

The report on the orchestral quarrel brought a quick response from Alfred Hill. 'In the first place there has been no quarrel' he stated, 'my resignation is not, as one would suppose from the account referred to, the result of an impulse, but of calm and quiet thought'. He described how the Committee, realizing there was insufficient time to support both Ovide Musin and the Chevalier, decided to play three times for Musin and once for de Kontski. Alfred Hill took no part in the discussion:

After the resolutions to assist both were carried, I ventured to warn the members . . . I considered it my duty, whether right or wrong, to warn the members as I had been warned. The question was not whether de Kontski could play or not, but whether he was worthy of support . . . I did not say that "I would not conduct", I merely stated that I did not see how I could conduct, feeling as I did. I have had no communication whatever from the Committee since the quarrel began . . . My feeling in the matter is this, that if my labour has been in vain and I am not thought worthy of the consideration of the members, the sooner I give up a hopeless task the better. I do not regret what has happened; it is better for me to know that I have not the sympathy of the members of the Wellington Orchestral Society than to work on blindly at a barren and useless task. In conclusion, the article would lead one to suppose that M. Musin had been denied the services of the Society. As a matter of fact, he has refused to play with them under any other conductorship than my own . . .²⁷

The editor intervened. In an appended comment he wrote:

Mr Hill has surely no real grounds for saying that the account of the dispute in this paper attributed anything in the shape of 'impulse' to himself. We have only one question to ask Mr Hill, and that is, under what code he justifies the nature of the 'warning' he gave the members of the Wellington Orchestral Society?

Ovide Musin wrote from Marton on 12 October 1896:

. . . The merit of Chevalier de Kontski as a player is a matter for the public to judge. The critics of the colonies and America have expressed themselves on this point. To me the sacred name of Beethoven suggests the ideal personality of my art. I wrote to my friend Mr Alfred Hill expressing to him my opinion of the matter of de Kontski's announcing himself as a pupil of Beethoven, and I ventured to say that the gentleman would not have dared to make such a statement in Europe or America which is so easy to disprove. Mr Hill has been fortunate in having European culture, and the Wellington public have been fortunate in possessing an artist in their midst of such high standing as Mr Hill undoubtedly is. I am convinced that Mr Hill's resentment of the method of advertisement by de Kontski's manager would find him many sympathisers in Europe and America. For myself my most agreeable recollections are of the cordial and intimate friendship I enjoy with the greatest artists of my time, and I can only regret that it should appear from the article in today's paper that I have attempted to influence public feeling against a public performer.²⁸

To this the editor added: 'M. Musin may not be aware that his letter was read at a meeting of the Orchestral Society. No such use should have been made of a private communication.'

Alfred Hill was unlikely to let the editor's comment on *his* letter rest but in the issue of 14 October he is banished to the 'Answers to