

## CHAT OF AN ARTISTE

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### **Miss Maud Powell, Violiniste with Gilmore's Band, Tells of Her Study Abroad.**

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### **She Thinks America Has as Fine Teachers as Europe, but Not the Musical Atmosphere**

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### **Young Girls Had Better Stay at Home and Study Music then to Go Abroad With- out a Chaperone.**

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Of the thousands in the audiences which attended the Gilmore band concerts in the Auditorium and sat entranced under the witchery of the violin bow of Miss Maude Powell, the pretty young violiniste who accompanies Gilmore on his present tour, probably few knew that Miss Powell is an Illinois girl and received all her early instruction in violin-playing in Chicago.

"Yes, I remember my days of study in Chicago very well," Miss Powell said yesterday, at the Auditorium hotel. "I was born in Peru, Ill., and removed from there to Aurora, Ill., with my parents when I was 2 [actually 3] years of age. I commenced to study violin playing when I was 9 years old, making weekly trips from Aurora to Chicago to study with Prof. Lewis, who is still teaching here. I will not disguise the fact that I hated the violin at first, not from a musical standpoint, but because it brought down on my childish head the ridicule of my young companions in Aurora. It was a country town; male violin players were rare, and it was an absolutely unheard of thing for a girl to play the violin. When I walked along the Aurora streets the little boys would jeer at me and say: 'There goes the gal that plays the fiddle.'

I persevered in spite of the ridicule, however, and trudged from the depot to my teacher's office rain or shine, every week for four years. I am told that Prof. Lewis makes life a burden to his pupils by pointing out the example of my perseverance to them. 'Miss Powell never missed her lesson for rain,' and 'Miss Powell always practices faithfully,' is his constant refrain.

### **Studied Four Years in Chicago.**

"I commenced studying the piano at 8 and the violin at 9. For four years I studied under the faithful tuition of Prof. Lewis in Chicago. During these four years I laid the foundation for

my later advancement. My practicing during that period averaged from two to three hours a day, and many were the days I got up at 6 a.m., so as to get in my full practice for the day. I was going to school during those four years. When I was 13 years old my parents were so pleased with my progress that they decided that I might become an artiste of some note. They therefore decided that I should go to Germany. Leipzig was the objective point, as my parents considered it to be the greatest music center in Germany. It cost my parents a great sacrifice to give me the advantage of a few a years of European study, because it broke up our family for years. Papa remained in this country while mamma went abroad with me, and has never left me since. I entered the Leipzig conservatory and studied for a year under that great master of violin playing, Henry Schradieck. My American teacher had done his work so well that I had nothing to unlearn, as far as I had gone. I passed a good examination for admission to the Leipzig conservatory, and the professor then took such an interest in me that I frequently had opportunities of playing at the evening recitals of the pupils. During my stay in Europe I practiced every available minute. I never practiced less than from four to six hours daily, and it oftener ran to seven or eight hours. The rest of the time was filled up with going to concerts and recitals and in studying other branches of music.

“After a year in Leipzig I went to Paris for a year to get some of the polish of the French school. I was one of thirteen out of eighty applicants who passed the examination for admission to the Paris conservatoire. My teacher there was Dancla, whose name is a household word with every student of the violin, owing to the immense number of studies and short pieces he has written for that instrument.

### **Well Received in London.**

“I did not play in public in Paris, and after a year there I went to London. I kept up my practicing there, but took no lessons. In London I received a number of engagements to play and had excellent success. It is my experience that Americans are warmly received and appreciated by London audiences. At least it was so in my case. I played on one occasion for Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne at Kensington palace. I had an invitation to play for the Prince of Wales on one occasion, but as it happened I had a good engagement for the same evening to play at a concert, I let the honor go and took the engagement, declining the prince’s invitation in the approved American style. From London I went to Berlin to study a year with Joachim, and then I came to New York, making my debut at one of the philharmonic concerts, where I played a violin concerto with the Thomas orchestra.”

“What other American violinists of note studied in Europe, Miss Powell?”

“There were a number. Dora Becker was a Texas girl. She went to Berlin, studied under Joachim, and is now a successful concert soloist in New York city. Madge Wickham went from Cincinnati to Berlin. In Cincinnati she was a pupil of Prof. Jacobsohn, who is now the violin professor of the college of Music of Chicago. Miss Wickham had great talent and made wonderful progress, but she married and that terminated her career as an artist. Blanche Newcomb of Cleveland studied the violin in Germany. Nettie Carpenter studied in Paris and has been a successful concert violiniste since her return to New York. Geraldine Morgan of New

York was also a successful student of the violin in Germany; also Miss Nona Stach of Washington city studied in Brussels.”

“We have many excellent young violinists in Chicago. What is your advice to them if they wish to reach the higher walks of the art?”

“I should advise them to go to Germany. I consider the German school of the present day the greatest in the world. Of the German schools the one presided over by Joachim in Berlin is the best in Germany.”

### **Good Teachers in Chicago as Anywhere**

“The great advantage of a few years of instruction in Germany is the musical atmosphere one finds there. As far as the mere teaching goes, you have as good teachers in Chicago as there are in Europe, but musical advantages here are far inferior. To give you an idea of how thorough the instruction is there I will state that while I was in Berlin I had every week three violin lessons, one harmony lesson, one orchestra lesson, one trio lesson, one piano lesson, and one quartet lesson, besides going to numerous concerts, recitals, and music lectures. It is this atmosphere of music which counts in a student’s advancement.”

“Is the violin naturally a lady’s instrument?”

“Why not? Ladies, as a general rule, have more delicacy of touch and a finer organization than men. This is reflected in their playing, and a lady’s tone on the violin is usually very beautiful and delicate. Then it is a very graceful instrument--I mean it admits of the display of much grace in playing it. It shows Hogarth’s line of beauty to the greatest advantage. The girls are beginning to find this out, and it is the commonest thing in the world to see girls with fiddle cases trudging along the streets of Boston and New York to and from their lessons. There is no instrument like the violin for the education of the ear and the development of musical ability.”

Miss Powell deserves the greatest credit for the remarkable success which she has achieved in the musical profession. She is undoubtedly one of the best half-dozen lady violinist in the world. Of her future career Miss Powell said, laughingly:

“I do not intend ever to marry--at least that is the way I feel now. Art is a jealous mistress. She will not tolerate a divided allegiance. Sarasate, the great violinist, never married. Camilla Urso, the great violiniste, although she has been twice married, told me I must never marry. ‘My child,’ she said, ‘if you find that you are ever becoming too fond of the society of any young man run away and do not see him. An artiste ought never to marry.’ As she said this in the presence of her husband it was, no doubt, slightly embarrassing to him.”

### **Girls Should Be Chaperoned Abroad.**

Returning to the subject of American girls studying violin playing or any branch of music in Europe, Miss Powell said: “They ought not to go alone. Young ladies can not go on the street

alone, even in the daytime, with perfect safety. I never went on the street alone once while I was in Europe. A young lady is very apt to be made uncomfortable by being accosted if she does so. My mother was with me all the time I was in Europe. Better stay in this country and study if you have no one to go with you.”

Miss Powell’s father was formerly superintendent of schools at Aurora. He is now superintendent of schools of the District of Columbia, and is very proud of his talented daughter. Her uncle is Maj. Powell, the well-known explorer and scientist of Washington, D.C. Miss Powell lives in New York city and has her hands full of concert engagements. She is quite a beautiful girl, with large, brown, poetic eyes, and a countenance full of the fine sensibilities of an artiste. She was delighted to get to Chicago and see the well-remembered scenes of her girlhood.

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