artists whose talent and musicianship deserve the highest approbation but who cannot swell box-office receipts a single dollar for lack of this illusive quality – magnetism. Human qualities have greater impact on the public at large than artistic qualities. You can spend your youth and early womanhood in the sweatshop of Art so that you one day stand before an audience well prepared technically and artistically, only to find yourself snubbed by the public. From whence shall come your harvest of gold then?

The Price of Fame

Now the question that is on the tip of your tongue. Has your education given you a good return? Certainly, I have lived a rich life, but I am sure that no businessman would call the cost of my education a good investment. My gain cannot be expressed in dollars and cents. You should not forget that art has been created for the artist and not for the public. I doubt, too, that many women would be willing to pay the price which I have paid – if they would be willing to sacrifice all of their youth, to renounce all pleasures of society, live a life of complete withdrawal. For the female artist, this means daily exercises for many hours, the diet has to be carefully selected so that the body remains in good constitution, foregoing societal pleasures, late evenings, shopping expeditions and so many other things a woman likes to do are out of the question because they could harm the hands or stiffen the muscles. They say Franz Liszt never carried an umbrella for fear that of dulling the sensitive responsiveness of his fingertips. For the same reason, many years ago, Camilla Urso warned me never to take a needle in my hand.

A Secret

Shall I trust you with a secret? Most of the female violinists, and in fact the best ones, hate their instruments. Camilla Urso was embittered and yet held her head high. Lady Hallé is cranky and unsociable. Poor Arma Senkrah [Sarah Harkness] committed suicide. Teresina Tua, perhaps the most fascinating talent, wrecked her career and disappeared suddenly from the stage, just as meteorically as she ascended. I verily believe that I am the only woman who has always kept faithfully to her fiddle and yet has preserved a reasonably normal intellectual balance. But even I would not bet too heavily that my nerves or temperament shall not fold one of these beautiful days. And yet, I would not have my life constituted differently. With a certain satisfaction, I can assure you that the professional female artist keeps her form, her technique, her memory and her hearing longer in general than her male rivals even if she cannot achieve the inspired flights of the greatest geniuses.

Often I am asked how it is that I almost invariably play well. I believe the reason is that I live a more even and quiet life than men usually do. Nor am I satisfied to rest on my laurels. My colleagues and my public have been kind enough to assert that the first place among violinists belongs to me. To prove myself worthy of this trust burdens me with largely a greater responsibility than I had to carry at the time I began to make a name for myself. And therefore it means that I must continue to deny myself many things which my heart desires, continue working, studying and not lose courage and patience until I lay down my fiddle forever.

Sincerely yours,
Maud Powell

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

"AT THE PRESENT TIME . . ."

By MAUD POWELL

Minneapolis Journal
December 14, 1913

"At the present time we have nothing in America which could really be called a national school of composition. We have no distinctive utterance in invention or style. Speaking broadly of the nation at large, we are still in the ragtime stage—the first rung of the ladder of our musical expression. But the trend of the times is changing fast. One fact might be mentioned as an indication of the trend of public sentiment which is the great arbitrater of every change. The amount of money spent on music in this country every year is a splendid criterion of our intentions and ambitions and speaks well for our future development."

INSTRUCTIVE POSSIBILITIES OF THE TALKING MACHINE FOR VIOLIN PLAYERS

By MAUD POWELL

The Musical Observer
January 1914

The advantage of music study abroad consists chiefly in the endless opportunity afforded of hearing good music and plenty of it, on all sides, morning, noon and night. In other words, the living example of class-room precepts is found at every turn. This makes "breathing" music a daily, almost hourly, habit. This is the essence of what is called musical atmosphere. I, personally, owe as much to the musical "atmosphere" of the small town in Kane County, Illinois, where I lived as a child, as I do to the excellent piano and violin teachers I had. The musical mother, the music-loving father, the stern old German professor, who conducted the orchestra of eighteen pieces in which I played "first fiddle," and who was organist in a prominent church, where he introduced Sunday song services (to the temporary scandal of the community, be it said, for the "collection" was taken at the door in advance!) but where I was trained to play solos with the big sound of the organ in my ears (excellent preparation for future solo work with orchestral accompaniment) – these factors created the all-important musical atmosphere for my breathing. Before I was twelve years old I had heard Camilla Urso, Ole Bull, Wilhelmj, Remenyi, while my teacher, Billy Lewis, as he was affectionately called, a magnetic and temperamental player of no mean technical ability, played at me and with me and for me, until I imbibed some of his very soul. Here were "living examples," considerable in numbers and in influence. How many children in this country, even today, have similar advantages?

But there is one new and powerful factor in our musical advancement today, which is scarcely taken at its true valuation – that is the talking machine. Here are your "living example" and class-room precepts combined. Appreciated as a purveyor of entertainment these tone reproducers have hardly been accepted with due seriousness as educators. Here is much of the very best in music brought to our very doors, to the home, to the conservatory and even to the school class-room. Here is a very real semblance of musical atmosphere to command.

There is no doubt that *personal illustration* benefits the student as much as, if not more, than all the explanatory talks in the world. For this reason the attention of violin students should be called to the enormous advantage to be derived from listening to the records of the best artists. Wonderful as it is to play for this almost uncanny machine it is still more amazing to hear it repeat one's own performance note for note, with gradation of tone, subtlety of expression and technical point of bowing or fingering. It is verily a unique instructor. Now if the artist himself can find instruction and delight in listening to the recorded work of his fellow-artists, how much more valuable must be those same records to the mere tyro in music. To the students who, isolated musically and often unable to find opportunity to study with a teacher of genuine ability, these records are, one may almost say, indispensable. To such a student records of the standard

violin solos, obtainable now in great numbers, are a revelation. Indeed, the perfection with which these Victor machines record a performance is almost beyond belief. Those who wish to ascertain the tempo and style of a solo, its individual characteristics, effects and interpretative possibilities, cannot get a surer teacher. In addition let me mention that such a machine record represents a teacher who is ready to play a given solo at any time the pupil likes and as often as he likes. Many attractive and well-made pieces have been played for the Victor by "red seal" artists, small pieces that are well-nigh perfect models of style and technical accuracy for the student to copy. Every student likes to have a few pleasing solos at his command to play for the pleasure of friends. It gives him confidence, too, to know that his work is in good taste, that his interpretation is authentic. Nowadays he can have his "reference library" of violin pieces right at his elbow, and can consequently present his solo with an authority born of knowledge.

Would that some great philanthropist would generously make it worth the while of the Victor Talking Machine Company to allow red-seal soloists to play selections from the great mass of literature that students want to and ought to study for *real violin schooling*. I refer to such numbers as movements from Rode, Kreutzer or DeBeriot concertos, or sections of the old Italian Sonatas, for example. Some of the more important exercises, invaluable to finger and bow technique, could be included in the student list. The number of buyers of this class of records would, however, be so limited, commercially speaking, that one could hardly expect a big company to waste its capital by putting them upon the market. Certainly the Victor Company has conferred such a tremendous artistic benefit on the community at large and such an unprecedented financial benefit on the artists themselves that it behooves us not to complain but I am nevertheless of opinion that the time will come when it will be feasible to prepare such a library of records for the use of serious students. They will be a real boon from the pedagogue's point of view as well as the pupil's.

LET NO STUDENT GO ABROAD UNCHAPERONED, WARNS MAUD POWELL, CELEBRATED VIOLINIST

She Describes Some of the Insults to Which Young American Women Are Subjected in Europe – Necessity of Curbing the American's Free Temperament – Some Specific Cases

by
MAUD POWELL

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Too many art and music students seem to believe that by indulging in the more reprehensible habits of bohemianisms they thereby cultivate the "artistic temperament." Such habits do not make talent. As many stupid people as talented indulge in follies that waste their time and strength, while great talent is found as often in men and women of strong character as in the weak and will-less.

In the student life the choice of companions, of teachers and of pensions is of vital importance. Let no student go abroad unchaperoned or unprotected unless he has proved beyond a doubt that he is strongly moulded, morally. The barriers are down over there, the whole moral attitude is different, especially on the continent, the surprise and unaccustomedness of it all are dangerous to the inexperienced.

In the early eighties I lived in Germany. With my mother at my side I have had my hair seized (I was scarcely more than a child) and men have asked me if it was real. And being spoken to or "at" was of frequent occurrence. A young American woman in our pension, tall, fair, well built, was addressed by army officers and other men every time she went out of the house. Another young woman, the first girl to be accepted in the Leipsic University, was persistently annoyed and insulted by her fellow students for months. She won the respect of professors and student ultimately, but it was a bitter fight.

Matters have undoubtedly improved since then, but a French gentleman of high culture told me not many years ago that American women are entirely misunderstood in Europe. Their freedom of manner is misinterpreted to their disadvantage, not to say danger.

"And, anyway, American women have to go to the very brink," said he. Alas! How many have jumped or fallen over! Well-bred Americans nowadays can travel on the Continent unnoticed or mistaken for English of the better class, but those of coarser fiber, throwing all normal home restraint to the winds, arouse nothing but contempt in the mind of the foreigner, who, jealous of our prosperity, promptly makes up his mind to share some of it. Small wonder that we are the dupes of the unscrupulous (and their name is legion).

My contention is that we should think first and foremost of character and high standards of citizenship. American art will follow, all in good time. Our American temperament is one that drives us to extremes. We never do anything by halves. Even in our accidents, our graft systems and in our follies, we are stupendous. The American student, if left alone, either works too hard or dissipates too hard. He needs careful watching anywhere, but especially does he need it on the continent of Europe.

MAUD POWELL'S THOUGHTS ON OPERA IN AMERICA

From Maud Powell's Scrapbooks
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"English Grand Opera as an Artist Sees It," *Chicago Evening Post*, 14 August 1913
"Maud Powell's View of the Future of Grand Opera in New York," *Western Musical Herald*, Chicago, October 1913; "The Future of Grand Opera," *The Etude*, 1913

New York ought to be large enough to support two grand opera houses. The expense of opera with high priced "stars" can only be met by making of opera a social function, as at the Metropolitan Opera House. In anticipation of municipal opera, the second opera house should have a good ensemble: i.e. a good orchestra, good chorus, good scenery, good costumes and good artists, all without running to sensationalism. The house should be smaller then the Metropolitan and the price of admission lower, so that the big general public of poor and medium rich music lovers can afford to go, and can both see and hear when they do go. Should such an opera house be reasonably well patronized, and the public neither begged nor hood-winked into subscribing, then we can work for municipally supported opera. When we have municipal opera, then, *and* then only, can we claim with some show of truth, that we are an essentially musical community.

Personally, the opera does not fill me with awe. It seems to me often ridiculous and incongruous, rather than edifying. The various arts employed are so maimed and weakened to subserve each other that the aesthetic sense is constantly offended. Scenic painting is not painting in its highest form, operatic acting is at best, conventional, and a poor substitute for real mimetic art. Librettos are almost invariably better "working" librettos if not burdened with too much literary or poetic value, while the music, which is the raison d'etre of the whole thing, could still exist in its highest forms if opera had never been invented Opera's appeal is sensational. In small or young communities where the musical public is not large enough to support both opera and the symphony or quartet concerts, the latter, which are the more finely educational and of truer musical *value,* must suffer neglect. The love of glamour will prevail, controlling the situation in favour or the more blatant and pretentious art, thus retarding genuine musical progress.

Operas should be sung in the language in which they are conceived. *Parsifal* in English, *Péleas and Mélisande* in German, *Boris* in Italian, *Lucia* in Dutch are inconceivable to me. The meaning of words does not seem to matter much in opera - who ever hears enough of them to enlighten him as to the plot without reference to the libretto? - but the sounds of the words matter, for they should be in character with the music, a musical onomatopoeia which satisfies the aesthetic ear.

It is too soon to expect an American grand opera. We have no national school of composition. We have no distinctive musical utterance, in invention or style. Speaking broadly and of the nation at large, we are still in the ragtime stage – the first rung of the ladder of our national musical expression. The amount of money spent by our nation on art and music is no criterion of our culture, but it is a splendid criterion of its intentions and ambitions and augurs well for future development.

That our language is expressive and singable, I am convinced. If the reader does not agree, let him, at the first opportunity, go to the nearest Victrola shop and listen to the Scotchman, Harry Lauder, make our language rich and unctuous in "The Wee Hoos Mang the Heather."

There is another point about this all-opera-in-English question. Like arbitrary phonetic spelling, it is an insular attitude toward education and culture. It puts a premium on ignorance and philistinism and tries to justify mental laziness. We are "born equal" in these free United States. Let us give the words a noble interpretation: born with equal rights to the chances of improvement and development, not born with equal rights to lag behind the standards of other and older nations.