

## Musical Treasure Chest #19

This week we (Musicians of Ma'alwcyk) played our first "live" concerts since March 8<sup>th</sup>! To be in front of people, instead of in front of a camera, felt both good and comfortable. Yet we all commented on how much more energy it consumes to play live. None of us has ever, during our professional careers, had a hiatus of this duration from performing for an in-person audience. And while the streaming requires preparation and rehearsal, it seems to be more casual somehow, even when there is a large audience watching. It's a strange phenomenon. But how nice it was to be able to see the audience response (muted though it was by masks and social distancing) and to have a chance to interact with them. I believe that the performing arts will have been altered permanently by COVID, but I do hope that the in-person audience experience will never entirely vanish. In the best of all possible worlds, there would be a combination of both!

Since this week marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ratification (August 18, 1920) and the certification (August 26, 1920) of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment (women suffrage), and since MofM has had a long-standing musical relationship with the fight for suffrage, I thought I would share with you for this MTC a piece of repertory that I think is worthy of familiarity and that I am doubtful you already know. Our "live" concerts this week featured this music, and one of the pleasures of the concerts was seeing the great interest of the audience.

**Marion Bauer** (1882-1955) was the youngest of seven children. Her older sister Emilie was her first piano teacher. When Marion completed high school at 16, she went to New York City to live with Emilie and to take composition lessons Henry Holden Huss. From there she traveled several times to Europe for study, including a stint with Nadia Boulanger (as her first American pupil). Bauer never completed a degree, but was none-the-less hired as a professor of composition at New York University, the first female in the music department. She also guest lectured at both Juilliard and Columbia University. She counted among her close friends Aaron Copland and David Diamond (who both also studied with her). One of her students was Milton Babbitt. Writing in almost all genres (except opera and sacred music), Bauer enjoyed commissions and premieres from some of the great musicians of the day, including violinist Maud Powell and conductor Leopold Stokowski (with the NY Philharmonic).

I have become a great advocate of her work. She writes in a dark, yet melodic and accessible style, and there is great energy and passion in her music. My introduction piece to her, and the one I played on the concerts this week, was ***Up the Ocklawaha, op 6***, which is a tone poem for violin and piano commissioned in 1912 by Maud Powell (who often played it on her recitals). This is a piece that every violinist should get to know, it's simply wonderful. And to stimulate your imagination, I give you the first part of a poem that Maud Powell wrote about her paddleboat journey up the river that she shared with Bauer to help her create the piece.

*A stream of bark-stained waters, A swift and turgid river.  
A restless, twisting, tortuous river,  
Bankless, through a cypress swamp, Escaping to the sea.  
Through Florida's mighty inland swamp,  
Rank, dark, malarious, fearsome, (Hell's Half Acre hidden within)  
Where noble trees of giant estate Stand knee-deep in the noisome ooze.*

Bauer and Powell lived in the same apartment building in NYC for a while. Powell was tremendously supportive of Bauer's work and encouraged her to do for composition what Powell had done for establishing the credibility of women as instrumental virtuosi. After her trip on the river, Powell described the trip to Bauer, who recounted the visit that inspired her creativity in *The Musical Leader*.

*She [Maud Powell] described it with such earnestness that I was deeply impressed with the picture which had been forming itself into the musical images in my mind ever since she had begun to talk. I went to my rooms and immediately set to work at the piece, having a theme knocking insistently at my head. And so, a few hours later, I went back to her and showed her the almost completed sketches. There were tears in her eyes when she handed it back to me and said, "It is just as though you had been there." So she played it and it was really hers.*

For the performance I have selected soloist Rachel Barton Pine. Not only is Rachel a fantastic violinist, she is also a wonderful promoter of Maud Powell's legacy. And, I was fortunate to have been Rachel's producer on two CDs with Sam Sanders back in the 1990s (when she was just a teenager), so I feel a particular affinity for her musicianship.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33E32IIGDQc>



*Metamora* paddlewheel steamboat on the Ocklawaha c. 1902. Did tours from Palatka to Silver Springs in the early 1900s.