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WITH MAUD POWELL

Her Individuality as Rare as Her Art An American Young Woman Who Ran Up the Ladder of Fame--She Works Honestly

After the rabble of noisy professional people anxious to lay bare their achievements, Maud Powell comes as a balm. Her personality is a dangerous rival of her art. There are few American girls who could pass through the successes her violin has brought and retain all her simple directness of nature. Maud Powell has been called cold and unapproachable by men, but her womanly reserve is so impregnated with frankness, earnestness and sunniness that none but the vain and shallow could call her cold. Robbed of her violin, the woman satisfies; but with it, personality and art become one.

One fears, in writing of Maud Powell that his pen will overflow and unwillingly hurt her sensitive nature, for she is true enough to herself to spurn all but just praise.

European Adulation

"I have worked hard," she says, "and I have worked seriously. When I see anything like this in a paper: 'Maud Powell looked as sweet as a peach and played the violin,' it nauseates me. In Vienna the people used to touch my arm or my dress with their lips, or the silk handkerchief that held my violin in place. One night I hurried away as soon as the concert was over to avoid them, so that I might not have it out on my pillow afterward."

Her ready flow of language impels one to ask if she writes. The qualifications are there. Her mother will tell you that Maud can write nicely, but that she has no time.

"I read a paper at the World's Fair," Miss Powell explains. "And there were those unkind enough to doubt that I composed it. I have had them inquire if it were true. They seem to think because I play the violin I cannot know anything else."

Her Mother's Request

After you have heard Maud Powell's violin, you find yourself interested in heredity. Back in a little Western town some twenty-six years ago, Mrs. Powell left a goodly musical inheritance to her first-born. From the time of early girlhood she lost her musical identity in her daughter and is satisfied to behold the embodiment.

“She is the true artist mother,” says Maud Powell, “and I the selfish artist daughter. I have broken up a home. My father lives alone in Washington, and he loves domestic surroundings. My brother was deprived of home influence and the help of a mother and older sister, while we two roamed over the world together.”

Career in Schools

When she was eight years old, the violinist that Toledo heard last night was given piano instruction. At thirteen she was sent abroad to study, and carried off honors usually bestowed on the children of France in the Paris conservatory. At fifteen she appeared in London and played for royalty. She had made a salaried engagement when summoned to tune her fiddle strings for the Prince of Wales. But Maud Powell is an American and consequently a business young woman, and preferred the salaried engagement to the Queen’s encomiums or bit of bestowed jewelry. Joachim, the great Berlin violinist, interfered, however, and carried her off for a year’s study after hearing her performance in London.

When she was seventeen years old she made her debut in New York with the Philharmonic society, under Theodore Thomas. Since then she has studied and played with a variety of leading choral clubs and orchestras, interpreting as nearly as she could the thoughts of great composers. She has aspired to nothing less than first woman violinist in the world, and is not far from the coveted place. Camilla Urso has given her second place, and her day is nearing an end. Maud Powell works rather than claims.

Violin in America

“Violin playing in America,” she says, “is rapidly gaining a foothold. When I entered the profession, it was impossible to give a recital. People did not care for one kind of music through an entire programme; now there are at least forty places where recitals may be given.”

Last summer Miss Powell, as the representative of American violinists, toured Europe with the Arions, and became a true Bohemian. It may be her tendency to this sort of life and hatred of conventionalities that helped to make her recent interpretation of Dvořák’s violin concerto in A minor, such a brilliant success. In this difficult composition Dvořák indulges to the full his penchant for the rhythms of his native Bohemia.

Womanly as she is, Maud Powell dislikes to be called a “woman” violinist, for art recognizes no sex.

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