

PROFESSOR AUER AS A TEACHER



"Yes, he is a wonderful and an incomparable teacher; I do not believe there is one in the world who can possibly approach him. Do not ask me just how he does it, for I would not know how to tell you. But he is different with each pupil—perhaps that is one reason he is so great a teacher. I think I was with Professor Auer about six years, and I had both class lessons and private lessons of him, though toward the end my lessons were not so regular. I never played exercises or technical works of any kind for the Professor, but outside of the big things—the concertos and sonatas, and the shorter pieces which he would let me prepare—I often chose what I wanted. "Professor Auer was a very active and energetic teacher. He was never satisfied with a mere explanation, unless certain it was understood. He could always show you himself with his bow and violin. The Professor's pupils were supposed to have been sufficiently advanced in the technic necessary for them to profit by his wonderful lessons in interpretation. Yet there were all sorts of technical finesses which he had up his sleeve, any number of fine, subtle points in playing as well as interpretation which he would disclose to his pupils. And the more interest and ability the pupil showed, the more the Professor gave him of himself! He is a very great teacher! Bowing, the true art of bowing, is one of the greatest things in Professor Auer's teaching. I know when I first came to the Professor, he showed me things in bowing I had never learned in Vilna. It is hard to describe in words (Mr. Heifetz illustrated with some of those natural, unstrained movements of arm and wrist which his concert appearances have made so familiar), but bowing as Professor Auer teaches it is a very special thing; the movements of the bow become more easy, graceful, less stiff. "In class there were usually from twentyfive to thirty pupils. Aside from what we each gained individually from the Professor's criticism and correction, it was interesting to hear the others who played before one's turn came, because one could get all kinds of hints from what Professor Auer told them. I know I always enjoyed listening to

Poliakin (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTJeKAussxA>) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uc95H9T3vWM>), a very talented violinist, and Cecile Hansen (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RY-wpGthLmY>), who attended the classes at the same time I did. The Professor was a stern and very exacting, but a sympathetic, teacher. If our playing was not just what it should be he always had a fund of kindly humor upon which to draw. He would anticipate our stock excuses and say: 'Well, I suppose you have just had your bow rehaired!' or 'These new strings are very trying,' or 'It's the weather that is against you again, is it not?' or something of the kind. Examinations were not so easy: we had to show that we were not only soloists, but also sight readers of difficult music.

A DIFFICULTY OVERCOME

"The greatest technical difficulty I had when I was studying?" Jascha Heifetz tried to recollect, which was natural, seeing that it must have been one long since overcome. Then he Remembered, and smiled: "Staccato playing. To get a good staccato, when I first tried seemed very hard to me. When I was younger, really, at one time I had a very poor staccato!" [I assured the young artist that any one who heard him play here would find it hard to believe this.] "Yes, I did," he insisted, "but one morning, I do not know just how it was—I was playing the cadenza in the first movement of Wieniawski's F# minor concerto,—it is full of staccatos and double stops—the right way of playing staccato came to me quite suddenly, especially after Professor Auer had shown me his method.