

HOW JOHN POWELL OVERCAME PARENTAL OBJECTION TO ENTERING MUSICAL CAREER

Young Virginia Composer and Pianist Tells of Unique Masquerades that Convinced Protesting Father that His Natural Gifts Entitled Him to a Professional Life—Fresh Air Needed in the Artistic World

"YOU surely aren't going to make a musician of that boy?" "Sir, God has done that already."

The speakers were a citizen of Richmond, Virginia, and the mother of John Powell, the Southern pianist. The time was almost twenty years ago. In the South, at that period, however, no gentleman born remained at that elevation if he became a professional musician. There were only two vocations of Satanistic quality beyond this: life upon the stage, or that of keeping a bar. To overcome all parental objections, also this greatest of publicly agreed mortal sins, this same John Powell had to resort to extreme means.

"Besides having been already created a musician (according to my mother), by God, I had been given an equally strong gift for acting," said Mr. Powell. "From my earliest years, I took the greatest delight in donning costumes or disguises fooling my relatives and friends or playing mischievous tricks. As I grew older this imitative instinct took hold of me to what my mother and father, especially my father, considered an alarming degree. The climax to all my 'monkey shines' came about in this way. The culmination was the beginning of my musical career.

"There lived in Richmond a maiden lady who kept a boarding house. One night there called upon her a foreign gentleman, in quiet attire, be-whiskered and mustached. He inquired, much hampered by a foreign accent, for suitable apartments. The accent attracted the attention of the boarders and they lingered behind doors and portieres to know his message. He also inquired into the musical atmosphere of the community. Miss Nannie quite overcome by the eloquent presence before her, told of one John Powell. I learned from her lips what a musical genius this boy was considered by the natives. It was a delightful surprise, and I returned the compliment by announcing the presence of this young Mozart, removing the moustache and whiskers. Through the kindness of the inmates of Miss Nannie's establishment, she became quite the joke of the town. She really had been taken in! The news reached my father's ears, and I completed a session with him, receiving the ultimatum which forbade any more 'acting'. In despair, as I was leaving the room I said, 'Well, father, if I could fool even you, then might I act?'"

"Hearing my praises sung as I had set my mind to work. I would be a professional musician. But how to conquer my parents? I thought of every possible way, and finally decided upon an extreme means. My father ran a boarding-school for girls. All the little girls of my acquaintance were among his pupils with the exception of one. He could not quite understand this, and sometimes mentioned the fact. The little girl's mother was a young widow. "With my plans well laid, I forced the little daughter to enter my conspiracy; I 'dressed up' in her parent's 'weeds' and called upon my unsuspecting father. He received me kindly, and we made arrangements for 'my daughter's' education. As I was being ushered out by him, I pulled up my skirts, showing my short trousers, and threw my arms about his neck! He was stunned, and acknowledged that I had talent for acting.

"Then I became serious, and told him that I had greater possibilities, I was sure, as a pianist, and that he might choose the lesser of the two evils. Well, of course it ended in my being placed under the best master in Richmond, at that time F. C. Hahr. And I had to promise that I would go for at least two years to college, which I did, receiving my B. A. in that time.

"I suspect my father hoped I would lose all my 'nonsensical' musical ideas at college! Later the barrier of precedent and tradition was so mutilated that I was sent abroad to Berlin. One fact I will ever be grateful for—that is, that my father insisted upon a thorough college course for me. If many of the beginners would remember that music alone does not spell success, there would be less failure. The mind must be developed along many lines! How can a man expect to be a really fine musician without being a fine man?"

The Fresh Air Art Society

"This leads me to tell you of the Fresh Air Art Society which, though still in its infancy, I believe, with many others, will do a great deal of needed good in the artistic world, the world of allied arts. Life in all its phases is of fundamental importance. Now, until the last few years the artistic atmosphere has resembled a room with the windows closed, the air malodorous. Now, the windows are being opened, the fresh air, full of health and reason, is circulating rapidly in the world of allied arts, music, painting and literature. This Society had its birth in London. Such people as Warrington Dorson

with was taken by Reiss and that of Peter by Goritz. Lila Robeson, Sophie Braslau and Mabel Garrison were, respectively, the *Mother*, the *Sandman* and the *Dewman*. Richard Hageman conducted. G. C. T.

Caroline Hudson-Alexander Honored by Fellow Artist in Boston

BOSTON, April 17.—Bertha Barnes, the Boston mezzo-soprano, was hostess on Wednesday afternoon at a "tea with music" in her studio at the Pierce Building, in honor of Caroline Hudson-Alexander, the New York soprano. Mr. and Mrs. Alexander were in town attending the centennial celebration of the Handel and Haydn Society, in which Mrs. Alexander participated as soloist in Horatio Parker's "Morven and the Grail," composed specially for the centennial. At the tea on Wednesday a short musical program was furnished by Ethel Franck, soprano; Edna Seidhoff, pianist, and the hostess. A distinguished list of Bostonian musicians was in attendance, including Grace Bonner Williams, Harriot Eudora Barrows, sopranos; Helen Allen Hunt, mezzo-contralto; Willard Flint, William Gustafson, basses; Theodore Schroeder, baritone; Arthur Foote and Benjamin Whelpley, composers.



John Powell, a Virginian Who Has Carried the Gospel of Music to the Leading Music Centers Abroad

and Joseph Conrad helped to promote the first meeting in Queens Hall. It speaks peculiarly for the English press to say that they were all excitement over the project until they found that its aim was to promote and inspire a cleaner existence in all fields of art. Then they lost interest! The Fresh Air Art Society has a branch in Paris, and one in Berlin. We are hoping to soon establish another section here in New York."

Mr. Powell's reputation abroad is one of distinction. He has appeared in the leading music-centers both as pianist and composer. Among his important works are a Violin Concerto, dedicated to his friend Efrem Zimbalist, which Mr. Zimbalist introduced to New York music-lovers at a special orchestral recital at Carnegie Hall several winters ago, a Piano Sonata, which Mr. Powell has played abroad with no little success and a "Sonata Virginiaesque" for violin and piano, which David and Clara Mannes have played in their sonata programs in this country.

EVERY STRAKOSCH.

Herbert Fryer Charms His Brooklyn Hearers in Recital

The English pianist, Herbert Fryer, was heard at the music hall of the Academy of Music, Brooklyn in a recital on April 12, assisted by Robert Maitland, baritone. As a first appearance for the pianist it is to be chronicled that he justified the interest of a large attendance of Brooklyn Institute subscribers. Schumann's "Etudes Symphoniques," Op. 17, displayed the artist's technic, as to a still more favorable degree, did César Franck's Prelude, Chorale and Fugue. Eight waltzes by Brahms, Op. 39, and several Chopin compositions were given most effectively. Mr. Maitland, accompanied ably by Mrs. E. M. Lapham, contributed strongly to the program.

G. C. T.

"L'Oracolo" and "Hänsel" Final Brooklyn Bill of Metropolitan

The final appearance of the Metropolitan Opera Company in Brooklyn this season was on April 13, the double bill, "L'Oracolo" and "Hänsel and Gretel," proving enjoyable to a large audience. The principals were Scotti, Rossi, Didur, Lucrezia Bori, Sophie Braslau, Audisio, Luca Botta and little Ella Bakos. Polacco conducted with authority.

In contrast to the gruesome Leoni work, "Hänsel and Gretel" provided a cheery ending for the season's performances at the Academy of Music. Marie Mattfeld was Hänsel and Elizabeth Schumann was Gretel. The rôle of the

Jenny Dufau to Sing for Benefit of Countrymen

The Alliance Française, of Chicago, has arranged a special benefit concert with Jenny Dufau as the leading feature. The concert will be given May 2 at the Blackstone Theater. Miss Dufau will sing an aria from "Hamlet" and a group of French songs not heretofore heard in America. A long list of patronesses is announced, and, while there have been benefits arranged in Chicago for the Belgians and other war victims, this is the first charity concert to be given in Chicago since the opening of the European war, to aid the needy in war-ridden France.

York Male Chorus in Annual Concert

YORK, PA., April 19.—The seventh annual concert of the Y. M. C. A. Male Chorus last Thursday evening proved to be one of the important local musical events of the season. A large and enthusiastic audience was in attendance. A pleasing program was given under the direction of Urban H. Hershey, conductor of the chorus. Charles F. Henry, tenor soloist of Baltimore, assisted the chorus. The soloists included A. T. Scarborough, tenor; John H. Eyster and William H. Huntsman, Jr., bass.

G. A. Q.

Fryer Recital for Barnard Club

The Barnard Club of New York City, Walter L. Bogert, chairman of the music committee, presented Herbert Fryer, pianist, in the following program at Carnegie Hall on the evening of April 15: "Moonlight" Sonata, Adagio sostenuto, Allegretto, Presto agitato, Beethoven; Prelude, Chorale and Fugue, César Franck; Three Preludes, Op. 16, Waltz in D, Op. 12, Sarabande and Gigue, Herbert Fryer; Mazurka, Op. 59, No. 3, Berceuse, Polonaise, Op. 53, Chopin. Mr. Fryer's work was up to his usual high standard and was most enthusiastically received by the large assemblage.

Mabel Harlan Provides Attractive Violin Recital in Brownwood, Texas

BROWNWOOD, TEX., April 16.—Mabel M. Harlan of the faculty of Daniel Baker College School of Music, gave an unusually fine violin recital on April 6. Her program included Bach's E Major Concerto and Brahms's D Minor Sonata. Miss Harlan's playing created a good deal of enthusiasm. Her accompanist, Herbert J. Jenny, the school's director, performed capably.

Adele Krueger, the widely known soprano, was one of the soloists at the German Festival in Bridgeport, Conn., April 22. She will be heard again in New York at the Waldorf, April 29.



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