

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1373

The Great Violinists – Volume 25

EDDY BROWN (Chicago 1894 or 1895-1974) was the son of Jacob Brown, a wine merchant and an amateur musician. He was playing the violin before his third birthday. When he was four the family moved to Indianapolis, where he was taught by Professor McGibney and there, before his sixth birthday, he had given a public concert. At seven a patron and friend of the family, who was at this concert, enabled him to travel to Europe with his mother to study at the Royal Academy of Music, Budapest under Jenő Hubay. He became leader of the Conservatory Orchestra and he left in May 1909 with a gold medal and a purse which, enabled him to buy a better violin. In November 1909 for his London début at the Queen's Hall he was lent a Stradivarius. He played the Mendelssohn and Beethoven concerti with the New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Landon Ronald. It was a colossal success, as was his début in Berlin the following March. He then decided to study under Leopold Auer at St. Petersburg. In an interview published in 1919 he said that Hubay was "very thorough and painstaking in explaining to his pupils how to do things" but "Auer, a temperamental teacher, drags out of (the student) whatever there is in him, awaking latent powers he never knew he possessed . . . Hubay was a first-class pedagog (sic) . . . Auer is an inspiring teacher."

He remained in Germany until 1915, before returning to the United States. Once home his playing with leading orchestras was very well received. In his recitals he planned the first half to "appeal to the more specifically musical part of the audience, and to the critics" whilst in the second half he endeavored "to remember the general public; at the same time being careful to include nothing which is not really musical." Thus, at his Carnegie Hall début in December 1918 the first half of the programme included the "Devil's Trill" Sonata and Vieuxtemps's Concerto in A minor, and the second was of short, light numbers. But this rule could be broken: a series of evenings in 1936 with the pianist E. Robert Schmitz was devoted to the ten Beethoven violin sonatas played in chronological order.

In 1922 he formed a string quartet. Around that time, too, he began to be involved with the infant wireless, being much concerned to bring good classical fare to the new medium. He played frequently on Mutual Broadcasting's première station WOR, and became its musical director. Later he was heard on WQXR where he was musical director from 1937 to 1955. Subsequently he taught at the Cincinnati Conservatory and at Butler University, Indianapolis. At various times he owned violins by Grancino, Guadagnini, Guillami and Stradivarius. His Simon bow had belonged previously to Sivori. He used a metal E string. It was said that he knew what stage fright was only by hearsay.

As we hear, he was a spirited player and was highly finished technically. However, no man is a prophet in his own country, both he and Albert Spalding, born in 1888, coincidentally also in Chicago, suffered from the wave of Russian imports. In his memoirs Auer lists as his star pupils: Mischa Elman, Efrem Zimbalist, Eddy Brown, Jascha Heifetz, Toscha Seidel and Michel Piastro. All six made their careers in the United States.

Edith Lorand (Budapest 1898-New York 1960) was a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, Budapest. The claim that she studied with Carl Flesch is most unlikely. With her own orchestra, the title suggesting at times that it was Viennese or Hungarian, she was enormously popular throughout Europe, especially in Germany, and record sales were huge. The fare was salon music seasoned with light classics. She settled in Berlin. In 1934 her employment was terminated and she returned to Hungary, but in 1937 she emigrated to America where she and her orchestra toured with immense success. Just before she died she was planning to return to Berlin to start afresh. The Mendelssohn concerto was issued with Lorand playing the slow movement. The reason for this strange combination is unknown.

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"At the bottom of all technique lies the scale. And scale practice is the ladder by means of which all must climb to higher proficiency." - Eddy Brown