

Musical America
18 November 1916

**BELIEVES OUR HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUMS
ARE BEST SUITED FOR CONCERT PURPOSES**

**The Local “Opry House” No Longer Restricts the Music Artists Who Must Travel
Through the Country, Says Mme. Powell—Where the Theater Fails to Solve the
Musicians’ Problem—Some Fine Examples of Public School Architecture**

One of the problems that has confronted traveling musical artists in this country has been the difficulty of securing adequate auditoriums for recital and concert purposes. The local “opry house” has been weighed and found wanting. The Y.M.C.A. auditorium, reminiscent of bell ringers, sleight-of-hand performers and monologists, does not, as a rule, supply the right sort of atmosphere. Churches in most cases do not provide comfort for the auditors. The modern theater, which has taken the place of the “opry house” in a great many cities, is seldom available when it is wanted and there is danger that cancellations may be wired at the eleventh hour.

Where, then, shall the musical artist turn?

The answer is supplied by Maud Powell, the celebrated violinist, whose record as a pioneer in various phases of musical progress in this country is firmly established.

“I have just returned from Ottawa, Ill., where I had the honor of giving the first recital in a beautiful \$250,000 high school. I. B. Itner, the architect of this fine edifice, is responsible also for many other high schools throughout the country, one of the finest examples of his art being the Central High School in Washington, D.C.

“The average modern high school is well adapted for musical purposes because its acoustics are adapted especially to the speaking voice. And then, too, the use of concrete for construction makes for resonance. After three or four years, when such a building is thoroughly settled, its acoustics are invariably ideal.

“I had an experience once in a town in Montana which illustrates the disadvantage sometimes experienced in giving a recital in a local theater. I had been announced to give a recital on this occasion and on the arrival of my party in the city we inspected the theater. The building had been erected only a few years, but the stage had been used as a roller skating rink to which the children of the city had free access when no performance was being given. The place had apparently never been cleaned. The floor was littered with waste paper, discarded programs, peanut shells and various kinds of debris. We were discouraged. My manager decided to postpone the recital until the next night and forthwith took a half page advertisement in the local paper announcing the postponement and assuring the patrons of the concert that they would be able to attend without fear of soiling their garments. He then hired a force of men to give the theater a house-cleaning such as it had never had. They got together two great stacks of dirt and

refuse, which were piled in the corners and covered with canvas. The next night we were greeted by a large audience which contained a number of persons who had never dared to enter the building because of its unsanitary condition. Its appearance on the night of my recital was a revelation to them.

“This was only one case of many in which the local theater failed to reach the requirements of the concert artists. Happily, there are some notable exceptions in many of our cities. But such conditions never obtain in the local high school.

“Among some of the high schools or normal schools in which I have played and which are fine examples of musical auditoriums are those in Aurora, Ill.; Texarkana, Tex.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Benton, Tex.; San Marcos, Tex.; Corpus Christi, Tex.; Natchitoches, La., and Marquette, Mich.”

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

Musical America

29 April 1916

UNFOLDING NEW BEAUTIES OF THE TIME-HONORED DE BÉRIOT CONCERTO

Mme. Powell Flouts Tradition by Using a “School Piece” on her Concert Programs, and with Gratifying Results—the Story of her Travels From Boston to Honolulu and From Illinois to New Mexico

Are you a budding, half-blown or fully bloomed violinist? If one of the three you will remember – more or less clearly, according to your classification – the time when you played the de Bériot Seventh Concerto.

It was at a pupils’ recital, perhaps, or on that occasion of mingled joy and anguish, the graduation program. Or it may have been at “artist pupils” concert that your skill was displayed in the de Bériot composition – but not since then, certainly not! A “school piece” has no place on an artist’s program you say, a bit coldly.

Be of good cheer – a lot of other folks felt the same way about it! Then, along came Maud Powell, a violinist to whom the whole world of art does honor, playing the almost forgotten “school piece,” and adverse comment – that had looked with open-eyed wonder at this offering on the program of a great artist – was changed to delight. And the wonders of a hackneyed composition were unfolded this season for audiences from Boston to Honolulu, from Illinois to New Mexico.

“Criticism of the de Bériot piece was confined, I found, to before the recital,” said Mme. Powell, in discussing for *Musical America* readers some of the features of her extensive tour this season. “The performance always seemed to justify the place I have given it on my programs. Among the smaller novelties that had success this year it must be conceded that Percy Grainger’s ‘Molly on the Shore’ achieved the greatest glory. It is a little classic and has come to stay.”

Maud Powell is probably the only violinist who has successfully presented the D’Indy Sonata on recital programs. This exceedingly modern composition was given nine times during the present season. In all, six concertos and eight chamber music sonatas have figured on her 1915–1916 programs.

Concerning Sonatas

“The success of a large sonata work,” says the famous violinist, “depends upon the character of the pianist’s playing. If it lies within the style and artistic sympathies of the pianist, then it is possible to give a convincing performance. I attribute to Arthur Loesser, the young pianist I introduced this season, the pleasure I have taken in sonata work and the great number I have been able to include in my programs.

“To give successfully compositions like the sonatas of D’Indy, Brahms, Beethoven or Bach is making propaganda for serious music. The public must be coaxed into listening to the music and not to the artist. The task is not an easy one, for a good deal of mental projection is required in connection – or, I might say, collusion – with musical talent to guide an audience in this direction.”

Mme. Powell is, perhaps, the only great violinist before the public who differentiates in styles of composition and their interpretation.

“The Mozart Concerto and the Sonata by César Franck, if you wish examples,” she replied to a query. “They are about as far apart in character as the two poles are geographically, and they must be played in their respective characters. A Hubay Hungarian Rhapsody is in a class by itself, rhythmically as well as in style.

“A simple song transcribed for violin must literally sing the words. It is absolutely necessary that each piece have its own ‘atmosphere’ – to use an over-worked term. Not only must there be differentiation in style, but there must, for successful enunciation, be a special kind of technique as well.

Some Tour Reminiscences

“It has been the most delightful season. We began in October and are ending with the spring festival dates. Our first recitals were in New York, Boston and Cambridge, followed by a tour through Ohio, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas to the Pacific Coast. We had huge audiences in all the California cities. No, I am not going west of Colorado next season, although Mr. Behymer has written for return engagements.

“We gave two recitals in San Francisco, and then went to Honolulu for the Christmas holidays, giving two recitals there also. Then we came back to the mainland, where the first appearance on our return was in Oakland, in the municipal Auditorium, a beautiful building with excellent acoustics for so huge a place. From Oakland we went to Seattle, appearing with the Symphony Orchestra before the largest audience in the history of the organization, they told us. Then back to Portland, where the Heilig – the biggest theater in the city – was packed for the recital. Our trip took us Eastward from Portland, through Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Michigan, Georgia and South Carolina. The latter part of the season was devoted to appearances in Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois, in the latter with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. During the middle of April we were in Kansas.

An American Artist’s Ideals

“What is my ideal? There you ask a big question! One should have all the schools at one’s command. Especially is this true of the American artist, for the American – above all others – must be eclectic in taste and take from all other nations in spirit, he must use his ‘melting pot,’ so to speak. He must be analytical first, then synthetic, building his structure out of component parts of all nations, all classes, all schools, all styles; then he must combine them

in such beautifully adjusted and well-chosen proportions that the result is a satisfying and well-nigh perfect whole.”

Such is Maud Powell’s ideal, an ideal that thousands who have passed under the spell of her beautiful art will say this typical American artist has attained!

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

Woman's Citizen
"Tempo for Citizenship"
22 December 1917

WHAT THE WAR SHOWED MAUD POWELL

It was by an altogether different sequence of ideals that Madame Maud Powell came to be one of the world's great spokeswomen for freedom in art and freedom in political life. Madame Powell's progression is as truly American as Madame Guilbert's is truly French. The American violinist set her spirit to capture perfection. This was to be her contribution to the progress of womankind as well as her obedience to her inexorable art conscience. Madame Powell was born into the elect of the pioneer suffrage movement.

"Raised in an atmosphere charged with the then radical spirit of woman suffrage it is perhaps surprising that I did not come sooner to a realizing sense of the importance of the question," said Madame Powell. "As I grew older my studies absorbed my time and strength. Yet, through my girlhood years there persisted an undercurrent of thought that urged me ever onward—to try to prove that a woman could do her work as thoroughly, as capably and as convincingly as a man. Indeed throughout long years I fought my battle against prejudice, even as Camilla Urso—revered be her memory—fought the battle before me. In my early days, the names of Mrs. Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were household words. I remember with affection the gentle, honest nature of that good woman 'Susan B.,' who took a real interest in my future career, even giving me my first nest-egg, a gold sovereign, toward buying a 'Cremona' violin. Both women wanted the little American girl to show the world that a woman could 'fiddle as well as a man.'

"Years passed. The battle of life and the persistent struggle toward an ever higher artistic goal consumed my energy. Curious as it may see, a public life was foreign to my nature. It seemed to take all my courage to pursue my own little path toward recognition, leaving no surplus vitality to be devoted to the big general cause of 'woman's rights.' I honestly felt that I was doing my share toward advancing the cause by developing to the utmost the talents that nature had given me. I believed that sheer force of example would raise standards and fire enthusiasm in other girls, and that on the heels of equipment and efficiency, success would follow. I knew that equal suffrage was right; but that other women had greater gifts of speech and of disposition to work actively in the cause than I, I felt sure.

Then the War

"When more recently, the English suffragettes introduced militant methods I was repelled and ashamed. What I abhorred was their lack of sportsmanship. They didn't 'play fair.' Witness the famous House of Commons incident, in which they did not keep their word.

"Then came the war. The women of England, including the hysterical suffragettes, faced the situation squarely and bravely. They gave up their men-folk, and turned heroically to the

tasks that hitherto had been performed chiefly by masculine hands, masculine brains. They commanded the respect and admiration of the whole world. I, for one, reversed my judgment of that same hysterical element, and forgave.

“And what is it we are working for, paying for, our men fighting for? A world democracy, to be sure. But the word democracy gives the woman suffragist pause, for it is borne in upon her consciousness of right and justice that democracy is not altogether what it purports to be when such a large proportion of the adult population has no voice in the conduct of the government --- is denied representation in fact. Now this representation and all it implies should be *thrust* upon us as a matter of duty, not handed over in gingerly spirit as a mere privilege. Then we must be educated to our new responsibilities. We must learn, learn, learn, in order to meet intelligently new conditions arising out of this frightful world-upheaval. By the way, talk with almost any Englishwoman and with all her pretty, feminine ways, one is abashed before her knowledge of state affairs. With new duties, new emergencies we shall acquire undreamed of strength and prowess. For such is woman’s nature. And we shall be the better mothers, the better home keepers for our larger vision and wider capabilities. We shall bring up better men children, demanding from them, as from our husbands, higher ideals and cleaner activity. Goodness knows, the world of politics needs a house cleaning. Let us live up to the proverb of the new broom. Moreover, let us not fail to renew the broom whenever it shows the least sign of wear.

“Thus it is that the war and some of its consequences have brought about my complete conversion to woman suffrage. Women are fitter than some of us thought. There is no turning back now, for we are being swept onward by a great tidal wave of world change, a change that makes for bigger thought, deeper feeling and more rugged action.

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

Musical America
7 September 1918

**PLAY FOR SOLDIERS AS “ONE HUMAN BEING TO ANOTHER,”
SAYS MAUD POWELL
by Sadie V. Perlman**

Mistake to Think That New Army Is Not Musical, Mme. Powell Declares – Wide Difference Between Soldier and Civilian Audiences – Great Place in Liberty Theaters for Real Art and Real Artists

Famous Woman Violinist Tells How She Toured the Training Camps; How the Soldiers Received Her Programs; What They Liked and What They Wanted – Variety Essential in Programs

Photo caption: Maud Powell, Whose Recent Tour of the Training Camps Has convinced Her That Good Music Holds Sure Appeal for the Soldier

“Maud Powell licked the prizefighter,” read the wire, and official Washington gasped.

Not because, as might seem, a noted pugilist had been physically bested by only a woman; nor because, as musically inclined persons would hastily conclude, America’s own woman violinist had, in a fit of traditional artistic temperament, made her bow and came into violent contact with Willie Ritchie’s head, but because –

Well, several days before, Colonel Braden, manager of the Liberty Theater at Camp Lewis, Wash., had sent word to the powers that be in the Capitol that Maud Powell was going to give a performance in camp. A concert artist – a highbrow – in a whole, unrelieved program of just violin pieces! It was unheard of. The boys in training weren’t long-haired artists. A few might be fond of “good” music. The concert would be a “frost” and an evening which might have been used for really entertaining the boys wasted. So opined the bigwigs in Washington, and so they notified the Colonel.

And when Maud Powell, filled with the enthusiasm which had prompted her to offer to the War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities a repetition of her wonderfully successful concert in Seattle, arrived in camp, Colonel Braden explained that Madame must be prepared for a very slender audience, and in spite of his courtly manner showed plainly that he thought it was all a mistake.

“But what could they have been thinking of!” exclaimed Madame Powell vehemently, when she told me this story the other day in her charming, restful studio in Gramercy Park, New

York. "They forgot that when we say 'army' today, we mean something quite different than when we said it several years ago. They forgot that our army now is the very flower of the nation."

And the boys came. They came in flocks and droves and applauded madly for encore after encore. The box office announced that though the concert had been advertised but two days, 300 more 25-cent seats had been sold for it than for the demonstration by Willie Ritchie, the famous boxer, which had been heralded for six months in advance, and after the warmed up Colonel's effusive congratulations to Madame Powell he hastened to wire to Washington: "Maud Powell licked the prizefighter."

This was the beginning of a tour for Maud Powell of the Liberty Theaters in sixteen cantonments. One should say Liberty Theaters and base hospitals, for Mme. Powell invariably gives a short program to the sick boys after her main recital. Just as years and years ago she demonstrated to an unbelieving world that a woman fiddler could take rank with the finest male artists of all time, so today she is a pioneer in showing that there is a place in the training camps for the highest kind of beauty. Now that she knows what it meant to tour the Liberty Circuit, would she want to do it all over again?

This was the question put first to Mme. Powell.

"No!" she exclaimed emphatically. "Not do it all over again, but keep on doing it. Each year at the first of June I am at my summer home, but now the summer is almost over and I have just finished touring the camps, and as soon as I have had a few weeks' rest I will begin again.

"It is such a mistake to think that the boys in the camps do not want to see and hear good things. So fixed had become this idea that even the men were taking it for granted that all entertainment meant a big cast, lots of clothes, comedy or dancing. Without youth or beauty," said Mme. Powell smiling mischievously, "they wondered what a 'one-woman show' could do in the Liberty Theater. I heard stage-hands repeat such remarks myself," and here she laughed outright at the recollection, "and saw these same stage-hands listening in the wings until the last encore."

It was then that she told me the story of how her camp tour began.

"There has never been such a wonderful audience in the world," she continued, "as the soldiers, because they are in such an extraordinary state of receptivity. They are all in tune. Everything they do, they do *en masse*. They have come together animated by the same noble purpose. It has lifted them out of the usual rut of life and placed them in an elevated frame of mind so that when the artist comes among she finds them eager to drink in the beauty of what she offers.

Kind of Programs Given

“At first, many people said that my music would be too ‘highbrow’ for the men. What a word anyhow,” she added derisively, “to apply to intelligence! It is just the same you see as with Bernhardt’s acting. One does not need to understand French in order to appreciate the fineness of her performance and to realize what is going on. So, one need never have studied a note of music to respond to its appeal.”

“Do you mean,” I asked, “that you played the same programs to the soldiers that you would to a conventional audience – classic concertos, Bach, and so on?”

“Oh, no,” she replied. “One must use most careful judgment in choosing a program for the soldiers. I do not play to them as an artist to the public, but as one human being to another. Therefore, every one of the pieces I play must above all have human interest – an obvious appeal to some simple, fundamental emotion. Each one must be a complete mood in itself. Its instinct may that of melody, as the Henselt ‘I wish I were a bird,’ or rhythm, as the minuets and the gavottes of Mozart and Beethoven and the dances Sarasate, which are immensely popular with the men; or that of power to create ‘atmosphere,’ or that of dazzling technical display, or that of humor or coquetry.

“Variety is absolutely essential. Therefore I begin my programs with something big and majestic and straightforward that comes right out and hits the listeners ‘between the eyes,’ as it were. A piece that expresses a quiet, rather sentimental mood may come after this, and then something very sprightly and gay. They should not be long and named intelligently to stir the imagination of the listener. A little ‘story’ background heightens the interest of the men.

Value of the Phonograph

“It is good policy to play familiar numbers and the phonograph has made this an easy matter. I find my programs largely made up of ‘requests,’ which are before the public in records. Those most often called for are the ‘Meditation’ from ‘Thaïs,’ Schubert’s ‘Ave Maria,’ the Dvorak ‘Humoresque,’ Sarasate’s ‘Spanish Dance,’ the Drdla ‘Souvenir’ and Nevin’s ‘Mighty Lak a Rose.’”

“So you see,” interrupted Mr. Turner, who you will remember is Madame’s husband and manager, too, “is it wrong to think that our new army is not musical. The soldier at one camp who said he had heard Mme. Powell in his little home town in Montana not long before is just an instance of the numbers of young men in each camp who have been studying music or attending concerts before they were called to the colors.”

Which brought me to my pet question: “Madame Powell,” said I, point blank, “before you toured the Liberty Theaters you played to audiences in which women numerically predominated. Now tell me, is there a difference in the quality of emotional response you get from an entire male audience? I have noticed at concerts that the ‘bravos’ and ‘bis’ are shouted by the men, and

that they make the noise by thumping with canes and umbrellas. Isn't the so-called 'hysterical applause' commonly attributed to women, maybe a man-made myth invented long ago to divert attention from their own susceptibilities?"

"Well," said Mme. Powell, slowly, after she had thought a few moments, "I have played for audiences composed entirely of girls and for those composed entirely of men. Now that I come to think of it, they are about the same in the quality of their emotional response, with perhaps a little more demonstrativeness on the part of the boys in college, when they get together and give those heartening, ear-splitting yells.

Soldier vs. Civilian

"But between the civilian and the soldier audience there is a distinct difference. In the latter there is an expectancy, an eager desire for something fine, born, as I said before, of their outlook on the serious aspect of life and their unity of spirit. Their eyes have a different expression. I face them as I play, and everywhere I see those wonderful, wonderful eyes. And the applause! It is a spontaneous, hearty outburst that rocks the roof." And when they cheer – well," said Mme. Powell, her deep brown eyes lit with enthusiasm, "it sends thrills all up and down here," and her slender fingers made wiggly, birdlike movements up and down the back of her neck.

"Do you then consider the soldiers an ideal audience?" I asked.

"That depends again," said Mme. Powell, "on what you play. For instance, I should not consider them an ideal audience for a chamber-music recital. Once, when I stopped off to play at a camp in Canada, I was amazed to find that only a handful of soldiers came to hear me. It was one of the best recitals I have ever given, just at twilight, with only the piano score illuminated, and I marveled the more when I found the few who had come so warmly appreciative. Afterwards the officer in charge told me that a very large assembly had turned out to hear a violinist who had played in camp about a week before me. She began with the Kreutzer Sonata of Beethoven which takes forty-five minutes to play and that effectually stopped the soldiers from coming to hear any more violinists. *[KAS Note: actually, the violinist was Eugène Ysaÿe, who used the opportunity to rehearse for his upcoming civilian recital.]*

"Academic players and inexperienced players should not go into the camps. But," said Mme. Powell, and I believe that of her many splendid qualities I was most impressed by her generosity in lauding others, "I do not necessarily mean by that the younger fiddlers. Some of them have wonderful dash and spontaneity and I love to listen to them. But the interest of the soldiers is killed by anything which is badly done or is cold and studied. They love the kind of thing May Peterson did when she stayed over two and a half hours at a station filled with troop trains to walk up and down the cars singing little songs, and called a halt on her manager when he wished to announce that she was of the Metropolitan Opera Company. They would love an artist like Bert Williams, for he is a real artist," she added emphatically.

“So please,” entreated Mme. Powell, as I was leaving, “make everybody understand that there is a big place in the Liberty Theaters for real art and artists. Make them understand that the boys in camp want good things – not elaborate, complicated, hard to understand performances, but the beautiful expression of a simple, human emotion.”

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

Cleveland Plain Dealer
 Sunday, 18 August 1918

**HIGH-BROW STUFF HAS NO TERRORS FOR SOLDIER —
 HE WANTS AND GETS THE BEST**
 By Sadie V. Perlman

“Maud Powell licked the prize fighter,” read the wire, and official Washington gasped again. Not because, as might seem, a noted pugilist had been physically bested by only a woman; nor because, as musically inclined persons would hastily conclude, America’s own woman violinist had, in a fit of the traditional artistic temperament, made her bow come into violent contact with Willie Ritchie’s head, but because —

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Just as years and years ago she demonstrated to an unbelieving world that a woman fiddler could take rank with the finest male artists of all time, so today she is a pioneer in showing that there is a place in the training camps for the highest kind of beauty.

Another woman, as true an artist, but in this as in everything else an extreme contrast to Mme. Powell, has followed in her footsteps and is virtually barnstorming the camps.

The one, an earnest student and interpreter of classic music, accustomed to the reception of cultivated concert goers, to the accompaniment of great symphony orchestras, to the elegant environment of a distinguished circle; the other, the darling of the vaudeville world, unequaled in bringing a tear or a smile through the medium of popular song, accustomed to props, and scenes and changes of costume, to the rapturous plaudits and fuss and mush of every type from the hardened first-nighter down to the unsophisticated school-girl – both, in the simplest clothes, unaided by any stage “effects,” have enthralled that audience so difficult to please – an audience exclusively of men, mostly between the ages of 21 and 31, coming from every part of the country and ranging in taste and education from illiterate mountaineers, mechanics and laborers to brusque western ranchers and college easterners.

The impression that Maud Powell and Nora Bayes have made in the camps is a matter of public knowledge, but what I wondered, is the impression made on these two sharply differing performers by their brand-new audience?

Did they find it differing emotionally from one including women?

Had they met their ideal?

Now that they know what it meant to tour the Liberty circuit, would they want to do it all over again?

I put this last question first to Mme. Powell.

“No!” she exclaimed emphatically. “Not do it all over again, but keep on doing it. Each year at the first of June I am at my summer home, but now the summer is almost over and I have just finished touring the camps, and as soon as I have had a few weeks’ rest I will begin again.”

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“So, one need never have studied a note of music to respond to its appeal.

“It is good policy to play familiar numbers and the phonograph has made this an easy matter.

“I find my programs largely made up of ‘requests,’ which are before the public in records. Those most often called for are Meditation, from Thais; Schubert, Ave Maria; Dvorak, Humoresque; Sarasate, Spanish Dance; Drdla, Souvenir; Nevin, Mighty Lak a Rose; Kol Nidrei; and Traumerei.”

Which brought me to my pet question: “Madame Powell” said I, point blank, “before you toured the Liberty theaters, you played to audiences in which women numerically predominated.

“Now tell me, is there a difference in the quality of emotional response you get from an entire male audience?

“Isn’t the so-called ‘hysterical applause’ commonly attributed to women, really a man-made myth invented long ago to divert attention from their own susceptibilities?”

“Well,” said Mme. Powell slowly, after she had thought a few moments. “I have played for audiences composed entirely of girls and of those composed entirely of men. Now that I come to think of it they are about the same in the quality of their emotional response, with perhaps a little more demonstrativeness on the part of the boys in college, when they get together and give those heartening, ear-splitting yells.

“But between the civilian and the soldier audience, there is a distinct difference. In the latter there is an expectancy, an eager desire for something fine, born, as I said before, of their outlook on the serious aspect of life and their unity of spirit. Their eyes have a different expression.

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*[Note: This interview continues and ends with Nora Bayes. Omitted from this excerpt.]

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No source, n.d.
probably *Musical America*
ca. 1916

**AMERICA IS IN NEED OF MORE AMATEUR MUSICIANS,
WHO WOULD IN TURN STIMULATE NATIVE ARTISTS
An Intelligent Audience That Knows When to Clap and When
to Keep Its Hands in Its Muff Has Yet to Be Developed
in This Country, Says Maud Powell**

“America needs trained audiences, not more trained musicians,” declares Maud Powell, who has been facing audiences pretty much all over this terrestrial ball for something over thirty years and ought to know. She was getting her wraps on in Carnegie Hall after a symphony concert to which she had listened luxuriously from a seat in row J, where she had been (though little she kenneed!) under observation all the afternoon by the reporter, off duty and enjoying a seat in row K which the music critic didn’t happen to want that day. And every time some enthusiastic listener who loved the music not wisely but too well burst into a frenzied kid glove patty-caking at least three beats too early the reporter had observed a shudder go through the listener in row J, or a pained look pass between Mme. Powell and Godfrey Turner, her husband. Once the reporter was quite sure she heard a low moan escape the violinist. And so of course after the concert instead of rushing out to catch the first bus the reporter hung over the seat in front and asked for remarks on audiences.

Thereupon the violinist [made the foregoing remarks and continued]:

“American audiences do not keep pace with the increase in the number and quality of native artists. Musicians sorely need the stimulation of intelligent listeners.”

“Go on!” begged the reporter.

“The American audience,” began the artist once more, the light of battle in the piercing Powell eyes that are exactly as dark in reality as they are in the pictures in the record catalogue. But there was H. Godfrey Turner . . . holding her coat patiently all the while and reminding her that the janitor wanted to lock up the hall, so the meeting was adjourned to the studio down on Gramercy Park.

“Isn’t it remarkable that even a New York audience is still untrained?” said Mme. Powell sadly. “One hears the well seasoned audience of our most famous string quartet applauding in the wrong places time after time, wholly mistaking the architecture of the composition. Only the other day I watched Paderewski use a prodigious amount of will power and obvious dramatic force of attitude indicating suspense in order to prevent the usual large number of musically ignorant hero worshippers present from ruining the wonderful impressiveness of a long pause.

“There is a psychological moment when the last breath of tone passes into nothingness, then a psychological instant before the soul of one who understands music could react in physical applause; not to have that sense of proportion, that instinct, shows a listener to be hopelessly inartistic and listening to a name rather than to the music, attending the concert or opera because it is the proper thing to do.

“Now I believe that America needs more amateur musicians, and especially more amateurs in chorus singing and ensemble playing. It is a silly notion that the cultivation of music is worth while only when one shows enough talent for public performance. Music in the home is a wonderful influence, and the possession of a machine is not enough, though personally I believe a good phonographic instrument is about as necessary in a home as a furnace or a bath tub. Think what it means, especially to children, to hear the world’s best compositions recorded by the world’s greatest artists over and over until they are thoroughly familiar.

“But putting disk records on a machine never gives one quite the same feeling for music that performing oneself does. I shall never forget the thrill of playing with a little amateur orchestra in the little Illinois town where I grew up. Self-expression is one of the fundamental needs of human life, and self-expression in music is bound to be a joy to all who will give themselves to it. It is a shame that so many girls who have had musical advantages give up their music entirely when they marry. Then, if ever, they should develop what abilities they may possess, and as their children grow up make music a strong factor in the life of the home. Perhaps the streets and the cheap motion picture theatres would be less popular with the young if there were more music and laughter in their homes. Folks need all those means of expression --- singing, whistling, dancing, shouting, laughing, playing together --- and home life would be a sweeter thing if each family would organize itself into a troupe of performers for its own amusement.

“Music would become a bond, a resource against the deadly ennui of ‘nothing to do at home,’ a pleasure, a luxury and a necessity. I believe as much in emotional training as in moral training, and music is the best emotional instructor, bringing out the very finest that is in the individual.”

“Do you have dreadful experiences with the uncultured audiences out in the wilds west of Hoboken?” Mme. Powell was asked.

“The hotels are not all that a mortal could ask,” replied the lady pensively, as though too poignant memories of small town hostels still lingered. “But some of the audiences in the smallest towns are the most wonderful. When they do like music, and have only [word illegible] depend upon it they are an audience that warms the cockles of one’s heart. Oh, I do not despair about America at all.

“I as an American understand better than do foreign artists who have not lived here the marvelous possibilities of the American temperament, the tremendous growth of musical appreciation, already achieved throughout this big country and its possibility of greater growth in the future. Where others damn, I marvel at what has already been done and look forward hopefully to the future.

“American children of to-day are having musical advantages that the last generation did not dream of, and to-morrow’s children will have even better chances. Some day --- I am certain of it --- American audiences will know what music means and exactly when to applaud!”

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

Musical Courier
18 April 1918

**“PLEASE THE PUBLIC WITHOUT LOWERING YOUR IDEALS”
Maud Powell Contends That in a Careful Choice of Program, the Classic Will Please Every
One—Some People Are Born Ahead of Their Time but With a Power to See and Hear
Ahead—Discusses Recent Trip West**

Maud Powell, the American violinist, admits that her art does not prevent her from being domestic. When she is in New York between her tours, she loves to fuss about her home, but judging from her present season, Miss Powell has not had much time to hang her hat on the rack in the front hall. She no sooner gets in from one tour than she starts off on another.

In speaking of her recent trip to the coast, she said:

“I went to Colorado via Santa Fe and visited the wonderful new museum. Major Powell, who was the first man to explore the Grand Canyon, was my uncle, and one of his boys, Dr. Hewitt, met us and told many interesting tales about the Pueblos who used to inhabit that section. There is quite a colony of artists and scientists living among the old ruins, although the museum itself is a new structure, somewhat adopting the lines of the Pueblo dwelling. I enjoyed the trip so much that I expect to go back soon and play to the people. All the time we were West the weather was beautiful. I found southern California as lovely as ever, and San Diego is one of the most picturesque cities I know.

Plays at Camps

“We had a funny experience on our way to Camp Kearny. We made the journey by automobile over a narrow mountain pass. Whatever nervousness we might have experienced was increased by the cheerful driver, who frequently turned his head to inform us that at this point a machine went off the road and was dashed to pieces on the rocks below, or at that point a man was killed.”

“Didn’t you enjoy playing at the camps?”

“Intensely,” replied the charming violinist. “I played at so many that I cannot remember their names. I will, however, tell you a choice story about the time I played at Camp Lewis. You know I never charged any soldier admission to my concerts until I went to Camp Lewis. Colonel Brayden told me that I couldn’t appear there for nothing, because the camp needed funds and people usually played there on a percentage basis. The camp, he advised me, wanted 25 per cent of the takings. The men were charged twenty-five cents admission and the officers fifty. Several days after the colonel had completed arrangements to have me there he was reprimanded from Washington, and told not to book any attractions that would be over the soldiers’ heads. Can one

blame him for being over-anxious as to how I would be received? He warned me not to be surprised if the boys walked out. I told him I was willing to take that chance.

Powell-Ritchey Bout

“Six weeks previously Ritchey, the prize fighter, had drawn a tremendous crowd at the same prices. Well,” she continued, laughing, “the place was packed, and I took in just three hundred more quarters than Ritchey did. That night Colonel Brayden gleefully sent this night letter to Washington: ‘Powell licked Ritchey tonight.’”

“What kind of a program did you give the boys?”

“One of my regular ones. I began with the Mendelssohn concerto, which takes just thirty minutes. I concluded long ago that, if you are careful in the choice of a program, the classics will please everybody. Just give them something with a clean line, something that is filled with charm and with the delicate and brilliant passages. Once after I had played the Saint-Saëns sonata, a woman remarked to me that she had never before seen anything in the work. ‘Because,’ I replied, ‘there are many ways of playing it.’”

“Again people may not understand a work well enough to like it thoroughly, but they realize, nevertheless, that there is something sweeping and imaginative about it. You can tell by the way they listen. Many times a composition meets with favor in one city but is disliked intensely by the people of the next. For example, the Sibelius concerto caused adverse criticism in New York when I played it, while in El Paso, San Diego and a number of other Western cities, I played it about a dozen times and it was very well liked.”

“Do you like the modern music?”

Likes All Good Music

“I like everything that is good. We are born ahead of our time, I believe, but we are born with the power to see and hear ahead also.”

“You have established quite a reputation, I understand, for having given a number of first performances in this country, haven’t you?”

American Composers Will Improve

“Yes, but that is an old story now. You may say, however, that I am still on the lookout for good novelties and am gratified to find works of considerable value coming from our own composers. They are going to be better and better as time goes on and with the larger encouragement. I find as I grow older that works have to get a firm hold of me in order to make it possible for me to learn them. I have been doing a modest American group at my concerts which has met with not a little success. It consists of ‘Deep River,’ which I arranged from Coleridge-Taylor’s piano setting of the spiritual; Cadman’s ‘Firefly,’ Grasses ‘Waves,’ and four

American tunes that might be best described as being ‘racy of the soil.’ In one town where I played ‘Kingdom Come’ a bishop was in the audience, and in spite of the fact that his ‘kingdom come’ was a different one, he afterward told me that I had stolen his thunder.”

Literary Quality Appeals to Layman

Miss Powell related an interesting incident that occurred out West. In one city where she played, a prominent editor on one of the dailies confided to her that he had never missed one of her concerts, even though he was not musical. He added that he felt that there was something in her work that appealed to the layman—something of a literary quality.

“Do you know, I liked that,” she mused, “because I would enjoy doing my country good culturally if I could. It is nice to have that faculty, even though it be in ever so small a degree. Please the public without lowering your ideals is my belief. You have to make your public feel you are above them, if only a trifle, because the minute you stoop to them they sense it, and they do not like it.”

San Antonio City of Bridges

During her Western trip Miss Powell visited Schumann-Heink’s home. She also toured throughout Texas, playing in San Antonio, which the violinist describes as the city of bridges, because they number five hundred and cross an artesian river. The Texans, according to Miss Powell, are endeavoring very hard to make their principal cities like New York. Skyscrapers are going up every day, and they are not content to call the main hotel the San Antonio, but prefer the name of St. Anthony. The most prosperous section of the West is in the Northwest—the lumber region—whose people are now busily engaged in turning out ships and aeroplanes.

In speaking of aeroplanes, Miss Powell told this incident: “One of the camps that I visited was an aviation camp—Camp Love Field—and of all the program numbers the most popular with the boys was Chopin’s ‘Maiden’s Wish’ that begins like this, ‘Wish I were a bird.’”

“You have a good sense of humor,” ventured the MUSICAL COURIER representative.

Sense of Humor Lessens Tension

“A sense of humor,” Miss Powell replied, “relieves tension. In small places it has helped tremendously that way in more than one case. You know the towns where the local club has taken a chance in bringing an artist to their midst, by the evening of the concert, usually the music lovers are all wound up and fearful as to the result of their efforts. It is a frequent occurrence to see a pretty girl and her best young man seated in the front row, very stiff and erect and thoroughly self-conscious. Well, then, in such a case, when I see the first number does not relax them, I determine to do so by hook or by crook. I do not approve of an artist speaking to her audience, because it breaks the thread of thought, but when the thread is the wrong kind, then I do. An occasional remark such as ‘the worst will soon be over’ has worked wonders.

Artist's Duty to Reach Audience

“The American public loves to think that the artist is a human being, although some people do not think so. I had one woman say to me: ‘Isn’t it funny, you send your laundry out just like the rest of us!’ ‘You do take toast and coffee for breakfast, don’t you?’ How absurd such remarks are! Why should one’s talent make him different from the rest of the people? It is the artist’s duty to reach his audience. The real difference may be shown in his work, but not in his ways. It is dreadful to go through life without being understood.”

Miss Powell expected to leave the next day on another tour which would take her to St. Paul, Minneapolis, Cedar Rapids and other adjacent point. Upon her return on May 1, she will go to Hot Springs, in order to appear at the meeting of the Federation of Music Clubs.

“After that,” concluded the violinist, “I hope that I shall be free to go to my home at Whitefield, N.H., for the remainder of the summer, and sort of get back to nature.”

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

Musical America
10 May 1919

**MAUD POWELL CONVINCED AMERICA IS
STRIDING AHEAD IN MUSICAL APPRECIATION**

Great American Violinist Returns from Western Tour Impressed by Optimistic Condition of Country—Increasing Number of Men in Audiences, She Says, Demonstrates Power Exerted by Music—Why Platform Audiences Exhaust the Artist's Magnetism—"Better Constructed Halls, One of Our Growing Music Needs"

by Herbert F. Peyser

Maud Powell returns from a protracted Western tour convinced of the increase of musical sentiment and appreciation even in the dark parts of the continent. We take the same assurance with salt when it comes from a foreign artist. It may mean much or little. From Miss Powell it has all the weight of authority. For the great violinist knows how to interpret this nation's soul and its artistic manifestations. She has experienced, has viewed first hand the phenomena of its development for years. Wishes do not father her thoughts on the subject and there are elements in our cultural life she condemns unsparingly—elements which many do not find it in themselves to censure.

To-day Miss Powell finds herself moved to report progress. She has been through a trying season. Epidemic and the disturbed conditions attending the sudden cessation of the war made concertizing in many ways a hardship. Nevertheless things have impressed her and led her to optimistic conclusions.

Where the average musician is a superficial observer Maud Powell is a psychologist. Trifles she construes after a fashion that leads to potent truths. And numerous trifles, to the casual mind irrelevant, are to her lights whereby to see great issues. The spectacle of a man alone at a concert is of deeper import to her than to the average individual. The sight of two men in a Western town lured to the concert hall by the mere power of the music signifies something of an awakening. For men in this country do not attend musical functions alone unless musically inclined.

"I have observed, moreover," she declares, "that men in many of these Western towns, like those in camps and in prisons listen with a look in their eyes that demonstrates how powerfully the music is exerting its effect. They look at the artist vacantly, as it were. The music, not the personality of the player, is absorbing them. Year by year the number of men not drawn to the concert by the mere necessity of accompanying the women folk thither has been increasing.

“The theatrical men have felt the musical growth to the point of entering the field themselves. For some time there has been a reaction against vulgar musical shows and this reaction has had as one of its consequences an increased attendance at serious musical functions. Now the musical and the theatrical business is fundamentally different. Nevertheless theatrical managers, sensitive to the growing advantages of the latter, are doing their best to feel their way into it. Some of them are finding it easier than others. I know one at least who is making a proper start and who deserves encouragement. He does not know the business as he eventually will but has an inkling of what it really is.

“Of course, there is still the tendency to look upon a musical artist as “the show”—just as they look upon a circus, a play, a burlesque or vaudeville act. Also the demand for music which is beneath a serious artist’s standard. There are limits to which a musician can go and others which he cannot pass without forfeiting a necessary self-respect. If I receive a request from some prosperous farmer for something I do not care to play, with the promise that he will attend the concert with his family at five dollars a ticket, I take the liberty of refusing his five dollars and declining his programmatic suggestion.

We have often wondered who would be the first artist to protest against playing recitals on a stage occupied by several hundred listeners. Maud Powell now come forward to claim the distinction. To be sure she has played under such disadvantageous circumstances. But she has no further idea of doing so. “The audience’s place is in the auditorium,” she says. “There the privilege is theirs to criticise everything about the player from the manner of holding the violin to her gown. But I object to it at close range. To begin with, scores of people on the stage exhaust an artist’s magnetism—literally constitute a tremendous extra drain on it and impose an increased nervous tension. They also attract the attention of those in the body of the house to themselves, they become self-conscious, their applause distracts and seems forced. Their presence on the stage puts an end to the illusion and atmosphere which every artist, whether actor, singer or player should create. They see the mechanism which should be hidden and mysterious. I went through such an experience on my tour and shall not go through others.”

Concrete halls are another thing that call forth Miss Powell’s disapproval. We in New York know something of the acoustical qualities of the concrete orchestra pit in the Lexington Theater. The great American violinist can retail similar stories of the structures now springing up in growing number. To make them acoustically profitable nothing but the installation of a certain type of wood covering would serve. Yet people persist in erecting concrete halls, seemingly ignorant of the acoustic horrors they are establishing. Reformation of this fault is one of our growing musical needs, as she sees them.

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

MAUD POWELL

from *Violin Mastery*, by Frederick H. Martens,
New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1919.

“TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES: SOME HINTS FOR THE CONCERT PLAYER”

MAUD POWELL is often alluded to as our representative “American *woman* violinist” which, while true in a narrower sense, is not altogether just in a broader way. It would be decidedly more fair to consider her a representative American violinist, without stressing the term “woman”; for as regards Art in its higher sense, the artist comes first, sex being incidental, and Maud Powell is first and foremost – an artist. And her infinite capacity for taking pains, her willingness to work hard have had no small part in the position she has made for herself, and the success she has achieved.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCERT VIOLINIST

“Too many Americans who take up the violin professionally,” Maud Powell told the writer, “do not realize that the mastery of the instrument is a life study, that without hard, concentrated work they cannot reach the higher levels of their art. Then, too, they are too often inclined to think that if they have a good tone and technic that this is all they need. They forget that the musical instinct must be cultivated; they do not attach enough importance to musical surroundings: to hearing and understanding music of every kind, not only that written for the violin. They do not realize the value of *ensemble* work and its influence as an educational factor of the greatest artistic value. I remember when I was a girl of eight, my mother used to play the Mozart violin sonatas with me; I heard all the music I possibly could hear; I was taught harmony and musical form in direct connection with my practical work, so that theory was a living thing to me and no abstraction. In my home town I played in an orchestra of twenty pieces – Oh, no, not a ‘ladies orchestra’ – the other members were men grown! I played chamber music as well as solos whenever the opportunity offered, at home and in public. In fact music was part of my life.

“No student who looks on music primarily as a thing apart in his existence, as a bread-winning tool, as a craft rather than an art, can ever mount to the high places. So often girls [who sometimes lack the practical vision of boys], although having studied but a few years, come to me and say: ‘My one ambition is to become a great virtuoso on the violin! I want to begin to study the great concertos!’ And I have to tell them that their first ambition should be to become musicians – to study, to know, to understand music before they venture on its interpretation. Virtuosity without musicianship will not carry one far these days. In many cases these students come from small inland towns, far from any music center, and have a wrong attitude of mind. They crave the glamor of footlights, flowers and applause, not realizing that music is a speech, an idiom, which they must master in order to interpret the works of the great composers.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE TEACHER

“Of course, all artistic playing represents essentially the mental control of technical means. But to acquire the latter in the right way, while at the same time developing the former, calls for the best of teachers. The problem of the teacher is to prevent his pupils from being too imitative – all students are natural imitators – and furthering the quality of musical imagination in them. Pupils generally have something of the teacher’s tone – Auer pupils have the Auer tone, Joachim pupils have a Joachim tone, an excellent thing. But as each pupil has an individuality of his own, he should never sink it altogether in that of his teacher. It is this imitative trend which often makes it hard to judge a young player’s work. I was very fortunate in my teachers. William Lewis of Chicago gave me a splendid start. Then I studied in turn with Schradieck in Leipsic – Schradieck himself was a pupil of Ferdinand David and of Léonard – Joachim in Berlin, and Charles Dancla in Paris. I might say that I owe most, in a way, to William Lewis, a born fiddler. Of my three European masters Dancla was unquestionably the greatest as a teacher – of course I am speaking for myself. It was no doubt an advantage, a decided advantage for me in my artistic development, which was slow – a family trait – to enjoy the broadening experience of three entirely different styles of teaching, and to be able to assimilate the best of each. Yet Joachim was a far greater violinist than teacher. His method was a cramping one, owing to his insistence on pouring all his pupils into the same mold, so to speak, of forming them all on the Joachim lathe. But Dancla was inspiring. He taught me De Bériot’s wonderful method of attack; he showed me how to develop purity of style. Dancla’s method of teaching gave his pupils a technical equipment which carried bowing right along, ‘neck and neck’ with the finger work of the left hand, while the Germans are apt to stress finger development at the expense of the bow. And without ever neglecting technical means, Dancla always put the purely musical before the purely virtuoso side of playing. And this is always a sign of a good teacher. He was unsparing in taking pains and very fair.

“I remember that I was passed first in a class of eighty-four at an examination, after only three private lessons in which to prepare the concerto movement to be played. I was surprised and asked him while Mlle. — who, it seemed to me, had played better than I, had not passed. ‘Ah,’ he said, ‘Mlle. — studied that movement for six months; and in comparison, you, with only three lessons, play it better!’ Dancla switched me right over in his teaching from German to French methods, and taught me how to become an artist, just as I had learned in Germany to become a musician. The French school has taste, elegance, imagination; the German is more conservative, serious, and has, perhaps, more depth.

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

“Perhaps it is because I belong to an older school, or it may be because I laid stress on technic because of its necessity as a means of expression – at any rate I worked hard at it. Naturally, one should never practice any technical difficulty too long at a stretch. Young players sometimes forget this. I know that staccatoplaying was not easy for me at one time. I believe a real staccato is inborn; a knack. I used to grumble about it to Joachim and he told me once that musically *staccato* did not have much value. His own, by the way, was very labored and heavy. He admitted that he had none. Wieniawski had such a wonderful *staccato* that one finds much of it in his music. When I first began to play his D minor concerto I simply made up my mind to get

a *staccato*. It came in time, by sheer force of will. After that I had no trouble. An artistic *staccato* should, like the trill, be plastic and under control; for different schools of composition demand different styles of treatment of such details.

“Octaves – the unison, not broken – I did not find difficult; but though they are supposed to add volume of tone they sound hideous to me. I have used them in certain passages of my arrangement of ‘Deep River,’ but when I heard them played, promised myself I would never repeat the experiment. Wilhelmj has committed even a worse crime in taste by putting six long bars of Schubert’s lovely *Ave Maria* in octaves. Of course they represent skill; but I think they are only justified in show pieces. Harmonics I always found easy; though whether they ring out as they should always depends more or less on atmospheric conditions, the strings and the amount of rosin on the bow. On the concert stage if the player stands in a draught the harmonics are sometimes husky.

THE AMERICAN WOMAN VIOLINIST AND AMERICAN MUSIC

“The old days of virtuoso ‘tricks’ have passed – I should like to hope forever. Not that some of the old type virtuosos were not fine players. Remenyi played beautifully. So did Ole Bull. I remember one favorite trick of the latter’s, for instance, which would hardly pass muster to-day. I have seen him draw out a long *pp*, the audience listening breathlessly, while he drew his bow way beyond the string, and then looked innocently at the point of the bow, as though wondering where the tone had vanished. It invariably brought down the house.

“Yet an artist must be a virtuoso in the modern sense to do his full duty. And here in America that duty is to help those who are groping for something higher and better musically; to help without rebuffing them. When I first began my career as a concert violinist I did pioneer work for the cause of the American woman violinist, going on with the work begun by Mme. Camilla Urso. A strong prejudice then existed against women fiddlers, which even yet has not altogether been overcome. The very fact that a Western manager recently told Mr. Turner with surprise that he ‘had made a success of a woman artist’ proves it. When I first began to play here in concert this prejudice was much stronger. Yet I kept on and secured engagements to play with orchestra at a time when they were difficult to obtain. Theodore Thomas liked my playing (he said I had brains), and it was with his orchestra that I introduced the concertos of Saint-Saëns (C min.), Lalo (F min.), and others, to American audiences.

“The fact that I realized that my sex was against me in a way led me to be startlingly authoritative and convincing in the masculine manner when I first played. This is a mistake no woman violinist should make. And from the moment that James Huneker wrote that I ‘was not developing the feminine side of my work,’ I determined to be just myself, and play as the spirit moved me, with no further thought of sex or sex distinctions which, in Art, after all, are secondary. I never realized this more forcibly than once, when, sitting as a judge, I listened to the competitive playing of a number of young professional violinists and pianists. The individual performers, unseen by the judges, played in turn behind a screen. And in three cases my fellow judges and myself guessed wrongly with regard to the sex of the players. When we thought we had heard a young man play it happened to be a young woman, and *vice versa*.

“To return to the question of concert-work. You must not think that I have played only foreign music in public. I have always believed in American composers and in American composition, and as an American have tried to do justice as an interpreting artist to the music of my native land. Aside from the violin concertos by Harry Rowe Shelly and Henry Holden Huss, I have played any number of shorter original compositions by such representative American composers as Arthur Foote, Mrs. H.H.A. Beach, Victor Herbert, John Philip Sousa, Arthur Bird, Edwin Grasse, Marion Bauer, Cecil Burleigh, Harry Gilbert, A. Walter Kramer, Grace White, Charles Wakefield Cadman and others. Then, too, I have presented transcriptions by Arthur Hartmann, Francis Macmillan and Sol Marcossou, as well as some of my own. Transcriptions are wrong, theoretically; yet some songs, like Rimsky-Korsakov’s ‘Song of India’ and some piano pieces, like the Dvorák *Humoresque*, are so obviously effective on the violin that a transcription justifies itself. My latest temptative in that direction is my ‘Four American Folk Songs,’ a simple setting of four well-known airs with connecting cadenzas – no variations, no special development! I used them first as *encores*, but my audiences seemed to like them so well that I have played them on all my recent programs.

SOME HINTS FOR THE CONCERT PLAYER

“The very first thing in playing in public is to free oneself of all distrust in one’s own powers. To do this, nothing must be left to chance. One should not have to give a thought to strings, bow, etc. All should be in proper condition. Above all the violinist should play with an accompanist who is used to accompanying him. It seems superfluous to emphasize that one’s program numbers must have been mastered in every detail. Only then can one defy nervousness, turning excess of emotion into inspiration.

“Acoustics play a greater part in the success of a public concert than most people realize. In some halls they are very good, as in the case of the Cleveland Hippodrome, an enormous place which holds forty-three hundred people. Here the acoustics are perfect, and the artist has those wonderful silences through which his slightest tones carry clearly and sweetly. I have played not only solos, but chamber music in this hall, and was always sorry to stop playing. In most halls the acoustic conditions are best in the evening.

“Then there is the matter of the violin. I first used a Joseph Guarnerius, a deeper toned instrument than the Jean Baptista Guadagnini I have now played for a number of years. The Guarnerius has a tone that seems to come more from within the instrument; but all in all I have found my Guadagnini, with its glassy clearness, its brilliant and limpid tone-quality, better adapted to American concert halls. If I had a Strad in the same condition as my Guadagnini the instrument would be priceless. I regretted giving up my Guarnerius, but I could not play the two violins interchangeably; for they were absolutely different in size and tone-production, shape, etc. Then my hand is so small that I ought to use the instrument best adapted to it, and to use the same instrument always. Why do I use no chin-rest? I use no chin-rest on my Guadagnini simply because I cannot find one to fit my chin. One should use a chin-rest to prevent perspiration from marring the varnish. My Rocca violin is an interesting instance of wood worn in ridges by the stubble on a man’s chin.

“Strings? Well, I use a wire E string. I began to use it twelve years ago one humid, foggy summer in Connecticut. I had had such trouble with strings snapping that I cried: ‘Give me anything but a gut string.’ The climate practically makes metal strings a necessity, though some kind person once said that I bought wire strings because they were cheap! If wire strings had been thought of when Theodore Thomas began his career, he might never have been a conductor, for he told me he gave up the violin because of the E string. And most people will admit that hearing a wire E you cannot tell it from a gut E. Of course, it is unpleasant on the open strings, but then the open strings never do sound well. And in the highest registers the tone does not spin out long enough because of the tremendous tension: one has to use more bow. And it cuts the hairs: there is a little surface nap on the bow-hairs which a wire string wears right out. I had to have my four bows rehired three times last season – an average of every three months. But all said and done it has been a God-send to the violinist who plays in public. On the wire A one cannot get the harmonics; and the aluminum D is objectionable in some violins, though in others not at all.

“The main thing – no matter what strings are used – is for the artist to get his audience into the concert hall, and give it a program which is properly balanced. Theodore Thomas first advised me to include in my programs short, simple things that my listeners could ‘get hold of’ – nothing inartistic, but something selected from their standpoint, not from mine, and played as artistically as possible. Yet there must also be something that is beyond them, collectively. Something that they may need to hear a number of times to appreciate. This enables the artist to maintain his dignity and has a certain psychological effect in that his audience holds him in greater respect. At big conservatories where music study is the most important thing, and in large cities, where the general level of music culture is high, a big solid program may be given, where it would be inappropriate in other places.

“Yet I remember having many recalls at El Paso, Texas, once, after playing the first movement of the Sibelius concerto. It is one of those compositions which if played too literally leaves an audience quite cold; it must be rendered temperamentally, the big climaxing effects built up, its Northern spirit brought out, though I admit that even then it is not altogether easy to grasp.

VIOLIN MASTERY

“Violin mastery or mastery of any instrument, for that matter, is the technical power to say exactly what you want to say in exactly the way you want to say it. It is technical equipment that stands at the service of your musical will – a faithful and competent servant that comes at your musical bidding. If your spirit soars ‘to parts unknown,’ your well trained servant ‘technic’ is ever at your elbow to prevent irksome details from hampering your progress. Mastery of your instrument makes mastery of your Art a joy instead of a burden. Technic should always be the handmaid of the spirit.

“And I believe that one result of the war will be to bring us a greater self-knowledge, to the violinist as well as to every other artist, a broader appreciation of what he can do to increase and elevate appreciation for music in general and his Art in particular. And with these I am sure a new impetus will be given to the development of a musical culture truly American in thought and expression.”

The Violinist
1909 ?

HOW TO MEMORIZING

by R. Frederick Grover

Excerpt:

Later I had the pleasure of meeting Maud Powell. I knew before I went in that she committed “by ear,” but I asked her the same question I had asked [Arthur] Hartman [violinist] [how he committed and if he could call off the individual notes if necessary.] She looked at me for a moment before answering, then said, “Why, indeed no; I try to get just as far away from the printed page as is possible.”

I said, “But suppose you forget?”

“But I do not forget,” she replied.

“But suppose you should; if you could not call up the printed page and its individual notes, what would you do?”

She shrugged her shoulders and with a sigh said, “Well, I don’t know what on earth I would do.”

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