

**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**

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“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.”

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