New York Times
March 26, 1898

FIDDLE AND THE FIDDLER

A Story of Maud Powell's Transition from the Baby Instrument Up to the "Strad" Period.

NOT A PRODIGY, JOACHIM SAID

But She Had Talent, Which Was Better, and Worked Hard – Difficulty of American Players and Audiences in Overcoming Puritanism.

This is a story of Miss Maud Powell and her "fiddle." The word fiddle is in quotation marks because it is Miss Powell's word. It does not behoove a stranger who is not on intimate terms with the instrument of instruments to say anything less dignified than violin.

"But I should feel that it was almost an insult to call my dear old fiddle of violin," Miss Powell says. To say 'fiddle' is like using the familiar pronoun of the Germans, 'du,' 'thou .'"

And the strangers do not say "du" upon first acquaintance, and Miss Powell's violin is an instrument which should be treated with great respect, not only on general principles, but because of its age and good qualities. It is an Amati, Andreas Amati, and is 300 years old. Miss Powell has been using it for the past eight years. It is an instrument belonging to the collection of E. J. Delehanty, who loaned it to Miss. Powell. It is a "healthy instrument, has good whole word in it, and stands the changes of this climate." That is a professional criticism and means a great deal.

Professional violinists may almost be seen to grow by their violins. Miss Powell, for instance, has about reached the "Strad" period. "Strad" is another "du" term for the famous old violin which outsiders speak in awed tones as the Stradivarius. A "Strad" in good condition and not patched up on the inside is a treasure, and one that will cost from $3000 to $5000, according to circumstances. Miss. Powell has played online, and when she has one of her own she will have reached the height par excellence of the violinist.

The violin she began with was, very appropriately, a baby instrument, half size, which cost only $10. She was a small girl of eight then. She had learned to play on the piano and had become a marvel, in a small way, on that instrument when she took up the violin.

"I take credit to myself for that," Mrs. Powell says. "Everyone played on the piano, and I was so tired of it that I made up my mind that my daughter should learn something different."

"Yes," Miss. Powell adds, "and grandmother used to say that you said, even when you

were a little girl, that if you ever had a daughter she should learn to play on the violin."

Mrs. Powell is a musician herself and composed music when she was only a girl of sixteen.

"I always say," Miss. Powell continues with a little laugh, "that I inherited my music from my mother and my brains from my father."

"Yes, and that makes us both angry," Mrs. Powell makes haste to exclaim, "for I consider that I have some brains and her father thinks that he knows something of music." That is a family joke, but Miss. Powell continues to think that her particular mental inclination comes from her father's side of the house and her musical genius from her mother.

But to return to the violins, the little Miss. Powell of eight outgrew her baby instrument and the teacher she had in Aurora, Illinois, her birthplace, in just a year. Then she went to Chicago for further instruction, and took up a large instrument. It was too large for her, but it gave her the intervals as they really are on the ordinary violin, and she did not learn distances that she would have to unlearn later.

She was thirteen when she finished the ordinary violin and her course in Chicago, and bought another violin to take with her to Leipsic. But there is a funny little story connected with that first ordinary. Mr. Powell was connected with the public schools of Aurora and was a prominent educational man there, and when a farmer from the vicinity of the town came into the house one day and saw the violin he was surprised. It was not a new one.

"I suppose this is second–hand?" he said, with an interrogation point at the end of the remark. He could hardly believe his eyes, and he wanted to being reassured. But when he found it really was a second – and instrument he did not say anything. He was too polite, but it was evident that it was too much for him to understand why a man like Mr. Powell should get his daughter a second – hand violin. Miss Powell's possible "Strad" will be more of a mystery to him still.

It is a pleasure to know that Miss. Powell was not a prodigy. The great Joachim said so, and he is not to be gainsaid. A prodigy, it seems, is something abnormal, genius in the form of an ex-crescence, and it is very possible when it appears that nothing solid, substantial, and lasting will result from it. So, as you walk him approved of the young woman's work, it was a compliment that he did not consider her a prodigy. Some people might.

The English people did, when, after studying and Leipsic, and under Dancla in Paris, she made a concert tour there and members of the nobility and royalty were very kind to her. That to her was a part of her musical education. It was to give her the almost indefinable something which playing before audiences wouldn't give. She had been well prepared for it by Dancla, for under him she had been taught not only to play, but how to hold her hands, her feet, and her body when she played. It was all most important, he believed.

"Are you a conspirator," he asked, "that you always look down?" And after that she kept her eyes in a more natural position. And he taught her to care for her violin. If there was a bit of resin on it, he remarked about it, and if there was dust on it, he wrote her name in the dust.

"But he never did that for me but once," cries Miss. Powell, in telling about it.

Then Joachim comes into the story, and the Guarnerius period arrives. It was in London that he met Miss Powell and advised her going to Berlin, and, of course, she went. Joachim's word is law, and to have instruction from him means something. His opinion of her talent did not decrease with acquaintance, and he selected the Guarnerius for her. And with that "fiddle," after she had completed her studies, she came home to make her debut at one of the Philharmonic concerts in New York. She was only seventeen then, and she made an immediate success. And she calls herself an American player out and out. She does not even say that she received her education abroad.

"And I have never had anything to complain of in American audiences," she goes on, "they have always been very kind to me. But an audience here is quite different from an audience abroad. Take a Vienna audience. When I played there they stood upon their chairs and applauded; they came down to the front and gathered around me; they kissed my hands and my skirt, and I was glad to get back to my hotel to escape them.

"An American audience cannot give way. Perhaps they are not sure of themselves though that may not be true of the musical audience. But there is a certain Puritanism about Americans; they cannot give way and allow their feelings schools and. It is the same with the player. One of the first things an American musician has to learn is to let himself go, to throw himself out. It is that certain Puritanism. And there is something in the climate, too. Foreigners speak of it. When I came home after my trip abroad with the Arion Society I felt the difference immediately. I played the same music and I was surrounded by the same old friends, but I could not play."

There is one period in Miss Powell's career that she does not think of with pleasure. She wanted something larger towns, and she bought a new "fiddle," a Duiffoprugcar. Then she began and acquaintance with it and she wept.

"The space of time during which 'my new violin' becomes 'my dear old fiddle' may or may not be agreeable. There are the new colors to be learned and the new possibilities to be discovered. It is exactly the same process through which one would pass in developing and your acquaintance into a dear friend. If there are great hopes, and then no sympathy, no responsiveness, no new and tender chords struck, the process is a torture and the result distress. So it was with the new violin. It had larger tones, but nothing else. It would not respond; it was cold and heartless. Any woman would have wept. But there was a reason for it all. The new violin was a base pretender; it never could become a dear old fiddle; it was not a Duiffoprugcar, but an ordinary $40 violin." But that period is past and the Amati period is on.

All this is the fun of violin playing, the part that shows. It is all a pleasure, for that matter, but the practicing looks like hard work to an outsider. Even now, during the summer, Miss

Powell practices from three to three and a half hours a day, and abroad she practiced more than that.

"The first ten or twelve years of one's work one ought to practice very regularly," she says. "It is much more valuable than spasmodic work. For five or six years I used to practice six or eight hours a day. I have practiced from seven to nine hours at a time. Usually I practice with intermissions, though I have practiced for two and a half hours in perfect self-forgetfulness, walking up and down the room."

"And I say sometimes 'can't you sit still for a little while?' But she is up again in a moment," Mrs. Powell says.

"Yes it is hard not to do it on the stage," Miss Powell goes on. "The tendency is to walk about. There is a great strain in playing. There is the physical effort in standing and holding the arms raised, and then the position of the fiddle held up against the knack under the year, vibrating against the vocal chords. Sometimes I get entirely out of breath."

But the practicing is not done on the present "dear old fiddle." A good violin that is overworked comes as near having nervous prostration as is possible for an inanimate thing. It is tired all over and in every part; it loses all its energy of tone and expression and becomes useless for good work. And it would never do to practice on a second-rate or poor instrument. The ear would lose its power of detecting delicate shades of color and the hand its power of bringing them into being.

"It is not well for the beginner to use a poor instrument," Miss Powell says. "But he need not use the best. It would be brutal to put a very fine instrument into the hands of a novice who did not know how to use or care for it. There is a certain way of using the fingers and bow; it must not have too much heat, and the strings must be kept in good condition and must be kept clean. A violin is sensitive, and if one part is not in good condition all will suffer from sympathy."

And while Miss Powell has her fiddle and the pleasure it brings, there are a great many other things that she does not have. She doesn't have a bicycle, because she would not dare to ride one for fear of some accident such as happened to Josef Hoffmann the other day, when he had of fall, injuring his hand, and was unable to play for a time. She loves boating, and she dare not row; she loves skating, and she dare not skate. She never sews, and nothing would induce her to hold a book in her left hand on the day in which she is going to play. But she does swim and, oh, she dances!

"It is such a natural thing to do," she says. "I can't understand why everyone who plays does not dance. Why, if you have a desire to express rhythm with your hands, shouldn't you have the same desire to express it with your feet? But dancing in America is not everything that it might be. There is too much of the decided 'tum, tum, tum' to it. In Vienna it is an art."

This is something of the story of Miss Powell and her fiddle. There is a good moral in it

for people who have musical aspirations without talent or a love of hard work.

It is interesting to hear of Miss Powell just now, for she is soon to go abroad, where she will probably remain for a couple of years, and when she returns she may be received with even more esteem than now, if that is possible.

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

Musical Standard **(England)**
November 9, 1901

INTERVIEW WITH MISS MAUD POWELL
by C. Fred Kenyon

Interviews generally take a long time. I had only fifteen minutes. The time was 4 p.m., and the place Manchester. My train to Derbyshire went at 4.20 , so when Miss Powell met me at the foot of the stairs of the Queen's Hotel there was really no time to be polite. Besides, she didn't expect it.

"I know you're in a hurry," she said, "so don't bother to talk about the weather. Come to the corner here – there's everything you want: pen, ink and paper. You don't take notes? What a relief! You don't know the hot feeling that comes over me when a man plumps himself down in the chair, pulls out a notebook and pencil, and asks you when you were born. It's the most dreadful thing in the world that can possibly happen to anyone. But interviewers are privileged beings. They are allowed to say anything, and we, their poor unprotected victims, have to submit with a smile."

"Ah, you'll find me quite an accomplished person as far as interviewing goes," I replied. "The great thing to do is to keep on talking at all costs. Once stop, and you're completely lost. The interviewer and his victims stare at each with lack-lustre eyes, both feeling and looking horribly stupid, until the hard-worked journalist blurts out some absurd remark about the pretty furniture or the South African War. That's what I used to do when I began this kind of work; but I've learned wisdom since then. I talk on and on until I'm interrupted. Any kind of nonsense will do. I never ask questions; I leave that to my victim. I make him the interviewer. He doesn't like it, of course, and it's hardly fair, but then what is one to do? The stereotype interview is the most hopeless thing in the world. In fact, I might say – –."

"May I remind you that we've only ten minutes left, and if we are to speak of music perhaps we'd better began. I'm immensely interested in your methods of interviewing, of course" (here I collapsed completely, for Miss Powell has a fine gift of expressing the highest degree of sarcasm with her eyebrows), "but after all, don't you know, I don't think the *Musical Standard* people care very much about it."

"You're quite right," I answered. "It's my great weakness – the habit of talking of myself. What I should like to hear from you is some account of the struggles which a young artist has to face in attempting to gain a footing. As you know, there are dozens of colleges turning out more or less competent young men and women by the hundred, and each of these youngsters imagines that he or she is going to take the world by storm. He has only to sit down and the letters and telegrams will come of their own accord."

"Yes – I myself should like to say something on that point; it's a matter I feel very strongly about. The certainty of achieving Fame which most musical students possess is not only pitiable, it is pitiful. When I see a young girl striding along with a violin case in one hand and a roll of music in the other, my heart aches for the sorrow and disappointment she will have to go through. Concert playing is no career for anyone unless he have powers absolutely above the average. And even then it is one of the most disheartening professions a girl can possibly enter. A man like Kubelik can get as many engagements as he wants, but Kubelik is a technical giant, and I am not speaking of giants. I am speaking about the ordinary run of violinists, pianists and vocalists of whom there are scores. An artist has to *seek* engagements; they rarely come to him. He has to obtain letters of introduction to managers, he has to introduce himself sometimes, and if he gets terribly snubbed, well, it's all in the day's work, and he has to put up with it. People say 'there's always room at the top.' So there is, but how many people get there? Not one out of every five hundred. A man or woman may become fashionable, but who understands fashion and who is able to fathom its strange eccentricities? I know very well that it is extremely unpopular for a successful artist to talk in this way; he is generally accused of being anxious to avoid future competition by discouraging young aspirants; but, believe me, I speak right from my heart when I give Punch's advice to those about to marry – 'Don't!' It doesn't pay; and not only that, it is the most heartrending profession in the world. Take my own case, for instance. I am no longer in the first flush of youth – in fact I've been before the public a fair number of years, but *I haven't saved a cent!* I simply can't. Artists are supposed to dress well both on and off the concert platform; they are supposed to stay at the best hotels when traveling; and they are supposed to keep up appearances in the thousand and one little ways which I needn't bother to explain. Added to all this, an artist is really only a child – he doesn't understand the value of money because he receives it in fairly large sums after half-an-hour's work, and he spends it as quickly as he gets it. Not one artist out of twenty is a good businessman; it isn't natural that he should be. The artistic temperament is all against it. The artist's life is a hand-to-mouth existence; anything between 200 pounds and 20,000 pounds a year may be made from it, but the prizes are few and far between. And of late years another difficulty has sprung up. It is not only extremely hard to obtain engagements, but at certain concerts one is expected to pay for one's appearance, and (*mirabile dictu!*) there are actually a large number of men and women who are willing to do this. The ambitious sons of wealthy bankers gain an entrance to certain concerts merely by the length of their purse. Of talent they have little, of money they have a great deal – so that is how the trick is done. They put a premium on mediocrity, and concert managers begin to expect really able artists to sacrifice sums of money just for the sake of appearing once or twice at their concerts. I am glad to say I have never paid a cent for any one of my appearances; I would rather starve the then encourage a system which is ruining the prospects of so many talented men and women."

Here Miss Powell would have sighed if she had been that kind of person; but instead of sighing she spoke in a high passionate voice, and it looked as if she would like to emphasize her remarks by vigorous thumps on the table with her fist. She is a woman who feels intensely; you can see it in her face. She has suffered because she has not been afraid of the world. She has fought it and conquered it… . We both looked at the clock simultaneously; there were three minutes left.

"Quick!" I exclaimed. "Let me have something of English music. What do you think of Elgar?"

"Oh – Elgar is the English Richard Strauss – the greatest composer we have, or, at all events, the man who will eventually become the greatest composer. He is the musician in whom I am most interested here in England. He has something much more than talent; 'genius' is not too big a word. And Richard Strauss is the greatest musician alive. He has wonderful technique, tremendous depth of thought, and a soul that is neither afraid nor ashamed to feel. At least, that is how he appears to me, don't you know."

The interview was over; my time was finished.

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

The New York Daily News
Saturday, January 16, 1904

MAUD POWELL ON HER ART AND HER VIOLIN
Chat With an American Girl Who Has Won Fame

"Isn't this a disagreeable, sloppy-underfoot sort of day?" asked Miss Maud Powell, the wholesome and delightful American girl, who has just played so artistically for us on her new violin.

"Do you see my little gas radiator with the basin on top? The former keeps me warm and the latter keeps the air moist and breathable. So forget how they look and just draw up your chair. I know you will soon be comfy.

"But, you see, I have something to think of aside from my own comfort. I have the well-being of that precious new fiddle of mine to take into consideration. Don't you want to see it?" she asked, her face glowing, as she went over to the table, and approaching the black box in the spirit of a mother bending over the cradle of her first-born, drew forth the fine, old violin which she recently acquired through dint of much saving.

"Steam heat is vile for a fiddle," she cried, stroking the rich old wood. "I had a great terror in Washington the other night. My pet had been subjected to the villainous influence of steam heat, and when I was introducing it to its first American audience in the Columbia Theater the sound was inadequate. Something was queer, and I had a fit of despair; I was afraid it had been a mistake to decide so hastily. That hasty decision is 'another story,' and I will tell it in a moment.

"Well, I was in a cold perspiration of fear for a few moments, but soon the [illegible] old thing began to melt, and then [illegible] settled with itself, and then – [illegible] sighed rapturously, "well, it was simply heavenly – that's all. So I felt reassured [illegible] had [illegible] in pushing me on to the purchase of it.

She Loves Her Violin

"You love it, don't you? Is it partly because she sacrificed a few gowns to own it?"

"Perhaps, anyway, I did. All my earnings of many months went for that one fiddle. I was on the lookout for one, and had had my gowns made for my American tour," she added, laughing. "You know one must wear one's stunningest in New York, and it isn't in me to save money. I am extravagant, and money simply slips away from me.

"Well, I had gotten together a wardrobe, and somehow had managed to save quite a bit of money, and had more over here in America; so the time seemed ripe. But, for all that at the last the decision was made so suddenly, I had to make a terrible run for my money, to speak racily.

"One day a friend and I went to Hill's famous place in Bond street, London. I was taken into the back part of the shop, where are kept rare old fiddles. The place is full of a mystery that is deliciously romantic, and I reveled in dreams and delight galore.

"After trying a great many violins I picked up a Guarnerius and drew the bow across the strings. Directly I had done so I thought thoughts and experienced presentiments. Oh, that fiddle!" Miss Powell cried.

"Well, I arranged to take it to my hotel and as I stepped into the cab remarked 'that's the fiddle I'm going to buy.' 'All right,' my friend replied, 'but don't decide hastily.'

"I preserved a discreet silence, but wasn't I full of excitement, though!

"After dinner, upon returning to my room, I took the violin out of the box and again drew the bow across the strings.

"'That's mine!' I cried, and mine it was, very soon.

"That was Friday. The following Tuesday, by dint of much skirmishing, carried on in the meantime – by cablegrams, borrowings and several other sorts of hustle, I found myself the possessor of the coveted $5000 fiddle but it took a lot of energy to secure it. You see, by paying cash it became a bit more accessible as to price, so it paid to hustle."

"If it is as fine as it looks one cannot wonder at your ardor."

A Regular Treasure

"As fine! It is superb. And you see the wood. Isn't it a rich color? But the tone – oh, the tone of it! And do you know there is something of especial interest in it to one who has toiled hard to play the fiddle well. This identical violin belonged to [Joseph] Mayseder, whose exercises are practiced by every ambitious fiddler. He owned this instrument for years, and do you see that little worn place in the wood? Somehow his little finger must have had a trick of slipping off the board very hard, and the little dent is the result. I wonder why he did that!" Miss Powell added, reflectively."I don't do that trick."

"He didn't play as well as our Miss Powell does," was the enthusiastic reply.

"No, it isn't that, for he played beautifully," the artist replied, smiling. "But is it not interesting to think that the old master played on this very fiddle for years?"

"Miss Powell, at last they have ceased to speak of you as the greatest woman violinist,

and place you where you belong, as one of the few living really great artists regardless of sex. Did you not resent the reference to sex?"

"At first," she replied, smiling. "Later I began to regard it as something in the nature of a compliment. The thing evens itself out pretty well. When I hear the playing of the greatest men violinists, I miss something – a nervous vitality – a subtle lack, hard to define, but still inevitably present for me. So if, on the other hand, the men miss something in my playing, how can I complain? It is only fair all around.

"But my work was too masculine without having fine distinction at one time. It was getting too hard, too scintillant, too purely virile without possessing the leavening [illegible] of tenderness and sympathy. Do you know who brought me to a [realizing? illegible] sense of this? Mr. Hunecker."

What a "Roast" Did

"He roasted me, and kept on roasting me, in the papers, you know, until I learned to be a better critic of myself. He praised me for much of my work, but blamed me for that lack; called my playing mannish, without the proper proportions of the feminine.

"You see, I had high and mighty ideas, but very honest ones, when I began," Miss Powell said, laughingly. "I wanted to be a great fiddler I was the first American women violinist after Camilla Urso to win really universal notice, and had the especial fight which comes of being a woman.

"It was my dream to find my pedestal, firmly plant my artistic feet upon it, and hold myself erect and aspiring. It was later that I found nothing would satisfy me, unless I could feel I had a message to give, and a mission to fulfill. I wanted to play for some purpose, and to some good effect. The altruistic crept in and colored my ambitions, making them ethically, as well as personally aspiring."

"That's fine! It is good to hear it from one's own countrywoman."

"Well, I'm right glad I am an American," said Miss Powell. Then she laughed and added, "which reminds me of an interview with me by a Western reporter. 'Are you an American?' he asked. 'Indeed I am!' I replied, and added, very carefully, if mischievously, and with much refined apology in the soft tone of voice I assumed, 'I should like to say, "you just bet I am!"" Now, what do you suppose confronted my eyes the next morning? 'You Bet I Am' in great head line letters above an interview with Miss Maud Powell.

"Since that time I've tried to be careful, for that sort of thing looks sensational, you know.

"But," she continued, "when in London some American friends of mine and I use slang shockingly; twice as much as we would think of doing at home – just to shock the Britishers; they are so dreadfully proper. It's great fun, sometimes.

"The social life there impresses me as being very different from ours. Court etiquette demands so much, and being in a country with a king may mean, for the republican, the making of many breaks, especially to a republican from the States. Such funny situations are the result. One has to 'watch others hard,' and 'follow suit' diligently," she laughed.

"Did you enjoy playing for the king?"

Playing for Royalty

"Vastly. Before I had finished the first selection, his Majesty began to applaud, and, of course, the court followed suit at once. It was very exciting and delightful."

Right here Miss Powell's secretary [probably H. Godfrey Turner, her fiancé] broke into the conversation.

"Yes, and a few nights later there was a pasteboard imitation of it all. Miss Powell was to play for the king's representatives in Dublin and when the company assembled in the vice regency lodge, Miss Powell and her friends were treated to an act from a ridiculous comedy.

"One and all, men with their gold braid and stars and elegant bearings; women with their fair Irish faces and evening silks and satins, appeared visibly under the burden of too much wine at dinner."

Miss Powell held up a warning finger, but not before the laugh had become general at the thought of the absurd picture.

"They couldn't find their places, and got so mixed up," the secretary couldn't resist adding, as he laughed in glee at the memory.

Miss Powell laughed, too, but changed the subject as her guest rose to leave.

"See these compositions lying around," she said. "It throws a performer into a slough of despond to receive them, for one wants to encourage young talent, but cannot play everything that is sent accompanied by a pleading note."

Then in response to a hint:

"Oh, you want some pictures? Do you like these? Here is one taken with Mary Carmichael, the London song writer, who is one of the sweetest old ladies in the world. Everyone loves her, and whenever a young person approaches her, he or she bursts out with those lines from the little Scotch song about the 'Four Mary's.'

"'Twas Mary Beaton, and Mary Beaton,
And Mary Carmichael, and me.'

“In this picture I am sitting on the arm of the chair. Do you think that looks queer?”

Upon being assured quite to the contrary, Miss Powell added:

“Let your last look be for the fiddle, and pray that the steam heat in Carnegie Hall may not get in its deadly work. Poor Mr. Wood’s face was just streaming with perspiration at the rehearsal today. But the fiddle acted gloriously. It’s a dream! You will love it!” she called as the door closed.

She is very right. It is a “dream,” and we all did love it.

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

Springfield Union (Massachusetts)
May 19, 1904

MAY MUSIC FESTIVAL OPENS SUCCESSFULLY

Miss Powell The Star Of Afternoon Concert

Great interest was aroused by the appearance of Miss Maud Powell, who played the St.-Saëns concerto of this afternoon's program.

"It was a surprise party to me," said the violinist after leaving the stage. "I had no idea that the rehearsal was to be public, and behold me in a short skirt, a waist I felt to be so soiled that it would do nicely for traveling, etc.

"Why, this is a regular concert!" added the artist, laughing. "I feel as though I were making two appearances instead of one. Never before have I played in a public rehearsal. And I think I don't quite like it, to be perfectly frank," she said, folding her silk and cashmere blanket around her fiddle as carefully and tenderly as if that instrument were a baby.

"I have to be careful of it and even keep it out of the draughts," laughed Miss Powell. "It came from Old Bond street, London, and cost me a year's . . . ." [the remainder of the article is missing]

The Cape Town Argus
Cape Town, South Africa
Saturday, June 3, 1905

Stage and Show

INTERVIEW WITH MISS POWELL

Among the gifts that Miss Maud Powell has inherited from her racially mixed ancestry – she is English – Welsh on the paternal side and German – Hungarian on the maternal – capacity for depth of thought is one and humour is another.

So a representative discovered who called yesterday at the Mount Nelson Hotel, luckily for him at the moment when Miss Powell was about to go over some of the pieces on the programme for that evening.

So ravishing was her playing that the Pressman had difficulty in collecting his thoughts when, between musical silences, Miss Powell kindly submitted to questioning.

One of the incidents that occurred to her during the course of her career was the following:

Puzzled

"Somebody told me about an old lady about ninety years of age, decrepit and bedridden, living in a village where I often used to spend my summers. Wishing to do something to give the poor old lady some pleasure, I thought I would go and play for her in her room. I played for her for a long time, played with my whole soul in the music, played as, perhaps, I do not always play in public.

The old lady listened in absolute silence, till finally she turned to a neighbor who was in the room, and through her toothless gums, the while her frame shook with palsy, she breathed the inquiry in querulous, uncomprehending tones: 'What is all this for?' I left very soon after!"

Birthdays and Bombs

Miss Powell has played in all the great cities of the United States and in most of the important countries of Europe. In St. Petersburg she played before the Tsar, under very curious circumstances. It was at the principal theatre there, and on the Tsar's birthday. The officials had given instructions that the concert must commence with the Russian national anthem, and must end with it, and if the least enthusiasm was shown by the audience at its playing, the anthem was

to be repeated even unto the third and fourth time. The officials in the theatre all turned towards the royal box and saluted while this was being done, which box was veiled by a curtain. The Tsar was supposed at the time to be out of town. But an official later on told Miss Powell his Majesty had really been in the box listening to the concert, the reason for all this mystery, she concluded, having some connection with the fear of assassination.

Miss Powell is delighted with Cape Town and with the climate. Cape Town, by the way, is delighted with the weather that she has brought along with her. It reminded her, she said, very much of the American climate. The appreciation evidenced by the audience on the opening night was eminently grateful to her, and she accepted it as a good omen.

Audiences and Moods

Ms. Powell had much of interest to say with regard to audiences, to their moods, to the moods of artistes, and so on.

One could often tell, she said, the moment one went on the stage, whether the audience was "sympathetic" in the literal sense of the term, and whether or no one was going to take their fancy by storm right away. Sometimes again an artist will play in a manner that disgusts himself, and yet the audience will be delighted.

It is obvious that the whole question is complicated by the fact that the mood both of the artist and of the audience has to be taken into consideration, and that as regards both these moods, such other considerations as atmospheric conditions and so on, must be reckoned on.

Crowded audiences are always the most enthusiastic, owing to the inspiring of the whole with the feeling of magnetism, or whatever may be the correct term, flowing over and to whose stream each individual has contributed his share.

What in His Soul?

After playing magnificently Dvorak's "Humoreske," in which the slightest touches of playfulness served but to throw into greater relief the heart – searching despair of the rest, particularly of the double-stopped passages, typical of the Slav – it breathes in the Russian national anthem even – Miss Powell remarked, "What could have been in the soul of that man to write such music? What was there struggling to find expression? This son of a butcher – an ugly, squat face – course-looking – to write such music as that!"

It was evident from the exquisite interpretation she gave the piece as well as from the moved manner in which she said this, that Miss Powell feels deeply the beauty of beautiful music.

Debut and Panic

She was born in the State of Illinois, and began to learn the violin at the age of seven. Two years later she made an unconventional debut. She had been taken to a picnic, and a string band had been provided for the dancing. After listening for a while to the music, she went up to one of the violinists and murmured bashfully, "if you will lend me your violin, I will play a piece."

He looked shocked, for in those parts it was hardly considered proper for girls to play that instrument. He evidently thought that this was to be a first attempt.

"No, really, I can play," she assured him, and the instrument was handed over.

"I played Dancla's Seventh Air, with what I thought was the marvelous pizzicato with the left hand. All the people came crowding round, and when I stopped and they began applauding a sudden fear came over me at my temerity, and I ran away and was found later on far away in the wood paddling. I can still remember the intense feeling of fear that overwhelmed me when I saw a crowd and heard the applause."

Technique and Determination

Miss Powell has toured the States with her own string quartette. The main details of her wonderfully successful artistic career have already appeared in these columns. To those details may be added the fact that [illegible] Miss Powell exhibits in private [illegible] course a charming personality.

To her evident strength of character may be ascribed that wonderful technique of hers, for, however gifted by nature as regards natural facility in that direction, only great determination could enable any artist to go through the drudgery necessary before such astonishing powers were attainable, as she exhibits.

Miss Powell related the following amusing anecdote. Some man had sent her for approval a violin which he described as a Strad of the rarest order.

A Slight Misunderstanding

Without taking it out of the case she saw the kind of thing it was – one of those German atrocities turned out by the million, not a violin at all, but a fiddle, worth a dollar or two. The thing was packed in a rather large case of deal wood, and Miss Powell had it sent back by the "express boy." After a few days the man wrote to say that his valuable Strad had not been received, "as per your letter."

Miss Powell went down herself to make inquiries at the express office. She inquired for that deal box without avail. Search was made high and low, but no box. At last the manager came towards her with the thing in his arms, and assuming an attitude of deference and in tones almost breaking with sympathy, he murmured, “We had it on ice, madam!”

Needless to say what he thought it was!

Here ended the interview with a wonderful violinist whom all musical Cape Town desire to hear again before she leaves these sunny shores, with which and with whose audiences, she expresses herself delighted.

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

The New Age
Johannesburg, South Africa
July 1905

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

Miss Maud Powell, who, by her wonderful violin playing, has recently filled Johannesburg audiences with admiration, was kind enough to grant me an interview the other day, in the course of which I obtained some very interesting particulars of her career, a career that has been watched with interest by devotees of the art, and with the greatest possible enthusiasm by Miss Powell's countrymen and countrywomen – for Americans are as patriotic in the matter of art as in all else.

Born in Aurora, Illinois, Miss Powell began to learn the piano at the age of seven, and a year later turned to the violin. "Every girl I knew," Miss Powell remarked, "seemed to be learning the piano, and I thought I would like to be different from them." It was in her native town that the first steps were taken that were destined to lead to the future, which is now the brilliant present. Journeying to Chicago, Miss Powell used to trudge alone from her home to her master, Mr. William Lewis, "with her fiddle box in one hand and a roll of music in the other." It is to Mr. Lewis that the subject of this sketch attributes that virility – almost to be described as energy – of style which is today a feature of her method. "He was," she added, "a sort of genius – he played because he couldn't help himself." Side-by-side with this infectious spirit was one of severe classicism, imbued by Miss Powell's piano mistress, though the contrast between the two was a matter not for immediate, but for the notice of a mature mind. Traveling to Leipzig, Miss Powell went right into the first classes of the Conservatoire, where she was regarded as the representative violinist of America. A big success at the Gewandhaus, and then to Paris, where, at the Conservatoire, she was adjudged the best of the eighty applicants.

"But I did not quite like the training there," said Miss Powell. "I had no chance of playing chamber music, for instance, and I would gladly have exchanged my four violin lessons a week for two violin and a piano and harmony classes. I did not seem to come into touch with the sort of music that has a broadening effect. Then it was suggested that I should go to London and get some public experience, though I was still in short skirts, and had my hair down. I played before the then Princess Louise and the Duke of Edinburgh in London, and in the provinces. I was introduced to Dr. Joachim, who told me I must immediately go over to Berlin. I played before the begowned and bespectacled committee, and entered the doctor's class without the usual preliminary studying with a sub-professor. At the end of the year I went home."

Miss Powell made her debut in New York with the excellent Philharmonic Society's orchestra, of which the conductor was Theodore Thomas , "whom I always look upon as my musical godfather," she adds. Her playing of Bruch's G Minor Concerto created a furore, and it may be remarked that this concerto owes its popularity, in a large degree, to Miss Powell, whose

interpretation is singularly fresh and vivid. Engagements with all the principal Philharmonic Societies followed, during which time the gifted violinist started a quartette. “I adore quartette playing,” she said. “It is the only thing in which a violinist can find real satisfaction. Look at the solo literature! And the concerto is a queer sort of thing after all.” In 1892 Miss Powell toured Germany, Austria, and other countries, and she recalls with delight her experiences with the Maenner Gesang Verein Arion. “It was a sort of triumphal tour. I will never forget the trip down the Rhine, with all the salutations and decorations. At Cologne there was an immense crowd, but from what I heard I gather that the people expected to see and hear Negro artists from America!” Then came the World’s Fair, at Chicago, at which Miss Powell represented America, and in addition to playing read a paper. Other tours followed, alike only in one feature, and that the tremendous success she achieved in Russia, Denmark, Bohemia, Belgium, Holland, Poland, and France.

Very interesting experiences fell to the lot of Miss Powell, especially in Russia. On one occasion, when it was announced that the Czar had left town, the playing of the National Anthem was invested with great secrecy and importance, those in the hall facing the Royal box, of which the curtains were drawn. It transpired later that the Czar had been within his box the whole time, but the fact had to be suppressed.

Miss Powell was vastly impressed and moved by the terrible contrast of immense wealth and absolutely degrading poverty which is to be seen in Russia. She quotes as an instance of this the scene in St. Isaac’s Cathedral, St. Petersburg, where the pictures are set in gold frames ornamented with jewels, the priests clad in bejeweled vestments, while the poorer worshipers are indescribably ragged, covered with vermin, and unalterably wretched.

Now for one word of comment on Miss Powell, if such be permitted. In the first place it may be asked, “Where does she stand in comparison with other great violinists?” At the risk of falling into the evils of comparison, which are doubly odious in art, I would say that she has more positive genius than any woman player in the world, and as much as any man, if not more. She has more introspective and interpretative power than either Kubelik, Kocian, or Kreisler and to my mind more grasp of the meaning of music than Lady Hallé. Again – I write this not so much from South African experience as from having heard Miss Powell in the concertos of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Tschaikowsky, and Bruch – she has the philosophy of Joachim, and, if the expression be allowed in reference to Tschaikowsky, the genial humor of Brodsky. On the question of technique I need say nothing. It is with Miss Powell as with every artist who is really great, only a part in a homogenous whole; and the greater part is the spiritual and emotional potentiality – a quality which Miss Powell possesses in a truly astounding degree. There is as much mentality in her playing as there is technical virtuosity. Miss Powell is a broad-minded artist who knows and admires other manifestations of art than that in which she is pre-eminent. Chatting with her on these other matters, I gathered the impression that while a worshiper of the classics, she still pays homage to Strauss, to Elgar (whom she regards as the master of instrumentation he undoubtedly is), Tschaikowsky, Dvořák, and, to a certain extent, Saint-Saëns.

Mr. Benno Scherek has under his guidance undoubtedly one of the best organizations that have visited South Africa. Quite apart from its brilliant central figure, Miss Mukle, for instance –

the praise is perfectly discriminate – is one of the finest cellists I have heard. Her technique is perfect, quite abnormal, in fact, either for a man or a woman; but as I said in regard to Miss Maud Powell, this is not the sole stock-in-trade of the artist, and Miss Mukle possesses the other quality which justifies the assertion that she, too, is a consummate artist. Especially is she in sympathy with the modern school, and her playing of such things as the solos of Popper, Dankler, and the rest is delightful. I do not mean to imply that Miss Mukle could not interpret the older masters. On the other hand I should think she would do so well; but her tendency is towards the romantic in music. The library of the cellist – with the exception of a few and interesting concertos – is limited to thankless solos and undesirable *pot-pourris.* Miss Mukle will in the future, unless I am much mistaken, much increase the reputation she has already won for herself. Her thoughtful and expressive face suggests determination as well as that appreciation of the beautiful which makes her playing a real delight.

Then there is Miss Helena Brain, who, choosing the uncommon trumpet as her instrument, has done exceedingly well. Her playing, indeed, does away with the idea that a lady can never excel as a wind instrument player, and her really artistic solos have been characterized by good tone and excellent phrasing. Miss Visser, the soprano, Mr. Creighton, the baritone, and Mr. Nicol, the tenor, have all shared the favor with which the company has been received, and Mr. Shereck, of whom I hope to write at length one of these days, has been an orchestra all by himself. He is a wonderful accompanist and a fine artist, truths which I will elaborate in due time.

The Musical Courier
October 18, 1905

MAUD POWELL'S SOUTH AFRICAN TOUR

After a triumphal tour in South Africa, Maud Powell, the American violinist, returned to her native land last week, greatly rejoicing to be home again, her cup of happiness brimming over through her success in the Diamond country.

Other musicians have made satisfactory appearances in South Africa, but it is doubtful if anyone—particularly an American woman—has so agreeably surprised and pleased the Boer and British inhabitants as did Miss Powell with her genius as a violinist. She received ovations and praise from audiences and critics wherever she played, and was given re-engagements in all the large towns. This made her tour twice as long as originally planned.

"South Africa, taken as a whole, is a splendid country, very much in the rough, of course, as to dwellings and city improvements, but settled throughout with a most hospitable, wholesouled and music loving population of Boers and Britons...and, although I gave forty-two concerts, my whole trip was made so restful that I feel in the best of health and spirits for my coming tour of my own country and Canada.

"Traveling throughout the country is not very comfortable, partly on account of the ravages made in the traffic facilities by the war. However, the railroad officials made it as easy as possible for me by the granting of a private car, which I was informed was an unusual privilege in that country.

"The railway, by the way, is of the primitive, narrow gauge sort, built on the stage coach principle. When you come to a hill it just climbs up and down, as tunnels or cuttings are undreamed of. There are no trestles or bridgework for the small streams, so the longest way 'round them is the shortest way across.

"At my concerts the Boers showed much enthusiasm and afterwards seemed to vie with each other in offering hospitalities. In all the large towns the Mayors seem to represent the people socially as well as politically, and everywhere they seemed eager to show their country and extend courtesies to me and my party.

"In Natal, where the scenery is wonderfully beautiful, we were taken on a 30 mile drive in a government mule wagon, to see Howick Falls, which are 364

feet high, and drop with a terrific roar. My snapshot of the falls illustrates their size in July—the South African winter time—when it is the dry season. At other seasons, I was told, it is a much bigger waterfall. At Kimberley we were conducted in great state through the De Beers diamond mines and through the 'Ferruna Deep' gold mines, at Johannesburg. In the former the laborers, convicts for the most part, picked the diamonds out of the running sluice every other minute. It was a tempting spectacle.

"I hugely enjoyed Pietermaritzburg, which is by far the prettiest town in South Africa, and contains some magnificent public buildings. I also like Durban, which, though a more pretentious town, is not so distinctive in progressive characteristics, as it is largely a winter resort only.

"A quaint custom in both Pietermaritzburg and Durban is the use of those jolly little 'rickshas. It was a novel sensation to me to step into a 'ricksha in my evening dress, valuable fiddle in hand, and to be trotted off to the concert. This sort of conveyance seemed rather romantic and delightful on those wonderful starlit nights I spent under the Southern Cross.

"The townspeople of Ladysmith were more than cordial in their reception of me. All around were evidences of the terrors of war, in the demolition of portions of some of the fine buildings. Even the Town Hall did not go unscathed, its pretty little clock tower having been partly destroyed by a Boer shell. But the citizens don't dwell much on that topic, and it was only called to my attention when in my appreciation of their putting a billboard on the Town Hall announcing my concert, I had remarked, 'Just fancy any other country advertising my appearance on its Town Hall!' It was a generous compliment. At Ladysmith we also visited the surrounding battlefields, which gave us more of an idea what hardships the Ladysmith settlers had to undergo during the war."

"What did you bring back in the way of souvenirs, Miss Powell?" queried the interviewer.

"Well, in addition to more than 200 photographs, I secured a specimen of a Kaffir piano, which must be seen to be appreciated, as it beggars description.

"A memorable day of sight seeing on the way was a visit to St. Helena, where we entered Longwood House, where Napoleon lived."

Musical America
December 14, 1907

MAUD POWELL CHAMPIONS THE WEST'S TASTE FOR MUSIC

Eminent American Violinist Declares That Programs of the Highest Standard Are Invariably Demanded and Appreciated.

Three or four years ago, when Maud Powell, as soloist of a New York Philharmonic Orchestra concert conducted by Henry Wood, played the thirty-fifth of old Fiorillo's famous etudes as an encore, a New York reviewer quaintly remarked, "And then she came out and played a duet with herself," adding "and it made Henry Wood stand up and take notice."

Three or four weeks ago when, away across the continent, down in Southern California, in the picturesque city that someone has christened "Port Orient," this little classic gem was again transfigured under her bow, a Lomaland writer said:

"Maud Powell played it—and how we sat and listened! And back of the smile upon her lips, as she looked up at the boxes at the close, was a merry smile in the eye which said plainly, "Sh-h! This is our secret!'"

No one who has come under the sway of the temperamental vitality and magnetism of this eminent American artist can believe her capable of anything but the most ardent and at the same time wholesome enthusiasm for whatever appeals to her as worth championing. Consequently, when, after playing in practically all other parts of the world she is brought face to face for the first time with the possibilities of the musical development of the great West and the opportunities it offers for pioneer work, it is not surprising that the fire of optimistic patriotism is stimulated in her to an extent that is bound to make itself felt. And she was radiating with inspiring enthusiasm when on her return to New York the other day from her long tour, she told me of many of her happiest experiences. All sorts of interesting incidents marked the tour, which opened in Helena, Mont., and proceeded to Seattle and Portland, down the Pacific Coast to San Diego, and took a long railway jump of four nights and three days from there to Denver.

"I have come back a better American than I was before," began Miss Powell, who seemed to have brought with her the breeziness of the West. "In the first place, the pioneer instinct in me is very strong, as my father was a pioneer in educational work, and my grandfather conspicuous in the opening up of the West. Then the spontaneous enthusiasm of the people out there is delightful. They absolutely refuse to accept Eastern verdicts without testing them for themselves. In their attitude towards music, as in everything else, they have the courage to be themselves. They are fresh, wholesome, receptive, responsive; they insist upon thinking independently at all

costs, and they want only the best. Unfortunately they have been deceived a good deal by managers who have taken out artists of the second and third rank — or perhaps a little *passé* — and advertised them as stars of the first magnitude, charging high fees for them. And these people arrange their programs on the theory that they must cater to a taste that is not capable of appreciating what the Easterners demand. It is a great mistake, and the Westerners have been disappointed so often in the extravagant claims made by managers that they are now strictly on their guard when new attractions are announced.

"Here is an indication of their progressiveness musically. In Colorado Springs, which is not a very large place, they have a very energetic Women's Musical Club, and when I was there I visited the ex-president. She casually mentioned that she was studying some of Vincent d'Indy's songs, and when the present president called I found she was working up songs by Debussy and Réger for one of their meetings.

"Throughout my trip I played the same programs I do in the East. For instance, I would open with Grieg's Sonata in G major, op. 13, for violin and piano, follow it with Vieuxtemps's Concerto, op. 31, and later play a group of smaller numbers; or beginning with the Schütt Suite, I would play the Arensky Concerto, and so on. The only numbers I had that could be considered as in any way of a 'popular' nature were three arrangements of *St. Patrick's Day*, *The Arkansas Traveler* and *Dixie*, which I used as encores. But they are such excellent arrangements — the *Dixie* being quite worthy of Paganini — that I should not hesitate to play them anywhere. But I must say the regular program numbers were just as keenly appreciated as they were. One number I invariably had to repeat was Schumann's *Traumerei*.

"That reminds me of a pretty incident in Seattle. There being no large concert hall there, our concert was given in the Dreamland Rink — a huge place — and it was packed [1,700 people]. Mattresses were placed against the windows to keep out the noise of the trolleys, and the evening was one of the most successful of the whole tour. The people seemed to be so absorbed in the music it was inspiring to play for them. When I played the *Traumerei* with muted strings there was not a sound in the place except the ticking of the clock, and the manager climbed up on a chair and stopped it. Wasn't it thoughtful? After the concert, by the way, they went to work there and organized a symphony orchestra to have for the succeeding concerts in the same course — Paderewski, Gadski, Kubelik and Witherspoon are some of the artists engaged. So if I gave them the impetus to form an orchestra, that was a little bit of pioneer work, wasn't it?

"Another point that interested me mightily was Ogden, Utah. It is quite a large city and though they have had lecture courses, I was the first musical attraction they had ever had. The concert was held in the Weber Stake Academy, which had no piano. They didn't realize till the last minute that I would need one, and after skirmishing around the town they found there was not a grand in the place. However, they succeeded in borrowing an upright. Then when I explained I would require a music stand, too, they bought one, and after the concert, which was a fine success, they came to me and said, 'Miss Powell, we now have a music stand to begin with, and when you come again we will have a grand piano for you.'

"One thing that was particularly pleasing was the appreciative attitude of the managers and committees. When they took pains to thank me personally for the pleasure they had derived from my concert, it added a friendly touch even to financial relations. One of the most graceful compliments that I received was a remark the managers in one of the larger towns made — 'Miss Powell, this is not the best concert we have ever had; it is the first.'

"In Salt Lake City, by the way, we attended the funeral service of a Mormon bishop. The music was simple but beautiful."

Miss Powell has brought back many pictures of memory – of the flowers and the baskets of fruit that were presented to her across the footlights, of a banquet given in her honor in Los Angele by the Celtic Club, where she made her speech through the medium of her violin, and of the cordial responsiveness of her audiences everywhere– and they will not soon fade.

J. L. H.

Excerpt from The Bohemian
May 1907

LITTLE GLIMPSES OF FAMOUS MUSICIANS

By Charles F. Peters

We have labeled femininity "the weaker sex," and in music this is often a far juster appellation than in other walks of life. But the grand exception which almost disproves the rule is Maud Powell, a woman to whom the world is indebted, and music infinitely so. A cultured, aristocratic gentle woman, as a violinist she might be placed at the top, irrespective of sex or nationality, but if not actually there, then second to one, and only one.

It is impossible to speak of her unenthusiastically, for she unites all the charm of a beautiful and graceful woman to musicianship that holds one enthralled. Apollo and Juno seem to have conspired in her composition, and the result is a high priestess who draws worshiping thousands to the temple.

All over the known worlds she has traveled and triumphed, from South Africa to Scandinavia, from Asia to America. She possesses all the qualities that go to make up the ideal violinist: sound musicianship, masculine virility coupled with feminine delicacy, a highly poetic intensity and a tone that draws almost hysterical plaudits from her hearers.

In America she is one of the makers of musical history. Three concertos entirely new to the country in one season is a record that few can equal.

"That is what I like to do," she says, "take something which the people have not heard before. Then with a discriminating audience it is an inspiration to watch the awakening interest, the dawning understanding, then the quick delight, which is what the performer strives so hard after. And, notwithstanding tradition, most of the cities of America are apt to furnish discriminating audiences."

It would be a very cold gathering, indeed, that could resist the Tchaikowsky or the Beethoven violin concertos as played by this artist. Her tone is so exquisite, her mastery so brilliant, and her interpretative intelligence so beautiful—ah, she is an artist!

She was presented to the musical world in this country by Theodore Thomas, at the concerts of the New York Philharmonic and the Thomas Symphony Orchestras. While he lived he always referred to her affectionately as his musical grandchild.

She has played before most of the crowned heads of Europe, from King Edward of England to the Czar of all the Russias, and the famous conductors of all lands who have acted as her accompanists are among her most devoted admirers.

To hear her practice is a great privilege. It prepares one for the broad conception, the

absolute freedom and sincerity which marks all her performances. She wanders to and fro, from one room to another, graceful, confident, and unconfined. The woman herself is so gracious, so wholesome, and so charmingly enthusiastic, that one cannot help but bow to her sovereignty.

An entertaining talker on an infinite number of subjects, her bright comments and witty replies make you a ready victim.

In South Africa she is most interested. Her apartment contains a highly valued glass cabinet, filled with all sorts of souvenirs and curios collected during her sojourn there. Belts, bags, bracelets, combs, everything she could pick up, whether fashioned of leather, beads or clay.

"They sell their things so cheap down there," she exclaims. "They seem to have no conception at all of the proper value of their time. This belt, for instance, must have taken weeks to make, yet a Kaffir woman sold it to me for a ridiculously small sum. But as a musical country it is surprising. At times I marveled at the numbers which received most applause. Beethoven or Brahms in one town, and again only a few miles away Paganini or Wieniawski.

"As a trip, though, it was splendid and helped me a great deal. You see I believe that the breadth of a musician's art depends largely upon the psychological knowledge he possesses, and that such knowledge is only gained by a deep and conscientious study of self. These South Africans gave me a view of life which I think has brought a new note into my playing. I have felt it since I returned. There, existence is so raw, so uncultivated. The people are like the country, a vast waste of kopjes and plains. It was almost primitive man of which I had a glimpse.

"A musician must study humanity before he can accomplish big things. I believe that all the master musicians were inspired psychologists, just as Shakespeare was in literature; that they had a wider human understanding vouchsafed them than is bestowed upon most men, because they had a message to deliver. But I believe they would never have realized the greatness of their missions, nor have attained to the true heights of their genius if they had not retired into themselves and tested their knowledge by the experiences of their own souls. The results are incorporated in their works, and it is the interpreter's task to read and deliver the message correctly. And so I would that it were possible for all of us before we attempted to sound the depths of these inspired beings to retire into solitude, and study music by studying ourselves. It would make us better musicians.

"The possibilities of mankind is the thing which countless ages have striven to solve, and why does the young artist not rise to his opportunity to add a little light to this superb problem? He has it within him if he will only seek for it, and he has no right to spend the time and energy that is necessary for a musical education, and then neglect to do so."

(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)

Exchange
Boston, Massachusetts
December 1907

HOW MAUD POWELL FEELS TONE

Maud Powell no doubt is one of the great, very great, violinists, because all the time she has been tearing her own work to pieces and been building anew. She has been adding to her stature as interpreter, and well knows it, for, declares she, "Years ago I played the master concertos, and they had no particular meaning for me, except that they forced me to raise my standard of performance. But today these same concertos take violent hold of everything about me that feels and breathes, and, at times, as I play them, I find myself muttering: 'Truly there is a God.' People talk much about correct breathing as an aid to proper singing, but have you ever heard of the breathing that comes when one draws hard on the violin string and the master spirit shakes your whole frame? That *is* breathing, I tell you, such as quickens the pace, then clutches the throat almost to suffocation."

Miss Powell has just secured, by purchase, a magnificent Guadganini, that can only be likened to a great big, whole-souled, heroic, magnetic personality. It needs no orchestra's flood for support or for cover of its scratchiness in solo work. It stands nakedly alone, sings with the purest voice ever put into human throat, and is ready with instant response to the tenderest touch of bow.

"You simply can't appreciate how beautiful an instrument this is," she exclaims joyously. "Look at its big, broad chest under the bridge. No hollow, caved-in consumptive lines there that tell of the 'one-lunger.' Then listen," rapping the wood with her knuckles, "do you hear that strong, healthy ring? This fellow never knows what it means to be frozen, husky, and hoarse; he's a big, lusty boy, whom I do love to thrash and beat black and blue, so different from the other violin in the box there, which is best likened to one of those gentle, many-mooded women of the world, who become stubborn, and, for sake of peace, must be cajoled and cautiously wooed.

"Do you know," Powell said, her voice deepening and slowing down, "that the fine Strads and Amatis of the world have almost reached tone bottom, and that the Guadagninis and Bergonzis are about the only instruments of today that have good, solid bodies? Not long since I was playing one of the most famous of all the Strads. It had cost its owner $15,000, and he was insanely proud of it. As I started to bow gently, its tones startled me with their strange, weird beauty. Then they excited my nerves, and I began to draw heavily across the low strings, when, to my positive shock, tone power and beauty suddenly vanished. The quality had gone, Heaven knows where, and I was scraping bottom." — *Exchange.*