



## E-Newsletter | August 2014

### Musical Women

Music is a significant contribution to the richness of our lives. In this month's e-newsletter, we feature some pioneers in the field of music: Camilla Urso, Maud Powell, Amy Marcy Cheney Beach, and Hazel Harrison. As we did our research, it was a wonderful discovery of these women and their amazing talent!



Maud Powell

When Camilla Urso expressed her desire to play the violin, her parents accommodated her wishes, even though in the 1840s, the violin was considered a "masculine" instrument. When she was 15 years old (in 1855), she performed with the New York Philharmonic to rave reviews. After her husband died during the Civil War, she moved North with her children and began teaching herself the music that adult performers play. She performed all over the world - in Europe, Australia, South America, and South Africa. She played concerts until shortly before her death in 1902.



Hazel Harrison

Child prodigy Amy Marcy Cheney Beach was writing her own compositions by age four; she began performing publicly at age seven. Her first song was published when she was 13; her public debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra was in 1883, when she was sixteen years old. In 1885, when she was 18, she married and, at the request of her husband, shifted her focus from playing the piano to

composing. Her compositions were published and performed by soloists of the time. In 1896, the Boston Symphony Orchestra performed her Gaelic Symphony in E Minor, Op. 32; the first symphony composed by an American woman. After her husband's death in 1910, she returned to performing and continued to compose. Beach wrote more than 150 numbered works including chamber music, orchestral pieces, church music and songs.

Another violinist Maud Powell benefited from the earlier, pioneering musicianship of Camilla Urso. Powell is credited with revolutionizing the art of violin playing. In 1904, Powell was the first solo instrumentalist to record for the Victor Company. She was thought to be America's greatest violinist of the time, and ranked with the supreme violinists of the day. Her recordings enabled the public to hear classical music without seeing the performance live. She brought music to the masses through the recordings.

Like Amy Marcy Cheney Beach, Hazel Harrison was a pioneering pianist and child prodigy. She started playing the piano at age four and by age eight was being paid for playing at local parties and dances. In 1904, she played with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra; the first American to play with a European orchestra whose education had only taken place in the U.S. Public funds were raised to enable her to study the piano in

Germany. When she came back to the U.S., her orchestral options were limited because African-Americans were not welcome in orchestras at that time. She played for special events; She also taught at Tuskegee Institute and, later, at Howard University.

Our lives have been enriched by the pioneering efforts of these women. We are proud to stand on their shoulders.

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## **Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America**

**Charlotte S. Waisman and Jill S. Tietjen**

[www.herstoryatimeline.com](http://www.herstoryatimeline.com)

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