SOUTH AFRICAN SIDELIGHTS ON A MUSICAL PROBLEM

Maud Powell, the Distinguished American Violinist,
Tells of the Colored Man and His Love of Rhythm and Tune

The Language of music Speaks to the Native in Direct and Intelligible Terms — His Instruments Mellow-toned and Sweet

By MAUD POWELL

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A recent trip to Tennessee has recalled impressions received in South Africa — impressions of the colored man and his love for rhythm and tune. There is an aesthetic susceptibility about the colored race that responds quickly to both beauty of color and of sound.

It was of frequent occurrence in my travels in 1905 in South Africa, to discover half-nude Kaffirs standing an hour at a time outside the hotel window listening to my violin practice. The knowledge of English speech amounts in the town-bred Negro of South Africa, to a vague understanding of so-called "kitchen-kaffir" (a most elemental speech adapted to his limited understanding), but the language of music speaks to him in direct and intelligible terms. Our own Southern darky brought his taste for folk-lore and song with him from Africa, when he came to us long ago, to help in the corn and cotton fields of Dixie land.

The love of beautiful line, color and sound is a racial instinct.

"No wonder the white man covers his nakedness," says our black brother of the antipodes, "for he is ashamed of his deformities."

As the South African native borrows his color schemes in his bead-work from the heavens or from the myriad-hued wild flowers that deck the great treeless Karroo, so he steals from the songbirds of the forbidding hills the secret of soft persuasive music.

His musical instruments are mellow-toned and sweet, being made of wood, bamboo, gourd (especially calabash) and of tinkling strips of metal, while his melodies, like those of the feathered creation, acquire a compelling charm from monotonous iteration and reiteration.

Even the intervals of the barbaric scale, if scale it can be called, are of such an indefinite and illusive character that they may very justly be thought to have their prototype in the throat of the songbird. So much do sounds of a gentle nature ravish the ear of the native African that he dons, when dancing, a belt of large dried bean-shells filled with softly rattling pebbles, which he strings together like beads and winds about his waist.

The lovable "ricksha" boys, curiously and gaudily costumed, oxhorn and feathers on their heads, imaginary stocking of amazing pattern painted on their bare legs, wear these dancing belts as anklets, and as they lope along in imitation of the native spring-buck, dragging their human load after them, anything more deliciously entrancing than the soft rhythmic "chink-chink" of these musical ornaments can hardly be imagined.

Another Kaffir ornament is a head-dress having beaded strings dangling between the eyes, with tiny bells crudely carved out of bits of horn jingling on the ends.

These dark-skinned, lithe-limbed natives possess also a delicacy of touch which they apply as readily to the manipulation of a musical instrument as to their quaint bead-stringing, plaited straw work and the like.

To hear a Kaffir boy play an instrument of the white man's fashioning, an ordinary mouth organ or the plebeian concertina, is something of a revelation. I heard once in the solitude of the hills of Swatzkop, Natal, a Kaffir lad softly playing a concertina as he strolled barefoot along the narrow mountain path.

One little haunting phrase he repeated over and over again, producing a tone so sweet and seductive that I stood entranced. As he passed me, some pretty instinct of courtesy prompted him to subdue his tone to a mere breath of sweet sound, producing an effect in the stillness of the late afternoon that was indescribable.

I have since been informed by an Englishman who knows something of the Kaffir, by virtue of his long association with him in an official capacity, that a native man is known by the one tune that he always plays. (Here we have the *leit-motif* in embryo.)

Moreover, he has a way of repeating his tune in cycles in some manner unfathomed by the white man, and it seems that my boy of the concertina had some large rhythmic plan, which made him loath to stop playing, inasmuch as he would thereby lose count and perforce have to go back to the very beginning.

This same official also gave me some particulars about the natives of Bechuanaland, who have good voices and sing remarkably well in chorus. On one of those strangely clear nights under the Southern Cross they will congregate in scores or even hundreds, ranging themselves in groups around an enormous bonfire. Then they will sing in unison, in chorus and antiphonally.

The burden of their song may be some strange folk-lore or tribal history, or mayhap a rehearsal of all the daring feats and brave deeds of their honored and worshipful chief. One group will start off with a slow monotonous droning, a second will presently intone a sort of melody, which in turn will be taken up by a third group, and so on.

Each group will have its individual tune, while the various groups will answer each other or sing together in a sort of curious counter-point. And for a grand and glorious finale they will rise and sing together in a simple impressive unison.

It is not agreeable to learn that the white man's hymn, too often feeble in both tune and words, and unfortunately associated with the civilizing (?) introduction of the whiskey habit, is gradually usurping the place of the native song, romantic, fitting, thrilling as it is. Like the clothes of "civilized" cut that sit in repulsive filth and awkwardness on these splendid bronze figures, so the white man's song is also a mournful misfit.

In view of the much discussed question of an American school of composition arising out of the melodies of our Southern negro, these musical susceptibilities of his semi-savage brother across the South Atlantic are of some import. Certainly the aesthetic advantage of steeping one's self in the atmosphere of our Southern tradition and coming in touch with the lovable but fast disappearing "Uncle Remus" type, is considerable.

But, to my thinking, the overpowering influence of the great white race, and the tendency of these restless money-making times will kill outright the poetic possibilities in this direction. We Americans are more likely to live first through a phase of large intellectual, mechanical music-making before arriving at a real individuality of expression. And nothing will accrue through *copying* peculiarities of interval and rhythm of a race fast losing its charm of unspoiled, uneducated originality.

The passing epidemic of rag-time (with its individuality of rhythm) will have lived its course and have left its imprint, which in time will have become an idealized memory. This will be one element in the building of an American school of musical expression — and a vitally important element, inasmuch as rhythm stands at the very root of all musical structure. And inherent in ragtime is much more than merely structural quality. It has a soul of its own, quite apart from anything that has thus far been created. American history, literature of life "befoah de wah" and traditions tinted by the hand of time, will create "mood" — and this will be another element in the building.

It is a long process, but we shall achieve the artistic result ultimately. It must be remembered that the great Italian, Dutch and Belgian schools of painting thrived and blossomed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, during the great financial prosperity of the merchant kings of those days.

So, too, will time and history prove that American music, now in swaddling clothes, received great impetus and encouragement and consequently made great advancement during an era of prosperity that is the wonder of the whole civilized world.

(PLEASE NOTE: Touring South Africa in 1905, Maud Powell felt privileged to encounter intact tribal/cultural traditions of African natives that had yet to be fully corrupted by white "civilization." The words she uses to describe her experiences are of the period and it is my hope that readers can see beyond the terms now considered inappropriate and appreciate how much Powell valued and learned from her encounters with native African culture. KAS)

MAUD POWELL

WHAT ONE'S ART SHOULD MEAN

Courtesy of H. Godfrey Turner

Pathfinder (Washington, D.C.)
October 3, 1908

It is a very gratifying thing, in these days when the great majority of us are engaged in a hurly-burly scramble for the dollar and what it will bring, to hear some clearer note sounded, to see someone who is authorized to speak uphold some loftier, nobler standard, of endeavor. Miss Maud Powell is now the world's leading woman violinist. Yet, in a recent magazine article, she speaks with the modesty of the true artist who sees in himself an instrument rather than an object. Miss Powell was a Washington girl, her father, Prof. Wm. B. Powell, having been for years the able head of the District of Columbia schools. Speaking on the always interesting question as to what is required for success, she observes:

"Talent allied to intelligence and determination is not to be despised. It is sufficiently rare, but it is not that God-given divine fire we call 'genius,' a gift accorded only to the elect! Genius is a law unto itself; it surmounts difficulties over which mere talent must plod step by step. It "arrives" and cannot explain its methods. But, unfortunately, genius often lacks the balance-wheel of common-sense. It falls by the wayside, consumed by its own fire. Talent is more sane and, I may add, achieves where genius fails. The girl with talent, or even genius, has nothing to do with greatness or success until her studies are completed. But day by day she may and, indeed, must excel in her task; that is to say, she must do it better than the average—her standard must be head and shoulders above the normal.

"Long before a girl of the right caliber has completed her studies, she should have received the baptism of her vocation—the words 'fame' and 'greatness' should have disappeared, to be replaced by truth and art. She must be a worshiper of the thing itself. Her ambition should no longer be to excel but to deliver the message of the musician. Her own greatness should count for nothing beside the greatness of her art. It never occurs to me to ask myself if I have achieved greatness or fame, but I do realize with a thrill of wonder and delight that after long, long years of praying and fasting in the temple, I am able to deliver the message of my art to hungry and thirsty souls."

THE GIRL WHO WANTS TO BE GREAT

BY MAUD POWELL

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I am somewhat loath to encourage the girl who wants to be "great," for she is the girl who is a worshiper of the trappings of art – its glitter and show, the fine concert dress, the reception after the concert with compliments galore, the big check offered by an obsequious manager! The girl who wants to be "great," and works to that end, rarely attains her wishes, although she oftentimes sacrifices her family and the family fortunes in the attempt. To the girl who wants to succeed, or better still, who wants to excel, I have perhaps a helpful message, gleaned from my own experiences in the long and weary march toward the goal of my chosen vocation.

All over this great country in city, town and distant village, are hundreds of American girls of that wonderful mixed heredity of all nations, who possess a gift or a talent that in a way sets them apart from their schoolmates and companions. It gives them a certain distinction, and long before the child is old enough to formulate an opinion of her own in the matter she is hailed as a prodigy; father, mother and a coterie of admiring friends insist upon the future of glorious triumphs – the child is doomed to greatness!

I became a violinist through my mother's passionate love of music. She was of German-Hungarian parentage, but while in this country she was suddenly bereft of both father and mother by the cholera epidemic raging at that time. She was adopted into a straight-laced Puritanical home.

Little Wilhelmina [Bengelstraeter] became Minnie Paul, and was forced to stifle her love of music and her ambitions for a musical career. Her adoptive parents had no sympathy for girls whose thoughts wandered from the domestic hearth and the duties of housecleaning, preserving and mending. When my mother married she determined that her first son should be a violinist. The expected son turned out to be a girl, but my mother was not to be balked by such a trifle. As soon as I was old enough a baby violin was put into my little hands, and it was not long before I realized that my mother had set me apart for something different from the other children whom I knew.

My mother had dreams of a musical career and future greatness for me. I knew only that a difficult task was placed before me, and there was something within me that forced me to conquer any task, however obnoxious. Often as a child I would stamp my little feet in fury and sob and scream in impotent rage, but I would return with tear-stained cheeks and swollen eyes to my scales and exercises; never for an instant did I dream of abandoning any work because it was hard. I not only had the ambition to do it well enough, I wanted to do it better than anyone else. I carried this spirit out, not only in my music, but in all my other studies. My father, William

Bramwell Powell, for many years the head of the public schools in Washington, was one of the most advanced educators of his day, and he had no intention of permitting me to have a one-sided education. He believed in all-around men and women – an equal development of mind, soul and body.

Once he was convinced that I possessed sufficient musical talent to justify my following the career of a violinist he apportioned three, and as I grew older, four hours a day as sufficient for my musical studies. He was right. Unless I am on a concert tour, I never permit any encroachment upon these four hours of practice. I have made a point to adhere religiously to this habit all my life. A regular routine of so many hours a day – a reasonable number – in the morning, especially when one's vitality is unimpaired, is infinitely preferable and accomplishes better results than the spasmodic exaggerated attempt to cram as much work into a day as possible. The girl who thinks, talks and acts the music drudge for sixteen hours out of the twenty-four will acquire neither technique nor musical development. It is the quality not the quantity of work that really counts.

At this point I want to lay stress on a fundamental essential of success. It is the determination to *excel*; a bull-dog instinct to stick grimly, ferociously to one's task and not let go except with one's life. If the girl who wants to be great is easily discouraged, if she "funks," she had better renounce at once all idea of a career. When all is said and done success is as much a question of character as talent.

It must not be forgotten that most of the girls who are dreaming of greatness, or whose parents are dreaming for them, possess "talent" only – talent in more or less quality and quantity. Now, talent allied to intelligence and determination is not to be despised. It is sufficiently rare, but it is not that God-given divine fire we call "genius," a gift accorded only to the elect! Genius is a law unto itself; it surmounts difficulties over which mere talent must plod step by step. It "arrives" and cannot explain its methods. But, unfortunately, genius often lacks the balance-wheel of common-sense. It falls by the wayside, consumed by its own fire. Talent is more sane and, I may add, achieves where genius fails.

The girl with talent, or even genius, has nothing to do with greatness or success until her studies are completed. But day by day she may and, indeed, *must* excel in her task; that is to say, she must do it better than the average – her standard must be head and shoulders above the normal. In the choice of her teacher there must be both common-sense and courage. If she is with a master who crushes her enthusiasm and keeps her in a depressed, discouraged condition – if she feels she has outgrown her teacher, she must have the courage to seek another. She must feel satisfied with and realize her own progress. It will not be long before the girl destined for a career finds that her own town or provincial city no longer offers her sufficient opportunities for development. She turns her eyes toward Paris, Berlin, or most probably New York.

Now, the question arises in my mind, "Why go abroad – why select New York?" The time has passed when a musician requires European prestige. Nowadays an artist is received on his or her own merits. If a girl can give a proper showing to the leader of any of our big symphony orchestras she will be given an opportunity to make her début. But she must be the

equal, not the inferior of the foreign artists; she must not expect favors simply because she is an American and received her musical education in her own country.

At the time I finished my studies abroad and returned to this country it was different. Girl violinists were looked upon with suspicion, and I felt that I had a hard road to travel in my native land. I had sent a letter of introduction to Theodore Thomas, but I waited in vain for a summons to play with the Thomas orchestra. I determined to take matters into my own hands. I walked into the hall one morning where the rehearsal was being held with my violin under my arm. When it was over, and before the musicians had dispersed, I walked up to the great leader. My heart was in my throat, but I managed to say pretty bravely, "Mr. Thomas, I am Maud Powell, and I want you to give me a chance to play for you." His big heart was touched, I suppose, for he nodded his head, reached out his hand for my score and called the musicians together. I knew it was a crucial moment in my life – a girl only eighteen daring to be a violinist and demanding a hearing of the greatest orchestral leader in America! I had brought the score of the Bruch Concerto, and it is not difficult to do once best when one knows every note of a concerto backward. When I had finished, Mr. Thomas engaged me on the spot for his next concert. At the close of that concert – my début in America – Mr. Thomas came to me with his two hands full of greenbacks. He handed them to me, saying, "I want the honor of paying you the first fee you have earned as an artist."

As I said before, I do not see why a girl should go to Europe for the actual routine of study. Indeed, I doubt if New York [would] be as advisable as Boston, or even Baltimore. New York is so noisy that it is apt to deaden the sensitiveness of a musician's ear; for a finished artist the competition and the exhilarating atmosphere are sort of a tonic and spur him on to do his best. It is well at some time in a girl's career to go abroad to measure her stature, as a student who plays a few concertos is apt to overestimate her value. If she goes abroad she will find the woods are full of her kind. In her own home she is apt to measure her standard by those beneath her; in Paris or Berlin or Stuttgart she falls into the ranks. There is more talent to the square inch in Europe than to the piece in this land of business and haste.

But for the actual routine of study, I should suggest Boston or Baltimore. In the latter place for instance, the ideals of the Peabody Institute are of the highest, and the different departments are in the hands of musicians, scholarly and sincere. Life is free from haste and restlessness and the cost of living is trifling. But under no circumstances should I advise a girl to enter the life of a student in a strange city without the care and guidance of a mother or a guardian. I had the inestimable treasure of a mother's care during my student life and during the first ten years of my concert work. A girl should be free from the consciousness of dangers and temptation; she should meet strangers without an undercurrent of suspicion and watchfulness. Young girls are none too wise; they require a person in authority to regulate their meals, their hours of rising and retiring. A certain amount of musical talent, or even that rare thing, genius, does not presuppose an old head on young shoulders.

Long before a girl of the right caliber has completed her studies, she should have received the baptism of her vocation – the words "fame" and "greatness" should have disappeared, to be replaced by truth and art. She must be a worshiper of the thing itself. Her ambition should no

longer be to excel but to deliver the message of the musician. Her own greatness should count for nothing beside the greatness of her art. When she is emancipated from her teachers she must not fear to seek and develop the creative spirit within herself. While she should not shun the world or her fellow beings, she should commune within herself and seek to fathom the depths and heights of her own individuality. I lay great stress on these seasons of solitude. I cannot tell how preciously I hold those long hours quite by myself on the swiftly moving train. I sit alone sometimes for days, unknown and knowing no one. Never does the voice of my art speak so clearly and truly as in those long and silent days of journeying across a vast desert or cutting a path through the mountains.

It never occurs to me to ask myself if I have achieved greatness or fame, but I do realize with a thrill of wonder and delight that after long, long years of praying and fasting in the temple, I am able to deliver the message of my art to hungry and thirsty souls.

HOW FASHION INVADES THE CONCERT STAGE

by
MAUD POWELL

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The amateur who dreams of a life of fame in music, has one of two ideas about her future work. If she has talent and personality, she fancies that her playing alone will bring the desired recognition; if artistic and fond of dress, she has visions of beautiful gowns trailing behind her on the concert platform, producing a picture of harmony and elegance. Both pictures have other sides, however. For dress plays almost as important a part in the concert as the talent itself and becomes, as the season progresses, a veritable "Old Man of the Sea." The professional woman owes it to her public to dress fashionably, for the simple gowns of former years have passed into obscurity and with the increased importance of dress in everyday life, it has spread into all professions, until the carelessly dressed woman or one whose clothes are hopelessly old fashioned has no place in the scheme of things.

The business woman receives much help from the fashion periodicals; the mother of a large family is also reached and it is possible for many persons to procure ready-made clothing, thus obviating the necessity of shopping and fitting. Valuable as these two are in the acquiring of an up-to-date wardrobe, they help the musician but little. It is absolutely essential that she have a certain style and individuality in the selection of her gowns, particularly those which must be worn before a critical audience.

Clothes are such an intricate part of one's life that they consume hours of valuable time in selection of materials and trimmings, planning suitable styles and then the long weary hours of fittings--the musician's gowns are fashioned to be comfortable as well as stylish and require ever so many additional stitches. It is absolutely imperative that there be perfect freedom of movement and that the completed gown be easy in every part.

My clothes are the despair of every tailor and dressmaker until they have mastered the intricacies of gowns for public appearances. There are several distinct peculiarities of such costumes—the violin, of course, is responsible for them all.

The long arm movement requires that the armholes be of an extra size, that there be additional length from shoulder to elbow; usually at least four inches. There must be fullness across the bust and back to permit free breathing, and at the waistline the gown must set well, yet be perfectly free so that the bow may be easily used. The vogue of the kimono sleeves, on account of their peculiar construction, made it impossible for violinists to wear them while playing.

Then too the hobble skirt could not be used to any extent because there must be liberty in the movement of all parts of the body. Short skirts never give the effect that long ones do and a graceful train adds to the beauty of a concert gown. Some people wonder at the artist's cleverness in managing the somewhat awkward length but it is the hidden weights and heavy cords that help the musician to gather up the train in so fascinating a manner.

There is no place on the stage where clothes are more on exhibition than on concert tours, for the brilliant lights bring out every line and show the defects of one's costume far plainer than the calcium and footlights of the theatre, and there is often no background or scenery of any kind, so the musician stands out alone. For this reason her dress must not be too conspicuous or it will detract from the recital, which is not a dressmaker's exhibition, but a programme of classical music and nothing she wears should be too brilliant or inharmonious with the hangings of the hall.

At times I have known artists to lose their self control over so insignificant a thing as "angel sleeves" which hung too long and interfered with their playing, and a brilliantly spangled dress has often glistened so brightly in the electric light that it has given its wearer a most unhappy evening for if dressed in bad taste the audience's sense of discomfort somehow projects itself across the footlights. Whenever I am to appear in a hall or theatre, with which I am unfamiliar my manager goes a few hours before the concert and reports to me the colors of the hangings and the general effect. If the predominant shade is red or some other brilliant hue, I select a white gown or one of a delicate tint of yellow. On the other hand, a new room with much white plaster and few decorations save palms and potted plants causes me to appear in a warm red costume or similar bright combination.

I remember visiting a city where the hall decorations were of the plainest. I had forgotten that at the former recital given there I wore a deep coral robe with rich trimmings, and chose a simple white spangled robe. There had been a glow of enthusiasm before, but on the second occasion I felt a difference in the reception and general effect and am confident that the dress was the cause.

The many details of everyday dress predominate also on concert tours. The hair must be becomingly dressed so as to give a good shape to the head. It must be comfortable and well pinned or even covered partially by an invisible net so that no strand or hair pin detaches itself. Shoes must be easy yet in the latest fashion, harmonizing with the gown and should be in perfect condition. Soiled white slippers or tawdry gilt ones are out of place. I do not imagine that any one could play in shoes with an extreme heel of the French type.

I could write a book on experiences in my career that have been connected with dress. Some are ludicrous and others almost pathetic.

My first concert dress comes under both headings. I appeared in public when only a child, and my first dresses were of the simplest sort--white frocks with sashes, blouses and skirts, and sometimes I even wore a jersey and skirt, for in the Middle West, where I lived, a decollete gown was unknown. Finally something more pretentious was required and I can still see it and

experience the sensations that overwhelmed me when I wore it. I am certain that I never played worse in my life than when garbed in that wonderful "creation." There was a bright red plush skirt, quite full, over which was draped a much shirred yellow silk "drop," the collar was square, in imitation of a decollete neck and there were bits of lace in every imaginable spot. This skirt came below my knees and I wore high yellow boots and bright stockings of the same shade. It is no wonder that the problem of dress overwhelmed me even at that early date.

Several times within the last few years, I have been forced to play in my traveling dress on account of delayed baggage, but at each recital the sympathy of my audience put me at ease. An interesting point about public appearances, and one that is common to many others that I know, is that while you may often scour the city for a particular ornament or jewel as a special addition to the concert costume, it is often forgotten in the excitement of the evening! This has often happened to me, usually after I had spent hours in securing just what I fancied was absolutely essential to make my costume look its best.

Clothes are a bother, yet a blessing and each faded gown recalls happy days and pleasant people in all parts of the world. So, after all, I do not regret the long hours spent in search of the solution of the problem of dress for the result is well worth all the time and trouble.

MAUD POWELL'S DEBUT AT NINE

by
MAUD POWELL

This version of this story by Maud Powell is taken from a manuscript in The Maud Powell Society Archive. The story was published in The Pictorial Review, March 1908 and reprinted in The Musician, March 1910.

When I was a little girl of nine, my teacher, "Billy" Lewis and his associate in chamber music, Miss Ingersoll, gave a concert in their suburban town near Chicago at which they introduced me to a Hyde Park audience. In my home town, my father belonged to a vocal quartet and upon occasion on a Saturday night they would go to a neighboring town to give a concert. I sometimes went with them as solo violinist. Also our local organist, who conducted the orchestra in Aurora, Illinois, had me play at church song service frequently.

My studies abroad were broken up by a year of concert playing in London. I was in my very early teens. A musician in the pension where I lived in Portland Place, introduced me to an ambitious young manager, a woman, who, when she heard me play, sent me out with a little concert company. I do not remember much about the business details, but I remember I did get my modest fee and I believe the manager made some money too.

I became acquainted with George Henschel and other distinguished musicians through that charming and gifted woman, Mrs. George B. Carpenter, mother of our now distinguished and well known composer (John Alden Carpenter) (Mrs. Carpenter was among other well known people staying at this famous Portland Place boarding house). Through being heard by these people other engagements came and I was invited to play before Royalty.

But my real beginning as a youthful artist was in New York City. My introduction came to Theodore Thomas through "Billy" Lewis, my Chicago teacher. It seemed impossible to make an appointment with Mr. Thomas as Mr. Lewis' letter was disregarded. I reported this to Mr. Lewis, who straightway wrote another and a stronger letter to Mr. Thomas, in which I understand some strong language was used. Mr. Lewis said "damn it" he must hear Maud Powell; that he, William Lewis, was not the person to recommend anyone to a man in Mr. Thomas' position, whose talent was not worthy of the introduction.

All through the earlier part of my American career I had the secure satisfaction that Mr. Thomas was watching my development, standing sponsor for my talent and lending a helpful hand occasionally with a real engagement. That early experience with orchestra—still in my teens—was of inestimable help in all my future work.

When I went to England to live, fifteen years ago or more, I gave my initial recital in London, which did not do a scrap of good, except that the three line criticisms were good, although practically lost in a mass of other mentions of concerts. At any rate managers knew I was on hand and the musicians became aware of my presence. I had a few letters of introduction which brought me few engagements, but I felt that I was not getting on and would never get on in conservative England unless something extraordinary happened.

I went over to Berlin, gave a recital, and while there played the Second Concerto by Max Bruch to the composer himself, whom I had met when I had studied in Berlin as a girl. I apparently pleased him very much, whereupon I ventured to ask him for a card of introduction to Dr. Hans Richter, who held the most important post in England, conductor of the Halle Orchestra in Manchester.

Armed with this I returned to London, called up my nice conservative, reliable old manager, Mr. Vert, who had never taken more than a perfunctory interest in me, told him I wanted to meet Dr. Richter and that I had this card from Dr. Max Bruch. Richter, who was not in town and would not be, and was too busy to see anybody when he did come, turned out to be coming incognito to Mr. Vert's office the next morning.

An appointment was made and I, an artist with a reputation behind me, swallowed my pride and went down to Mr. Vert's office and played parts of the Tchaikovsky and the Beethoven Concertos for the distinguished old man himself. His eyes glowed and he said: "You shall play either the Tschaikowsky or the Beethoven at one of my concerts in the autumn. It depends upon what the concertmeister, Mr. Brodsky, decides to play. If he plays Beethoven, you play Tschaikowsky and vice versa." Well, I played my Tschaikowsky and according to the local music critics I made a sensation. After that it was all easy sailing in England, and continental work followed that.

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But my real beginning as a youthful artist was in New York City. My introduction came to Theodore Thomas through "Billy" Lewis, my Chicago teacher. It seemed impossible to make an appointment with Mr. Thomas as Mr. Lewis' letter was disregarded. I reported this to Mr. Lewis, who straightway wrote another and a stronger letter to Mr. Thomas, in which I understand some strong language was used. Mr. Lewis said "damn it" he must hear Maud Powell; that he, William Lewis, was not the person to recommend anyone to a man in Mr. Thomas' position, whose talent was not worthy of the introduction.

All through the earlier part of my American career I had the secure satisfaction that Mr. Thomas was watching my development, standing sponsor for my talent and lending a helpful hand occasionally with a real engagement. That early experience with orchestra—still in my teens—was of inestimable help in all my future work.

When I went to England to live, fifteen years ago or more, I gave my initial recital in London, which did not do a scrap of good, except that the three line criticisms were good, although practically lost in a mass of other mentions of concerts. At any rate managers knew I was on hand and the musicians became aware of my presence. I had a few letters of introduction which brought me few engagements, but I felt that I was not getting on and would never get on in conservative England unless something extraordinary happened.

I went over to Berlin, gave a recital, and while there played the Second Concerto by Max Bruch to the composer himself, whom I had met when I had studied in Berlin as a girl. I apparently pleased him very much, whereupon I ventured to ask him for a card of introduction to Dr. Hans Richter, who held the most important post in England, conductor of the Halle Orchestra in Manchester.

Armed with this I returned to London, called up my nice conservative, reliable old manager, Mr. Vert, who had never taken more than a perfunctory interest in me, told him I wanted to meet Dr. Richter and that I had this card from Dr. Max Bruch. Richter, who was not in town and would not be, and was too busy to see anybody when he did come, turned out to be coming incognito to Mr. Vert's office the next morning.

An appointment was made and I, an artist with a reputation behind me, swallowed my pride and went down to Mr. Vert's office and played parts of the Tchaikovsky and the Beethoven Concertos for the distinguished old man himself. His eyes glowed and he said: "You shall play either the Tschaikowsky or the Beethoven at one of my concerts in the autumn. It depends upon what the concertmeister, Mr. Brodsky, decides to play. If he plays Beethoven, you play Tschaikowsky and vice versa." Well, I played my Tschaikowsky and according to the local music critics I made a sensation. After that it was all easy sailing in England, and continental work followed that.

THE PRICE OF FAME

by
MAUD POWELL

Published in *New Idea Woman's Magazine*
December 1908

***[EDITOR'S NOTE** – Miss Maud Powell is the foremost woman violinist of the world. Many years ago, as a little Illinois school-girl, she went to Germany to study, and endless were the hours she spent with her violin under her chin, working for the success she has since won. Finally she was classed with the few greatest men of violin fame, with no woman as her equal. No one knows the American girl's Europe better than Miss Powell; no one can tell half so truly the vicissitudes which confront the girl who goes abroad to study music. And all of this she has here told fearlessly, that there shall be no overwhelming disappointments for the girl who chooses a musical career and no pitiful disillusionment which might break her spirit for the great fight out of which success must spring.]*

It is a difficult question – too difficult to answer by a simple yea or nay: – Shall you become a great artist and have the multitude at your feet (if you are lucky), or shall you marry the faithful and honest Dick, live a life of humdrum domestic felicity and suffer ever after with a gnawing sense of defeated and thwarted ambition, a bitter "might-have-been?"

But first let me ask you a question or two before I attempt my answer.

Have you talent, a very real talent?

Have you health, strength and a good physique?

Have you character, will-power, courage and determination?

Above all, have you stick-to-itiveness, with an inexhaustible fund of patience?

Do you love your music more than anything else in the world?

Have you money to keep you going comfortably until you have finished with teachers and are fairly launched in the profession?

I hear you say, "I've more talent than any one else in Kaneville, and the girls at college all thought I was a genius;" which means that you and your friends have made comparisons that don't count. How would you stand comparison with very real and vital talents that have been reared in musical surroundings, talents that do things intuitively, talents that are at a starting-point of development at twelve where you are likely to finish at twenty? Besides, if you are going through college, you are wasting precious time that should be devoted to the mechanical side of your art. You must expect to sacrifice something in the way of general education if you are to become an artist. Madame Camilla Urso once told me that she never learned her A B C's until after she had mastered her scales. And I was taken out of school and carried off to the Leipzig Conservatory when I was only twelve. If you want to become a great instrumentalist, you must class yourself with the acrobats and the dancers, who train, train, train, from childhood on: always, everlastingly and unceasingly. How you are going to stand that hard labor, with your

delicate frame and sensitive makeup, I don't know. And were you as strong again as you are, I should still say, "Not strong enough for the fight."

Do you remember how Alice Mainard, large of bone and steady of nerve, a splendid tennis player, cyclist and swimmer, went all to pieces when that fine energy of hers was bent to nerve-racking and ear-splitting hours of study over in Germany; she meantime living on unaccustomed food in boarding-houses and restaurants? And how Jessie Ordnay, with her amazing nervous force and indomitable will, practised from six to nine hours a day and said she would be a great artist, yet failed utterly, had a nervous breakdown and perforce went back to her brother to be cared for? The one man she had ever truly cared for had tired of waiting and had married a rich widow. So Jessie's life was wrecked because of misplaced ambition.

Frankly, I say to you that "the game is not worth the candle," unless your music is a part of your very fiber, your breath of life. If you love it thoroughly, love it objectively (so few women do that), and cannot be happy without it, then go ahead. But you wouldn't have needed me to decide for you, if that were the case: you would have been impelled by something within, regardless of advice or a thousand warnings.

Did my mother ever tell Aunt Jinny how I became a violinist? It is a serious confession. The family was broken up when I was taken abroad. Father, fond of home and adoring his wife and children, was left homeless, wifeless, childless: his part to work, work, work and send the monthly check regularly across the seas to pay for lessons, music, concerts, clothes and board. Four years of study abroad, and then the return. But separation was still necessary, for the concert field had to be "worked" from the East, and father's work lay elsewhere. The son and brother went home to his father, but his education was continued without home or mother influence. There were fifteen years of homeless life for all of us: then the nervous strain of professional life, with its incessant travel and irregular hours, proved too much for the brave little mother. She went back to her husband and planned a home life anew. But who shall say, after fifteen years of separation, with estranged habits and interests, that home was ever quite the same again?

Then the question arises: Shall a girl go abroad and fight the battle alone? Not you, my dear, nor any other American girl! And why not? Because she is too far from home, in a land where her independence, her freedom of speech and manners are misunderstood and misinterpreted; where the temptations are more numerous and different from those at home; where her youthful and American unafraidness, and the consciousness that there is no one from home to see and judge, will assuredly lead her into difficulties. Or if, on the other hand, my little American girl is of the guarded, cautious sort, she will have to be so doubly discreet in her behavior, being alone, that her poor little nature will be dwarfed and repressed, her self-expression will suffer from self-consciousness, and her art will not grow and flower as it ought.

I once heard Mrs. Theodore Thomas say that an artist should have a companion, besides a manager and a maid or valet, to keep the career a-going. Can you bethink you of a relative or friend who will go abroad with you – some one who loves you well enough to sacrifice all her own interests for the sake of your career?

And tell me, when you are thirty or thirty-five, and one day admit to yourself that you did not know what you were talking about when you declared in your early twenties that you were never, never, never going to marry, but intended to devote your whole life to your art; when your heart and your head and your art cry out for a fuller life and broader sympathies, and you feel that you have come to a standstill in development – then what are you going to do? Dick by that time will have turned his heart elsewhere, or if not, what right have you to marry him, with your high-strung nerves, your self-centered life of study and travel, your habits regulated to the demands of a critical public and not a bit adapted to a home career?

Now, by all this I don't mean that you are to shirk. On the contrary, it is right and only fair to herself that a woman should apply herself to something useful while she is young enough to learn easily. Every woman should be able to support herself in case of need. If her choice be music, then no artistic goal should be too high. And by that I do not mean fame goal. Go as far as you can, be as thorough as you can, believe that there is honor and gratification in doing a thing well even though it may not be done in the glare of the lime-light; equip yourself for the possible day of need, but if, happily, the day of need arrives not, enrich your life and that of your friends by being a "really and truly" amateur, capable, knowing, and sympathetic.

You ask if the financial rewards of a "career" are commensurate with the outlay of talent, time, sacrifices and cost of education. In rare cases, yes: generally, decidedly no. If one has the strength of an amazon and can supplement the public work with teaching, working harder and longer than any laboring man ever dreamed of doing, or if there is a certain indefinable some-thing called "magnetism" in your personality which wins your way irrespective of your work – then, yes, the game may pay. Let me tell you, though, that the musical world is full of artists and musicians whose talent and ability command the deepest reverence, who nevertheless cannot swell box-office receipts by a single dollar for lack of that illusive quality – magnetism. The great public is moved by human qualities more than by art qualities. So suppose you spend your youth and early womanhood in the sweatshop of Art, and come forth into the light of public work well equipped technically and artistically – only to find yourself gloriously snubbed by the public because you are aloof and leave them cold? Where is your financial reward then?

I hear you say, "Tell me, has it paid in your own case?" Well, I have lived a rich life, certainly; but I am sure no business man could consider for a moment that the investment has proved a financial success. The reward lies elsewhere than in cold cash. Bear in mind, too, that art was created for the artist and not for the public. And it is a question whether many women would consider it worth while anyway, considering that they lose their childhood, miss the school companionship and social life of early womanhood, and live always a life of training and restriction. There are the hours of practise, the careful diet, the keeping in physical trim, the constant self-denial in the matter of social pleasures, late hours, shopping expeditions, or the many things one likes to do and may not, because of harming the hands or stiffening the muscles. They say Liszt never carried even an umbrella, for fear of dulling the sensitive responsiveness of his precious fingers. Mme. Urso told me, years ago, that I must never take a needle in my hand, for the same reason.

Shall I tell you a secret? Most of the women violinists, the best ones, hate their instruments. Madame Urso was bitter but brave; Lady Halle is (and I have this on the authority

of a manager who traveled on tour with her) cranky and ill-tempered. Poor Arma Senkrah committed suicide. Teresina Tua, the most fascinating talent of them all, got into some sort of trouble while in her fresh, beautiful womanhood and lost most of her artistic cunning and her adorableness quite suddenly. I verily believe I am the only woman who, having stuck to her fiddle unflinchingly, has preserved the remnants of a sweet sanity. And I wouldn't bank heavily on my nerves or temper either! But I would not undo my life, and it is a satisfaction to assert that the professional woman generally keeps her poise, her technic, her memory and her hearing, longer than her masculine rival; and while she may not take the inspired flights of the greatest geniuses, she nevertheless preserves a higher average of excellence. I am often asked how it is that I almost invariably play well, and I believe it is because I am more willing than men are to live as even and quiet a life as possible.

Nor am I satisfied to rest on my laurels. My confreres and my public have been good enough to maintain that I hold the premiere place among women violinists. To continue to be worthy of that confidence is a heavier responsibility than the original building-up of this reputation. The work, the study, the courage, the patience, the self-denial must go on to the end.

THE AMERICAN GIRL AND HER VIOLIN

by
MAUD POWELL

Published in *The Etude*
Department for Violinists
July 1909, continued in the August 1909 issue

[The Etude considers that it has been extremely fortunate in securing the services of the distinguished violinist, Miss Maud Powell, as editor for this special issue. Mr. Robert Braine, the editor of the violin department, will resume his work next month. A biography of Miss Powell will be found in the "Gallery of Celebrated Musicians" for this month. That Miss Powell is the greatest of American violinists, irrespective of sex, is conceded by many able critics here and abroad. Her virtuosity, however, should no be characterized by national limitations, as her frequent European concert tours have been successful in the extreme. All of the following articles are by Miss Powell with the exception of those otherwise distinguished. Miss Powell has prepared this department with the same enthusiasm that has characterized all of her professional work, and we are sure that our readers will find it of great value and interest. – ***Editor of The Etude****.]*

The girl with a fiddle-box no longer excites comment. The irrepressible school boy no longer hoots and points the finger of derision as she passes. Everywhere girls are studying the violin, and everywhere other girls, a generation older or more, are teaching the violin. Girls play in quartets, in orchestras or earn their living by solo playing. Over a decade ago, Nora Clench sat at the first violin desk in the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra, under the conductorship of John Lund, and fiddled with the best of her colleagues.

For sixteen years the Women's Symphony Orchestra, of Los Angeles, with Cora Foy in the concert-master's chair has been in ambitious and honorable existence. There are the well-known "Fadettes," of Boston. The Aeolian Ladies' Orchestra, of London, England, is perhaps twenty years old, and the Aeolians, like the Fadettes, boast a woman conductor. Several women play in the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. Recently, in Detroit, Mich., the ladies of the Fine Arts Society organized a string quartet for which Elsa Ruegger was imported to fill the post of 'cellist. The Soldat String Quartet is known throughout Germany, and the Nora Clench Quartet, of London, holds its own against many masculine rivals. Year after year the field of musical effort broadens and offers greater opportunity for women, and year by year women qualify for ever higher standards.

At the present moment, we in America are working, building, achieving in the right direction. There is cultivation of music in the public schools and in the home. We have big conservatories and little conservatories. Some are private institutions of modest endeavor; others, on a larger, more comprehensive scale, equal in importance the far-famed conservatories of Europe. Music is taking a more serious place in general education, and the conservatories

affiliated with our universities grow in numbers and importance year by year. Our women's musical clubs are doing pioneer work of inestimable value, both for themselves and for the community in general.

It may be said with confidence, therefore, that the girl possessing talent, health and plenty of stick-to-itiveness will, after a thorough course of musical training, find an interesting as well as remunerative field for her labors. Not every girl can expect to have a brilliant stage career, nor is it possible for untold numbers to achieve an international reputation as concert soloists. Beautiful work, honorable work, work that is needed and wanted, lies well within these limits. Our country needs plenty of quiet workers of honest endeavor, with high ideals and adequate equipment. Indeed, the field of labor for such is almost limitless.

Take heart, young musician – you who are too conscious of your limitations. Beethoven himself hath said: "The barriers are not erected that shall say to talent, 'Thus far and no further.'" Cultivate courage. Have a oneness of purpose. Keep at it. Go on trying. I have heard a pupil play, and play creditably, a piece full of difficulties that she had utterly balked at in the beginning. Her imagination had magnified the difficulties out of all proportion, and had diminished her own powers of achievement in inverse ratio.

Try! You do not know what you can do till you have tried. I am always disappointed in the girl who, on being introduced to me after a concert, says, "Oh, Miss Powell, I feel as if I never could touch the violin again--it seems so hopeless now." Much more to my liking is the girl who says, in a scarcely audible voice and with upper lip aquiver, "Oh, I feel as though I could do <u>anything</u> now – I just feel inspired!"

<u>Of course</u>, enthusiasm is going to help you along. There are plenty of hard places to be conquered, but enthusiasm will make them easier. Indeed, enthusiasm is an asset that will be valuable throughout your life, and if you want your career to count for something, remember that it is she of the abiding faith and unquenchable enthusiasm whose work "tells" in the long run.

As for opportunity, apathy will prevent you from seeing it, and a lack of courage from seizing it; and before that psychological moment arrives, which may mean an important turning point in your career, your apathetic and timid attitude of mind will have interfered with your progress and kept you in a state of unpreparedness. Then your rival, perhaps someone with less talent than yourself, but with a saner, stronger character, will perceive the opportunity, make the most of it and leave you and your duller companions wondering discontentedly why some people have so much better luck than others.

Nor will the apathetic teacher, with little love in her heart either for music itself or her own work as a teacher, be able to attract irresistibly pupils to her classes nor achieve the best results with pupils chancing to come her way. As for an indifferent soloist, she is an anomaly, and can carry little conviction to her hearers. But for you, if you are ambitious and alive with interest for your work, there is a promising art-soil throughout the length and breadth of this bid land of ours, from which a rich harvest may be reaped, provided a healthy seed be planted with care and the young shoot thence watched and nurtured with intelligence, faith and enthusiasm.

The field of orchestral playing is open to women. I see no reason why women should not be regularly employed if they wish to be. They have qualities that are necessary for the work. American women, especially, have a good sense of rhythm. They are imitative, adaptable and conscientious, with endless patience for detail. They are quick to seize the trend of another's thoughts and have marvelous powers of carrying out other people's ideas. If women really want orchestral work, they will get it.

Prejudice of the American masculine mind is easily broken down. The "Union" accepts women members. The question of dress is not difficult, good taste and diplomacy suggesting simplicity, both as to style and color. It can also be urged in our favor that we are not as thirsty as the men. On the other hand, it behooves us to take the following criticism to heart. Two conductors of my acquaintance have expressed a preference for men as harp players for instance. Why? Because women forget to count the bars of rest, and rarely remember when to "come in" without a sign from the conductor. This weakness shows a lack of concentration. It suggest, too, a lack of mathematical precision in the feminine mentality, and hints at a dislike of discipline and routine. Let us ponder this well, and train ourselves accordingly.

Ten Practice Rules

I. Concentrate. Concentrate your thoughts on your work, completely and absolutely. One hour of absorbed practice is worth forty of the casual sort.

II. Play in tune. The worst of all violinistic crimes is to be untrue to pitch.

III. Practice scales religiously. Play them slowly and with perfect evenness, both as to fingering and bowing.

IV. Practice slowly all difficult or intricate passages; also, jumps, trills, spiccato, staccato, arpeggios, etc.

V. Practice long bows slowly, slowly, slowly. Draw out the tone. Pull it out, spin it, weave it, but never press it out or squeeze the string. By pressing the string with the bow you can check the natural vibration, and without changing the position of the left hand the smallest fraction, you can actually lower the pitch of the note you are producing.

VI. Memorize everything, including scales, etudes, pieces and difficult passages in chamber music.

VII. Keep in mind the structure of the composition while practicing separate phrases, difficult passages, etc. Do not let your playing or your memory become "patchy" – keep each measure mentally in its place; that is, in its correct relation, structurally, to the whole.

VIII. "Vorspielen." This German word means "to play before." Play your studies or pieces over in their entirety before any long-suffering friend who will listen. You will be amazed at the sore spots that will reveal themselves, and will make it your business to heal them as quickly as possible.

IX. Hear other violinists. You will listen in spite of yourself. Then apply that kind of listening to your own work. There will be more surprises in store for you.

X. Love your instrument as yourself. But love your art more than either. Keep the fires of enthusiasm burning. Nothing was ever accomplished without faith and enthusiasm.

Piano and Theory

Every violinist should play the piano. You will be at a great disadvantage if you cannot study your repertoire from the piano score. You will lose much by not being able to play accompaniments for others. What can you get out of a new composition – say a quintet, if you can look over only the violin part? If you play the piano, the complete score is yours. The piano is a useful servant. True, it is a poor mechanical contrivance of wires and ivories, but it is a

library. The whole literature of music is yours, symphonies, operas, quartets, songs, et al., if you play the piano.

A student must also study the theoretical, structural part of music – harmony, counterpoint, form and composition. Without these, you play without comprehension, memorizing by rote, phrasing parrot-like. You trust a little to taste, but more to luck. When reading a new composition, you do not know where the second theme begins, you are in a wilderness when you reach the "development," and fail to anticipate in time that you are coming to the "recapitulation." The thing is a muddle to you, structurally and harmonically. How can you convey anything of the composer's meaning to others if you know nothing of it yourself? You will be at a loss in chamber music. Indeed, you will get small chance to join others in that delightful work when they discover your superficiality.

Hints on Memorizing

Read Rule VII and take well to heart. If you have no gift of musical memory and cannot leave the task to your subconscious self, then you will have to train, train, train, until your mind will commit objectively.

No two people memorize in the same way. Some artists have told me that they see the printed page before their mind's eye, while playing from memory. This I personally cannot understand. Notes and rests with expression marks are mere symbols by means of which the composer tries to express an abstract musical idea in black and white. These symbols are wholly inadequate to express the real essence of music.

The student should, after studying the notes and signs thoroughly, and reading the composer's printed intentions with perfect accuracy, try to make of the music an abstract essence, as the composer first conceived it – a disembodied, impalpable sequence of musical sound. The Germans call printed music "noten" or notes, which amuses us mightily when we first hear the expression. After all, they are right. The symbols are only little black notes--not abstract music at all. We unconsciously admit the inapplicability of our English work, for we speak of sheet-music, a modification which is rather sensible. However, if it helps you to remember exactly how that difficult bar in the second staff on page nine looks in print, then by all means use that method.

But before learning any new composition, get its structure well in mind. Analyze its different parts, and knit them together, bearing in mind their relative bearing to each other. Play the piece over in its entirety, either from the piano score or with an accompaniment. Get an impression of the whole and its continuity. Let the spirit of the work sink deep into your consciousness.

Remember the impression of that first bloom of enthusiasm, that first warm appeal. You will lose it all presently, when your soul flounders in a cloud of technical drudgery. The fresh enthusiasm will be deadened during the process of memorizing, while difficult passage work is practiced in sections, and countless repetition stretches patience to its limit. When the case seems hopeless leave the piece alone for a time. Some day when the composition is conquered and is yours, the warm glow of enthusiasm will return. Even after a day or two you will take it up with renewed interest and a more receptive mind. Often what seems impossible at three in the afternoon, is quite easy at 10 A.M. On the other hand, you may be able to achieve great things at 11 P.M., after having practiced yourself into a state of mental excitement, and make the

unpleasant discovery the next morning, that your over-heated brain did not hold a single impression.

Undoubtedly, the sane morning hours are the best for work, for memorizing as well as for technical practice. When fishermanlike you catch a snag – that is, get entangled and have to waste time and energy in freeing yourself, it may help you to use very simple means, such as noting the direction of the melody, whether it moves up or down, whether the interval is a half or a whole tone, a fourth or a fifth, as the case may be.

Invent little ways of your own of memorizing. What matter if they may seem silly to others, so long as you gain your object?

Always use the same fingering, if your mind is not musically quick. A very good rule, that; for in an emergency, the fingers will carry you through an uncertain passage from sheer force of habit. Your mind may be a momentary blank, or a temporary mental dizziness attack you when you are playing in public, but thoroughly trained fingers will help you along.

In works written in the sonata form, practice alternately the original presentation of the theme and passage work, and their re-appearance in the "recapitulation," until differences of key, of position, of contour, become familiar. You will usually find, when the composer writes spontaneously and understandingly, or really has something to say, that his music is easily memorized, but that if he builds artificially he is a veritable bugbear. In the latter case, you can only beat him at his own game, by using artificial means in memorizing.

Memorize Bach – and more Bach. If you play the piano, memorize Bach on the piano. He is complex, intellectual, full of musical fibre, and should be daily food. He is more than food; he is an intellectual tonic. And you will find that all others will seem easy after Bach. But guard against the stiff wrist in the right hand and against stiff wrist and fingers in the left. He demands strength in the right arm, which stiffens your bowing if you are not careful. And he keeps your left hand so much in one position that you will lose elasticity in both writs and fingers if you do not conscientiously guard against the tendency to tighten muscles. You must constantly think of flexible firmness when you play Bach.

Care of the Violin

Put your instrument away, always, when not in use. Keep it free from dust and rosin. A soft piece of cheese-cloth that has been washed or an old silk handkerchief may be used to remove the rosin. Always clean the finger board and strings after playing. You will be amazed at the black that will come off on a cloth slightly moistened. Use alcohol if you prefer. If your hands are not excessively moist, thereby keeping the strings too wet, it is just as well or rather better to--well, you have doubtless seen a mother moisten a handkerchief at her lips and vigorously rub the dirty face of her violently resisting young hopeful! Needless to say, the rosined part of the string should be touched only with a dry cloth.

Keep the violin box in a place of even temperature--not too near a heater or a window. The floor is cold or draughty, a high shelf too hot and dry, especially in winter. The evaporation will be good for yourself as well as your instrument. A big jardiniere of water should be kept under a grand piano, especially in a steam-heated or furnace-heated apartment. Many a time, when traveling at night, in zero weather, I have put the violin case under the blankets in my berth, as carefully as though it were a live thing. On one occasion my train was delayed nine hours by a blizzard. The steam pipes froze – so, very nearly, did the passengers – and all that day

I kept the violin wrapped in blankets, much more worried over it than about myself. I was to give a recital that night, and only arrived in town at eight o'clock, but when I walked on the stage at ten minutes of nine, I found the violin in a splendid condition, thanks to my care. I know a lad who always kept his violin under his bed at night. He slept, even in winter, with his window wide open. Of course, when the weather was cold, the poor little fiddle got absolutely chilled. Then the lad wondered why the instrument was so unmanageable when he took it down stairs to the over-heated drawing room.

Our climate, with its sudden changes and its extremes of both dryness and sodden humidity, is unfavorable to both artist and instrument. Both live in a state of too constant tension and resistance. Take care of yourself – health is valuable above all else – but don't forget to take care of your instrument. It will reward you for your pains. Treat it like a tender human being, and invite its soul – and your own.

A Word to Teachers

One phase of art-study is often lost sight of, namely: the making of amateurs. Why is it that so many who spend money and time on musical culture think they must necessarily pursue music as a profession? Many who love music have little talent for it, or may not be qualified by temperament or gifts to become either a teacher or public performer.

Teachers should make the less-gifted pupils feel that they have a very lovely mission as amateurs--to foster art at home – and by this enthusiasm enlarge the circle of good listeners. On the other hand, many an elderly, unaccomplished man or woman would be eager to study, if given a grain of encouragement on these lines.

Music can hardly be said to exist if it lies dormant in the printed page. To become a living, vital thing with influence, it must be heard. <u>There must be listeners</u>. The artist, by his very nature, sensitive, emotional, longing to make propaganda for the true and beautiful, should find sympathy, encouragement and an answering enthusiasm in his fellow-beings. If he can convey but a hint of the secret that the masters have revealed to him through the printed page, he does not live in vain.

Oh, the misery of having something of infinite, though perhaps esoteric, beauty fall on ears that do not understand! And then to hear the uncultured listener affirm somewhat proudly and defiantly that he knows nothing whatever about music – but he knows what he likes! Such a soul is a sealed book. Little do people realize what joys lie in store for them if they would seek and humbly prepare their minds with a little study. – **Maud Powell**

VIOLIN INTERPRETATION

by
MISS MAUD POWELL

Published in *The Etude*, August 1909
Department for Violinists

*[In the July issue of The Etude, which was devoted to "Woman's Work in Music," the violin department was edited by a woman for the first time during the twenty-six years existence of the paper. Miss Maud Powell, the renowned American violinist, honored our readers by a most excellent department of which the following is a continuation. – **Editor's Note**.]*

Listen to every great artist, whether pianist, violinist or singer. Hear an orchestra, or a string quartet, whenever possible. Get something from everybody, though it may be nothing more than a revelation of some fault or trait to be avoided. Nothing more, did I say? Nay, that is a great deal, for the "don'ts" are all-important.

Don't hurry.

Don't drag.

Don't blur the passage work.

Don't scratch.

Don't play absent-mindedly or carelessly.

Don't leave the hair at either the point or nut of the bow unused, thereby curtailing possibilities in phrasing.

Don't leave out the accents and other marks of interpretation.

Don't forget that rhythm is the first and most vital element in all arts, and most obviously so in music.

Don't lose your poise.

Don't overdo the vibrato.

Don't use the same vibrato in an eighteenth century composition that you would in an intense, dramatic, modern piece.

Don't alter the composer's meaning, especially in the classics, unless on the very best authority. And let me say right here that the dictums of cultivated talent are safer to follow than the unreflecting outbursts of genius. Young Elman, for instance, is a law unto himself. I sat spellbound one afternoon listening to his Tschaikowsky Concerto. No one approaches him, it seems to me, in that school of composition. But the distortion of tempi and the liberties taken with text were bad models for an imitator, whether artist or pupil. With all my admiration for the amazing, the unaccountable genius of the boy, I cannot bring myself to accept his interpretation of the Beethoven Concerto. Beethoven is scarcely a vehicle for emotional self-expression. Rather is this concerto an art expression of perfect line, perfect poise, perfect beauty; a noble thought, nobly conceived, a thing for all time, pure, true, complete, like the best Greek statuary and to be approached only in a spirit of complete self-abnegation. Now, the fullness, the vitality of self-expression of this gifted boy, the lovely cheek of his artistic unconsciousness, are

glorious. We of Anglo-Saxon origin know little of spontaneity of expression as exemplified in the Slavic and Latin races. When we cultivate spontaneity it is apt to be superficial. Our artistic emotions are not aroused within us creatively. Artistic self-expression is not a necessity. We are stirred from without and not within (artistically), and we are forever suffering intense and absurd self-consciousness in art, as in other matters. We have a horror of being sentimental or ludicrous. The young girl actually blushes when her teacher tries to induce her to play with "expression." There is a diffidence that stands between ourselves and our means of expression. And that brings me to another "don't."

Don't become an abject slave to "playing in" your fingers with scales. When you first take the violin from the box, occasionally plunge right into some composition that requires "mood" – the first movement of the Mendelssohn Concerto, which is "appassionato," or the last movement of the Bruch G minor Concerto, which is bold, majestic, rhythmic; or, for that matter, any piece you may be studying at the moment, whether soulful and singing in style, playful (scherzoso) or doleful (lamentoso). Learn to sink yourself at once in the emotional atmosphere of the work you are interpreting; but

Don't play to have a good time merely. Keep your critical self always alert and watchful.

Don't practice seventeen hours a day, nor even seven. It will kill all joyousness in your playing. Study, yes, any number of hours you may have strength for, but don't practice more than four or five at the most. If you have as much talent as you should have to warrant entering the ranks of professional workers, three hours should be sufficient.

Don't forget to think out your interpretation away from your instrument. Play a composition in imagination, vividly, spontaneously. Ideas will come to you, which you can work out later, with your instrument in hand. If unable to practice just before playing at lesson or in public, whip your mind into training instead. It is often even better than actual practice.

Don't get discouraged. If you cannot play an intricate passage as you think it, write it out on music paper from memory. Do this more than once, if necessary. It will help you technically and interpretatively, and it won't hurt your memory.

Don't get in a rut. You will sink in so far, if you allow yourself, that your soul will be ground down by the wheels of routine, leaving nothing but a mere mechanism with no interpretative energy. On the other hand,

Don't leave technic to the chance of the moment. Inspiration works unhampered only when technic is adequate and reliable. And technic can only be conquered through tremendous routine. The last two apparently contradictory "don'ts" you will have to work out for yourself. No one else can do so for you.

Indeed, don't expect your teacher to do your work for you. Your teacher cannot provide you with talent, nor with brains, nor with character. Your teacher can only be a guide and an inspiration. That is enough – to point the way to watch, help, prevent false steps, inspire to industry and high ideals. But on you, the you that is within you, depends your success.

A word about the importance of having good tools to work with: "A bad workman quarrels with his tools," but a good workman really prefers the best and he knows how to take care of them. So procure the best violin, bow and strings that your means will allow. It behooves you then to keep all three in as good condition as possible. Do not complain of them. An excuse is an accusation. If you cannot get something out of an indifferent instrument, you will probably get relatively little out of a good Cremona. Don't blame your instrument. Keep the lime-light of criticism focussed on yourself.

Undoubtedly, a good instrument will produce better results in the hands of talent than a poor one can. It will also teach the ear to seek beauty in tone. And it will stir the imagination. While telling you not to complain, I want you, nevertheless, to unceasingly strive for something better. It is stagnation to be satisfied. The artistic spirit never ceases to reach out for greater perfection. Strive for a more and more beautiful tone, and crave a better and more perfect instrument with which to produce it. Every time opportunity offers, play a violin that is better than your own, and seek therein new possibilities of tonal beauty. By this I do not advise experimenting in public. Play the violin you are accustomed to when you play before the public.

Tune quietly. By using a little anti-slip preparation, or by treating the pegs with soap and chalk, you can keep them in good condition. They should not stick fast and then jump suddenly beyond the mark with an annoying jerk. When you put on a new string, see that the peg stops (when the string is at pitch), at a convenient angle so that you get a purchase on it with your left hand, and turn it without taking the violin down from position. Tune with the point of the bow, producing a soft, clear tone. When the weather is unpropitious or strings are new, tuning may be troublesome, and must be done with a firm stroke of the bow, but generally speaking, especially in public, tuning should be done easily, quietly, and without fidgeting. Indeed, if it were possible, it would be well if tuning in public could be avoided altogether.

AMERICA'S MUSICAL FUTURE

by MAUD POWELL

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Writers who attempt to glimpse the future of music in America are fond of the assertion that when our composers have achieved the characteristically American style in musical expression, the foundation thereof will be the melodies of the Southern Negro. The hypothesis is interesting, and I was among the many inclined to subscribe to it, until a certain concert tour through South Africa gave me a splendid opportunity for close study of the musical susceptibilities of the semi-savage brothers of our Southern darky. The experience taught me that our musical theorists were right only in part.

The term Kafir is applied generally to the semi-civilized black in Africa, whether Zulu, Basuto, or Fingo. I found this people virginal in music, but on the point of being corrupted through contact with the ever encroaching horde of whites. Thus to come in contact with the primitive music of an almost primitive people was not only a delight but an inspiration. I learned from them how those who live close to Nature are conscious of the universal law of harmony and seek to bring it into expression in their own affairs by making music the most important element in the ritual of their daily lives. It meant much to me to learn that music had a far higher significance to the savage than to civilized man, who regards it as a mere diversion or accomplishment.

The savage appealed to me in a new light when I discovered that these superbly built Kafirs, with ebony skin and docile, doglike eyes, had souls attuned to something higher than mere animal appetites for eating, drinking, and fighting. Shakespeare's oft quoted line, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast," was revealed to me as a universal truth when, as frequently occurred during my travels, I found a half-nude native standing for hours "without my casement window" listening to the sound of my violin. His knowledge of English speech amounted doubtless to a vague understanding of a so-called Kitchen-Kafir (adapted to his limited perceptions); but the language of music spoke to him in direct and intelligible terms.

Intimate observation soon revealed that these blacks were keenly responsive not only to beauty of sound, but also to beauty of color and beauty of line. This aesthetic susceptibility to color, contour, and melody amounts, in my opinion, to a racial instinct among the blacks. These are the things in Nature that appeal most strongly to primitive peoples; but how different has been the response in the various races! Malay and Mongol, for example, are as susceptible to sound as the Ethiopian, but in neither the perception of the beautiful in sound, nor in the

refinement of their imitative expression of it, are they on the same aesthetic plane as the black man.

Nature the Great Teacher

For the color scheme of his marvelous beadwork and straw plating, the Kafir borrows inspiration from the heavens or the myriad-hewed wild flowers that deck the great treeless Karoos. And from the songbirds of the forbidding hills he steals the secret of soft, persuasive music. Nature is his only book, and to her he turns for instruments when his imitativeness prompts him to reproduce the melodies of the birds or the softer music of the whispering winds or rippling water. His musical instruments, therefore, are mellow toned and sweet, being made of wood, bamboo, gourd (especially calabash), and of soft, tinkling strips of horn; while his melodies, like those of the feathered creation, acquire compelling charm from monotonous iteration and re-iteration. Even the intervals of his barbaric scale, if scale it can be called, are of such indefinite and elusive character that they may justly be thought to have their prototype in the throat of the songbird.

So much do sounds of a gentle nature ravish the ear of the native African that he dons a dancing belt of large dried shells filled with pebbles, which he strings together like beads and winds about his waist. The lovable rickshaw boys, curiously and gaudily costumed, ox horns and feathers on their heads, imaginary stockings of amazing pattern painted on their bare legs, weave these dancing belts for anklets, and as they lope along in imitation of the native springbok, dragging their human load after them, anything more deliciously entrancing than the soft, rhythmic "chink chink" of these musical ornaments can hardly be imagined. Another Kafir ornament is a head dress, having beaded strings dangling between the eyes, on the ends of which jingle tiny bells, crudely carved from bits of horn.

These lithe limbed natives possess also a delicacy of touch which they apply as readily to the manipulation of a musical instrument as to their quaint bead stringing, plaited straw work, and the like. To hear a Kafir boy play an instrument of the white man's fashioning, an ordinary mouth organ or the plebeian concertina, is something of a revelation. I heard once in the solitude of the hills of Swartzkop in Natal a Kafir lad softly playing a concertina as he strolled barefooted along a narrow mountain trail. One little haunting phrase he repeated over and over again, producing a tone so sweet and seductive that I stood entranced. As he passed me, some pretty instinctive courtesy, or bashfulness perhaps, prompted him to subdue his tone to a mere breath of sweet sound, producing an effect in the stillness of the late afternoon that was indescribable.

Identified by His Tune

I have learned since through an Englishman who knows something of the Kafir that an native man is known by the one tune he always plays. Here we have the primitive exemplification of the *leit* motif. Moreover the Kafir has a way of repeating his tune in cycles in some manner unfathomed by the white man. So my boy of the concertina probably had some large rhythmic plan, which made him loath to stop playing, lest he might thereby lose count and perforce have to go back to the very beginning.

In Bechuanaland the natives are exceedingly musical. They have fine voices and sing remarkably well in chorus. On one of those strangely clear nights, under the Southern Cross, they will congregate in scores, or even hundreds, ranging themselves in groups about an enormous bonfire. Then they will sing in unison, in chorus and antiphonally. The burden of their song may be some strange folklore or tribal history, or it may be a rehearsal of the brave deeds of the tribe or the daring or wisdom of their honored and worshipful chief. One of the groups will start off with a slow, monotonous droning, a second will presently intone a sort of melody, which will be taken up in turn by a third group, and so on and on. Each group will have its individual tune, while the various groups will answer one another or sing together in a curious primitive counterpoint. And for a grand finale all will rise and sing together in simple, impressive unison.

Unfortunately, the barrier of language prevented me from gaining the full significance of this interesting musical ceremonial; but I can testify to having heard cadences in these barbaric chants that were strangely familiar to my American years.

Corrupted by the Whites

It is sad to think that the cheap and vulgar songs the white man has brought from his music halls to the African wilderness are finding favor among the Kafirs. The day is not far off, counting time in a large sense, when they will supplant the tribal chant, romantic, fitting, and thrilling as it is. Like the clothes of civilized cut that sit in repulsive awkwardness on these splendid bronze figures, so white man's song is also a mournful misfit.

The rude music of these Kafirs, beautiful in its simplicity and quaintness, is the true, characteristic music of the Africa of yesterday; but it will not be the characteristic music of the Africa of tomorrow. Year by year the Dark Continent is becoming a white man's country. Native simplicity and originality are already beginning to disappear through contact with a superior race. Eventually all that is characteristic of the Kafir today will be eliminated in the absorption of a more complex civilization. His music will then cease to exist except in the phonographic records of ethnologists.

This transitional period on which the Kafir has entered brings home to us the circumstances of our own aborigines immediately before and after the Colonial period, and the conditions of our Southern Negroes before and after the Civil War. Time was when the weird incantations, the battle songs, and the burial chants of the Indian where 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 folklore 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 forebears 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 "Suwanee River" disappeared with him.

Inspiration of the 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, hallowed 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 problem. Before that time what music was written in Russia 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-Korsakoff, 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 folklore, 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. Their 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 the spirit of nationalism affects the Russian composer and finds expression in this 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 folk song. This song, known as "Ai Ouchnem" has been sung from time immemorial by bargemen of the River Volga. Its rhythmic accent is indicative of the swaying of the boatman'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 Ouchnem" 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 dismissed 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 Blackfeet 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 then 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 folklore, 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 introduce 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.

(PLEASE NOTE: Touring South Africa in 1905, Maud Powell felt privileged to encounter intact tribal/cultural traditions of African natives that had yet to be fully corrupted by white "civilization." The words she uses to describe her experiences are of the period and it is my hope that readers can see beyond the terms now considered inappropriate and appreciate how much Powell valued and learned from her encounters with native African culture. KAS)

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

MAUD POWELL'S MUSICAL EDUCATION

The Musician, March 1910

In an article entitled "The Girl Who wants to be Great," contributed to *The Pictorial Review* some time ago, Maud Powell says that her mother, of German-Hungarian parentage, was adopted by a couple who had no sympathy with her love of music and her ambition for a musical career. She says further: —

"When my mother married she determined that her first son should be a violinist. The expected son turned out to be a girl, but my mother was not to be balked by such a trifle. As soon as I was old enough, a baby violin was put into my little hands.

"My father, William Bramwell Powell, for many years the head of the public schools in Washington, was one of the most advanced educators of his day, and he had no intention of permitting me to have a one-sided education. . . . . He apportioned three, and, as I grew older, four hours a day as sufficient for my musical studies.

"At this point I want to lay stress on a fundamental essential of success. It is the determination to *excel*; a bull-dog instinct to stick grimly, ferociously to one's task, and not let go except with one's life."

Referring to her entry into professional life, she says: —

"At the time I finished my studies abroad and returned to this country . . . girl violinists were looked upon with suspicion, and I felt that I had a hard road to travel in my native land. I had sent a letter of introduction to Theodore Thomas, but I waited in vain for a summons to play with the Thomas Orchestra. I determined to take matters into my own hands. I walked into the hall one morning where the rehearsal was being held with my violin under my arm. When it was over, and before the musicians had dispersed, I walked up to the great leader. My heart was in my throat, but I managed to say pretty bravely, 'Mr. Thomas, I am Maud Powell, and I want you to give me a chance to play for you.' His big heart was touched, I suppose, for he nodded his head, reached out his hand for my score, and called the musicians together. I knew it was a crucial moment in my life—a girl only eighteen [seventeen] daring to be a violinist and demanding a hearing of the greatest orchestral leader in America! I had brought the score of the Bruch Concerto, and it is not difficult to do one's best when one knows every note of a concerto backward. When I had finished, Mr. Thomas engaged me on the spot for his next concert. At the close of that concert—my debut in America—Mr. Thomas came to me with his two hands full of green-backs. He handed them to me, saying, 'I want the honor of paying you the first fee you have earned as an artist."

THE VIOLINIST

by
MAUD POWELL

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Common sense suggests, when you and I foregather for an informing chat about the way to win success as a violinist, that we begin with a clear understanding of the standard by which success is to be measured. One violinist may consider his career a failure if he falls short of the virtuoso estate. Another may be well content if he earns a comfortable livelihood with this instrument. With one, the standard may be artistic achievement; with another, the financial result. In either case, success will be measured entirely by the attainment of the end in view.

In establishing our standard, let us keep in touch with our environment. We live in America, and the American mind is essentially practical, above whatever artistic instincts it may possess. The duty of developing a talent for the good of the race does not appeal to the American mind in its present stage of artistic advancement. Neither has the American parent any inclination to educate his child for an artistic pursuit unless a good living is to be obtained thereby. As Americans, therefore, our standard must be the economic one, and the way to win success as a violinist confronts us as a practical issue: how to earn a good living with the violin.

This is making a commercial question out of an artistic pursuit, I grant you. But why not? Business methods are necessary to keep art on its feet. And our wonderful but intensely practical country will never develop the arts except on a sound businesslike basis. So businesslike it behooves us to be.

Is it possible to make a good living with the violin?

Unfortunately there is no pursuit in which so much ignorance and vagueness prevail, considering the essentials and probabilities of success, as in music. The most common mistake is that the life of a professional musician is easy and enjoyable. Enjoyable it is for those who love their art for its own sake, but easy – never. I work harder today than I did when I was a student in the Leipzig Conservatory. That is the common experience of all artists.

That we are greatly in need of enlightenment on every phase of the musical problem is evident. But my task is to cover the violin field and I will hark back to the question – Is it possible to make a good living with the violin? My answer is an affirmative, with one qualification, namely, that one's ambitions are made to square with one's talents and one's circumstances. With this reservation I maintain that the good violinist can always make a good income, and I will add that the avenues of income are widening continually in this country.

The virtuoso, the teacher and the orchestral player represent the three main branches of the violin profession. Fame and fortune are the reward of the successful virtuoso, and all young Americans who take up the violin as a profession look forward to that career.

But beware the long, hard road that lies between gifted youth and the virtuoso estate! I have traveled it. I know every obstacle. For every step forward I have paid heavy toll. Let me

reckon the cost for you in time, money, mental wear and tear and physical stress and put the matter squarely before you, pupil or parent--to decide whether the prize is worth the struggle.

And now, my ambitious young musician, before you take me up with a quick affirmative, let me ask you a few questions.

Have you real talent?

Have you strength of character, endless patience, courage, stamina?

Have you good nerves and a strong physique?

Have you a parent or some other relative willing to sacrifice everything else in life to look after you during your period of preparation?

Have you money to keep you going until you are done with teachers and then more money to launch your career?

You will have need of all these along the road to fame, and when you come to the end of the journey the reward is by no means in sight. You are in the position of a man who has toiled and slaved, stripped himself, his family, his friends – for what? A ticket in a lottery. After you have spent your youth in the sweatshop of art, you are quite likely to be snubbed by the public. Your technique may be flawless, your artistic development wonderful, but if you lack that indefinable personal quality – magnetism – the great public, which is moved most by human qualities, will give you the cold shoulder. And magnetism is something money cannot buy nor any teacher impart.

To begin with, how do you know your talent is equal to your ambition? Because you play better than any one in your town ever played at your age is no reason that you would compare remotely with very real and vital talents – talents that have brought their fortunate possessors farther along at twelve than you may get at twenty. Do you know that Kreisler could play the big concertos at twelve? Elman, Kubelik and Von Vecsey were full-fledged virtuosi on the mechanical plane at an age when the average American child begins to think of taking up the violin.

The foundation of virtuosity is technique and the technique of the instrumentalist, like that of the juggler, the acrobat or the dancer, is the result of a process of muscular coordination that must begin almost in infancy. There is little hope in the virtuoso field for the child who is not ready for advanced instruction before he enters his teens.

And not all the prodigies realize the promise of their early youth. For success is as much a question of character as of talent. Precocity is a foe to self-control and leads many to abandon the rigorous self-denial that is inseparable from the virtuoso career. Paul Cinquevalli, most artistic of jugglers, spent two hours a day for eight years learning the trick of balancing a billiard-ball on the side of a cue. Violin technique calls for equal patience and the same delicate muscular control.

Whether the student is boy or girl, it is absolutely essential that some one watch over him constantly during the years of study. I was twelve when my mother took me abroad to the Leipzig Conservatory. My father was left homeless, wifeless, childless, to work, work, work, and send the monthly checks across the seas to meet our expenses. After four years we returned, but mother had to remain with me during my early touring days. My career meant fifteen homeless years for all of us.

That is only one side of the family sacrifice. The financial phase remains to be considered. After the years of preliminary training, at least four years of advanced study are necessary. Usually this involves leaving home, and only with the strictest economy can the cost

of tuition and the living expenses of the student and his companion be kept down to fifteen hundred dollars a year. That is the minimum, mind you. When this interval is over, the expensive business of launching the career begins. It is on this point that the most woeful ignorance prevails.

Granting that the money is available, the point of contact between the young artist and the public is one that requires delicate handling. Many who have an adequate technical and artistic equipment fail through a mistaken conception of the concert artist's function. The general public goes to concerts in search of entertainment and not education.

It seeks the stimulus of agreeable music, agreeably performed, and it is not particularly interested in art. The young artist who will take into consideration the musical capacity of his listeners and avoid overdosing them with music they are incapable of assimilating, will find his reward the more quickly. After he has convinced the public that it is a pleasure to listen to him, he can lead them by gradual stages to the higher phases of his art.

But always in the beginning his chief aim should be to make a good impression and leave his hearers with pleasant recollections. I regret to say, with all admiration for their high ideals and splendid courage, that most of our budding virtuosi start off on the opposite tack. The programs they elect to play for their debuts would tax the ripened powers of the most seasoned veteran and tire out the assemblage of the most hardened concert-goers. On the other hand, the young virtuoso must remember that bidding for cheap applause is a pitfall wherein may easily lie buried all his youthful ideals and all chances of ever becoming a real artist.

Even where success attends the inauguration of the virtuoso career, a living income is hardly possible for two or three years. Meanwhile the expenses keep up. In fact, they never end. Mrs. Theodore Thomas was the first to tell me that a great musician needed a wife or a husband, as the case may be, a valet, a secretary and a manager for safe pilotage through the mazes of professional life. Even when the success is lasting, the hard work and self-denial must go on relentlessly. From the sweatshop of preparation, the virtuoso passes on to complete slavery in the house of art, there is compensation. But the artist must find his reward elsewhere than in cold cash.

We may safely place the average income of a good orchestral player at two thousand dollars a year. It isn't a large amount according to some standards, but it will compare favorable with the average professional income. And the good orchestral player is an artist. In the estimation of thinking musicians, he ranks far higher than the mediocre virtuoso, while he performs a far greater service for his art.

While on this subject of orchestral playing, let me record my astonishment at what seems to be an almost national aversion to learning instruments of reed and brass. Somewhere, possibly, in this country, there is a native-born oboe player, but I have never met him.

And oboe players' services are always at a premium. Trumpet players, trombonists, horn players and clarinetists are always in far greater demand than players of stringed instruments. Good performers on these instruments draw salaries running from thirty-five to seventy-five dollars a week and they can always find employment all through the year.

But what chance, you may ask, have women in the orchestral field? Just as much chance as they choose to make for themselves. The girl with the fiddle-box no longer excites comment. Woman's place in the violin field is firmly established. Over a decade ago, Nora Clench sat at the first violin desk in the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra. The Women's Symphony Orchestra of Los Angeles has been in ambitious and honorable existence for sixteen years.

Several women play in the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, and we have the well-known Fadette Women's Orchestra of Boston and the Aeolian Ladies' Orchestra in London. If we have no women violinists in the New York orchestra, we have had women harp players in the New York Symphony, the Russian Symphony and the Metropolitan Opera House.

The Olive Mead Quartette has held a prominent place in our musical life for many years and the Elsa Ruegger Quartette of Detroit is a promising newcomer. In England it is not uncommon to find women in orchestral work.

The field is open to them and I see no reason why they should not be regularly employed, if they wish to be. They have the qualities that are necessary for the work. American women, especially, have a good sense of rhythm. They are imitative, adaptable and conscientious, with endless patience for detail. They are quick to seize the trend of another's thought and have marvelous powers of carrying out other people's ideas. It can also be urged that we are not so thirsty as the men!

If American women really, truly want orchestral work, they will get it, and I believe they should seek it. The Musical Union has not put up the bars against them and public opinion will prevent it from ever doing so. During a recent tour of the Northwest, I found women violinists in many of the hotel and restaurant orchestras. Several with whom I spoke told me that they had been tempted to take up the work by the good salary offered, men violinists being scarce. The majority of them were saving money to come East and prepare themselves for teaching.

Before concluding, let me call attention once more to the fact that in spite of the wide-spread musical culture in this country, in spite of the millions we spend annually in musical education, most of us have only the vaguest notions of musical conditions, of the essentials for success in the musical career, of the practical side of the musical profession. I have tried here to overcome this lack of knowledge with regard to the violin field.

To the American parent let me say finally that a musical talent is not a thing to be stifled or rooted out. It ought to be encouraged and developed along common-sense lines. Wherever that is done, a musical education will prove to be a commercial asset.