



**Maud Powell: Pioneer
American Violinist**
Karen A. Shaffer

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MAUD POWELL SOCIETY \$25/VOLUME

If, like Karen Shaffer, you are going to devote a good chunk of your life to a violinist, Maud Powell (1867–1920) is a good choice. Though a pupil of Dancla, Schradieck and Joachim, she practically invented the ‘American violinist’ and surmounted the hurdles placed in the way of women to bring good music to remote corners of North America and even South Africa. She might seem as tough as old boots but her heart gave out at 52 – had she lived to, say, 60 we might have had concerto recordings.

As it is, we have enough 78rpm tracks to fill four CDs from this doughty lady who was the Victor company’s first ‘Red Seal’ violinist. They show that she could play



Maud Powell c.1900

THE STRAD

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virtually anything, but only Bériot’s Seventh Concerto is at all extended. No Sibelius or Tchaikovsky Concerto: she unveiled both to America and was first to play the Dvořák in New York. She premiered works by Aulin, Bruch and Saint-Saëns in the States and might have introduced the Elgar but found it empty and pompous – and Novello asked for \$1,000.

Shaffer first wrote about Powell in the 1980s, collaborating with Neva Garner Greenwood (who died before publication); but she was denied access to important documentation that has since become available, and the Internet has brought other dimensions. This new edition is vastly better and more informative than the original, with fascinating details of Powell’s indefatigable touring. I think she misses one Powell US premiere: Lalo’s G major.

The two volumes are not consecutively paginated and each has the same index. Volume Two has a discography. More than 100 half-tones are reasonably reproduced – my favourite is the full-length portrait of Powell with violin on page 61 of Volume Two. The price is amazingly low and the books belong in the library of every violin lover.

TULLY POTTER

Comments and Reviews

New, revised edition (2022)

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for Music and Education

Maud Powell, Pioneer American Violinist

New, Revised Biography

Karen A. Shaffer

“It has been a while since I last read the first edition, but **this has made me fall in love with Maud all over again.** I’m impressed once again with your lovely, evocative writing style throughout. . . . I also appreciate the wealth of information about the history of music, of violin playing, of instruments, of European and American culture, etc. that is folded into the story. . . . You are protecting all that firsthand, eye witness information from slipping through the cracks of dusty history to oblivion, and brought it all into a powerful, coherent whole.”

— **Rhonda B. Frascotti, concert violinist**

These two volumes are **magnificent books!** I learned so much from your new biography of Maud and I applaud you for the herculean task you have undertaken these many decades to amass the splendid collection of details about her amazing life. Your writing is beautiful and engaging so that **the history of this time and this great artist comes alive.**

— **Jody Gatwood, concert violinist**

Congratulations on a fabulous new second edition of Maud Powell’s biography. I . . . am so impressed with the new material, both in the body of the narrative and in the endnotes and appendices. The new images are so good. **I have learned more about American music history from your Maud Powell biographies than from most singular histories of American music.**

— **Robert Hanson, composer/conductor**