

(From the Daily Chronicle, London June 1908)

Hochschule Archives
Shaw
Maud emended
April 1895
to April 1897

Miss Maud Allan's Bohemian Days

Famous Dancer's Happy Student Life in Weimar.

PROFESSORS AT PLAY

German Police horrified by Unconventional Sports.

from April 1898 to

Miss Maud Allan, the famous dancer, devotes the following instalment of her reminiscences to a picture of her happy student days and unconventional life at Weimar, where she was a pupil of the famous pianist, Busoni.

October
1900

Twinkling candles, carols, presents, faces lit with good will and friendship, greetings, merry making and laughter - with an under current of those deeper emotions that affect the throat and affect the heart - I can recall no more joyous Christmas memory than that of Heliger Abend, 1900.

But life had to be taken seriously, and the New Year found me returned to studies at the Hochschule, leading much the same busy life that had preceded my visit to Italy.

XX
NOW
SENSE

The ideas that had crystallized in my mind as I stood before Botticelli's Spring was not in abeyance; but as yet I had taken no one into my confidence.

It had always been my habit to do physical exercises every morning after my bath - just as the spirit moved me. . . .

I have loved open air freedom since my bare foot, bare headed days of my childhood. Every great city must abound in trammels and conventions from which it is good sometimes to get away. Some friends of mine [Newman] had a houseboat on the Spree - as well as being the cosiest, snuggest, and most picnic inviting houseboat imaginable, was fitted with motor and screw. In this, in the budding summer of 1901 my two friends and I escaped from Berlin by river, through locks and lake, to a delightful spot, Crumau, to water, woods, open space, and a measure of solitude.

Check with
Bubensham!

The freshness of young summer was in the air, and the days were a continual picnic. Up with the dawn, if it so pleased us, when the grass sparkled with the crystal dew. Free to wander, drift in our cockleshell boat, or read, laze or meditate, tempted ~~at~~ often to voice one's gladness at the joy of living, in song or in dance. More prodigal, but all part of the life and enjoyable, making our beds in our cosy little bunks, washing up, cooking our meals on the 'cutest' little stove imaginable; running out for fresh vegetables and falling back on canned ones! But who cared? What did it matter, if, one evening, it was brought home to us there was nothing more for the morrow's breakfast? We had left the spirit of domestic economy behind us in Berlin. Were there not mushrooms to be had for the gathering? Up the next morning, and ashore before the first cold, death grey of dawn had yielded to saffron and rose, mushrooming!! Behaving very much like children, perhaps, but not in the least bit ashamed of the fact, raising a cry of triumph as we found some monster mushroom; racing over the dew sprinkled turf to be the first to pluck and gather. It is good to let one's spirits run riot sometimes/ Then back with our spoils to our floating home, with an appetite bred of early rising and ~~fresh~~ fresh air that a Lucullus might have envied. ~~What a~~ What a flavour that breakfast of our own gathering had!! What delightful days of freedom and fresh air these were!

But the day came to loosen our moorings and return to Berlin.

It was this same summer that I went to Weimar to continue my studies under the direction of Ferruccio Busoni, a great pianist and one of the most lovable and kindest of men!!

*Summer
1901*

Old world Weimar, with its quaint squares, is rich in German art and literature, and its atmosphere is very different from that of busy, up to date Berlin. Here the great giant of literature, Goethe, lived, fifty years of his life. Hither came Schiller towards the end of his days at Goethe's invitation. Goethe's house in the Goethe Platz is the shrine of many pilgrims. In one room is the piano on which Meendlessohn played. Cranach's great picture of the Crucifixion, in which the face of Martin Luther, the giant of the Reformation, Melancthon and Bugenhagen, hangs in the Stadt Kirche. In Listz's ivy covered home is the pupil room, just as the same as when the Master taught there.

There was much more for me to enjoy than just study my music. Also I came in touch with a broader spirit of what I had best call Bohemian bon camaraderie than I had had in Berlin. It was the kind of bohemianism that I frankly delighted in, though I may as well confess that it did not appeal in the same way to certain old fashioned inhabitants, who had either never possessed youthful spirits or had forgotten the days when they did. The German tongue was our Esperanto.

We devoted our mornings to hard study. The most delightful relationship existed between Busoni and his pupils. To us, he was something, much more than a great master of his art. We really might have been his children,, and when our work was done we seemed to share quite naturally in his family life, with his wife, the dearest of women, and his two children. We were some 28, and what a mixture! American, Scotch, Canadian, Russian, Servian, Austrian, French, Italian and other nationalities.

On two afternoons of the week, Tuesday and Friday, we gathered at the Maestro's house for an informal kind of concert. There was no fixed program. But though there was a delightful spontaneity about these afternoons, we only gave our very best. In fact there were not unlike Quaker meetings, when only those who felt inspired, rose to speak. But their the compatison ceases.

We were really like a large happy family. On other afternoons, when lunch was finished, we would go to the Professor's beautiful villa for tea. No ceremony, no formality; we were sure of friendliness and a simple welcome. Time had a way of skipping on these delightful ~~MEMORABLE~~ afternoons, and we generally stayed to coffee, too. At other times Busoni and his wife would come to us, or at another time banded together in a happy fanil , we would make an expedition to one of those open air spots,, beloved by Germans, and take our coffee there. It might be the beautiful lawn of the Tempel Herrenhaus, or to the Belvedere Gardens, Chateau. Delightful places abound around Weimar. In deed, we "loved" our Master for the kindly, simple nature that went hand in hand with his wonderful brilliancy in art, and noone delighted more in our affection and respect for him than his ~~wifex~~ dear wife.

My memories of those Wiemar days are like a breath of fresh, clean, air. This kind of intimacy between pupil and student, in Germany, is characteristic of student life. Porfessors are not afraid that their dignity will be abated or their influence lessened by treating themselves as humans. I cannot picture so easily an Oxford "don" unbending in the samw way. Or an Oxford don playing "Cat and Mouse" after dusk with his pupils.

Ought I to whisper it? I have played that game in the squares of Weimar with a band that included a Professor and his wife. We certainly did disregard other conventions. Instead of climbing up many stairs to a friend's room, we would whistle our two noted, peculiar whistle from the street. It saved time, and was part of the bon camaraderie that made those days so delightfully refreshing. Sometimes when we wandered through the streets and squares, a Bohemian band of brothers and sisters, we would all link arms and take two short steps with one one and a long step with the other, and so continue - Hoopla!! It was just glad spirits asserting themselves spontaneously, and if we did behave like children let loose, I for one have had no regrets since.

Then we would have supper parties in our rooms, after which we would see one another home, a somewhat lengthy progress, delayed by "hopla" and "Cat and Mouse." A quiet, moonlit, square, a ring on our hand in hand, now closing in and shutting out the pursuer, now opening out to permit the pursued to dodge and thread a way among us, laughter, excitement, and unfeigned happiness, that is my memory of "Cat and Mouse" as we played it, till the grim, shocked inhabitants of Weimar put the police on our wicked tracks. But, perhaps, we had kept them awake.

Those delightful free and easy days of hard study and bon camaraderie came to an end too soon.

The autumn of 1901 found me back in Berlin. I was continuing to give rhythmic, physical expression to my fancies and the inspiration of silent music or the memories of pictures or nature; but I was still keeping my own confidence. My joy in trying to give expression to my idea seemed to grow on what it fed, and the ~~the~~ idea was dominating my thoughts more and more. Perhaps of all the great painters whose works I have studied, Botticelli has influenced me the most. His lyrical imagination,

When did
Mrs D
leave?
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his love of the wind, and all things that the wind stirs, trees, draperies, floating hair, so wonderfully expressed in his paintings, and his pure love of the human form, never defiled by a descent to meretricious art, had deeply impressed themselves on me. But if he inspired pose in those formative years, I was thinking more of Greek dance girls when I turned my thoughts to draperies. On those I fashioned my first dress.

I was still holding my own confidence, I had no doubts as to the rightness and truth of my idea, but I did experience dark moments when I wondered if I were the fit person to give it expression.

I had made the acquaintance of many distinguished and artistic person in Berlin, and among these was Marcel Remy, the Belgian composer, musical critic and savant. I did not know him well enough to count him a friend, deeply as I respected him and admired his work, his talents, his sparkling talents and his unerring, sensitive, taste, and I little dreamed when I thought of mentioning my idea to him, that he would one day compose the music for "The Vision of Salome."