

Cleveland Evening News
November 21, 1907

Symphony Concert Series
Opened by Theo. Thomas Orchestra at Grays' Armory

MAUD POWELL ELECTRIFIES LARGE AUDIENCE
by Brilliant Playing of Tschaikowsky's Violin Concerto

Here is one woman who is willing to concede that the greatest violinists have been men, that the greatest composers have been men, and that men still hold this distinction in music as in other things.

"But you wait. Don't imagine for a moment that women are getting into the commercial life and succeeding at it and will stop there. No, sooner or later, and I believe it is coming pretty soon, women are going to be reckoned with in the arts. Woman is a pretty old article as history goes; but it is only recently that she has found herself. There is a whole world of possibility opening before her and she isn't asleep. I am an American and I believe in American women. I have lived abroad many years and know the women of the world. I say, watch the American woman. Keep your eye on her. She is going to do things that will startle the world."

So said Madam Powell, the famous violinist, who appeared at Grays' armory last night with the Theodore Thomas orchestra of Chicago.

"Don't misunderstand me," she continued. "I don't imagine that every American girl is destined to become a great artist, author or composer. Real greatness is the rarest thing in the world. There are only a few, say eight or ten, really great pianists in the world today. You can count the violinists on your fingers. I do not wish to encourage girls to undertake the struggle and hard labor for recognition that I endured. I have seen too many failures which were tragedies.

"What I believe is that girls usually know whether or not they are adapted to the life-work they undertake. They should study the matter well before they launch out. Most of us are leaners and should be. There are few props and strong pedestals. But I believe the American girl is destined to be among these towers of strength in the near future."

Then America's most famous woman violinist admitted that she had her limitations and thanked her stars that she knew them. For instance she realized that she was not a composer and therefore did not attempt to create, but was satisfied to interpret the works of others.

And how she can interpret! Those who heard her play the big Tschaikowsky concerto last night have seldom heard such glittering sparks fly from the forge of genius. Madam Powell exhibited the most impetuous virtuosity on occasion, and then picked rugged blocks of melody or

soared off into bird-like twitterings as soft as the note of the thrush. It was wonderful playing, as intelligent an exposition of fiddling as a Cleveland audience has witnessed for many years.

The audience, too, seemed en rapport with the performers. I have rarely witnessed such marks of keen appreciation. Even the opening strains of “Euryanthe,” which marked the commencement of another season, hushed the crowd, and a burst of enthusiasm greeted the conductor and orchestra after the rendition.

The Beethoven Fifth symphony gave Director Stock an opportunity for poetic treatment which he fully met. This, which is perhaps the most popular of the symphonies, was delivered with a mature judgment that is too frequently lacking in modern rendition.

The closing number, the gorgeous “Capriccio Espagnol,” by Rimsky-Korsakow, showed the flaming sun of Spanish noon, the languorous twang of the fiddles and the castanet in tropic moonlight, and the full, dazzling passion of a nation. It was a brilliant triumph for composer, director and every individual in the orchestra.

Thomas Opens Music Season
Great Orchestra Scores Triumph in Concert in the Grays' Armory
Maud Powell Proves Herself Master of the Violin
By Florence E. Allen

Cleveland Plain Dealer, November 21, 1907

Excerpt from review of Theodore Thomas Orchestra, Frederick Stock, conductor
Date of Concert: November 20, 1907

It was Spohr, was it not, who refused to let his wife play the violin, an instrument unsuitable for “females?” Would that the great Ludwig himself had been there, long and lank and lean; Maud Powell could have given him some points in women’s suffrage.

That she had finger power came out in her phenomenal tone in the cadenza, with its clean and rugged chords, and in the tremendously difficult rondo. That she had “temperament” and flame of soul was evidenced in every phrase with its sharp and puissant accents. That she was poet even more than artist was amply proved in the canzonetta, with its plaints and questionings. Here there was not only tone of varied tinting and warmth, and direct appeal, but that still rarer quality of the highest playing— style. Style was instinct in all Mme. Powell did – in the incisive openings of her phrases, and in their exquisite dying away, in her songlike and yet thoroughly controlled inflection, quiet, yet as vibrant with unfathomed feeling as the voice of a Maude Adams [actress]. And it is style, mark ye, which differentiates [Francis] Macmillen and Fritz Kreisler.

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