

On Monday 26 October 1896 the Chevalier de Kontski made his final appearance on the stage of the Opera House in Wellington for his 'Grand Valedictory Ovation of Hoimage'. He had written a Concertstück *The Fay of the Mountain* especially for the Orchestral Society and Otto Schwartz had copied out the parts in Christchurch while on his way to conduct the Stanmore Band in the Dunedin band contest. 'It is a legend' said the *Evening Post* of 24 October, 'and contains some very pretty and clever work'. The occasion must have surprised even de Kontski, who proclaimed he had played before Queen Victoria, Tsar Nicholas of Russia, Tsar Alexander II, the King of Prussia, the Queen of Spain and other Crowned Heads of Europe. Interest centred on the new work: 'It is a very pleasing composition, richly orchestrated, and abounding in flowing melodies. The leading air given to the cornet (which was remarkably well played at the back of the scenes) is a most effective piece of work . . .'³¹

There then occurred a ceremony perhaps unique in the history of music in Wellington. His Worship the Mayor, Mr Geo. Fisher, came on to the stage and presented the Chevalier with a floral harp and a basket of flowers, the harp a tribute from the Orchestral Society, the flowers from local admirers. The Mayor himself had put off a meeting in order to be present at such an occasion:

He recalled with pleasure memories of Arabella Goddard, Reickel, Ketten, Kowalski and others. They had gone; some had died; others had ceased to work in the profession; but here was the Chevalier, at the great age of 84 [sic], still playing the compositions of great masters with genius incomparable . . . It was probably the last time they would ever see him; but his memory would remain fresh and green with them always.³²

A surge of applause swept the Chevalier back to the piano where he performed his 'Polish Patrol' as finale.

Alfred Hill conducted the Wellington Orchestral Society for the last time in *Hinemoa* at a 'farewell concert' on 18 December 1896 which, publicly at least, seemed to put past differences behind him. A little earlier, he had bade farewell to the Society in characteristically generous words:

Ladies and Gentlemen, it was my intention before leaving Wellington [to join the Musin Company], to meet you all once more, and for the sake of old times to forget the discords that have of late come between us. My arrangements will not however, permit of a personal meeting, so I beg leave to address a few words to you in writing. Putting the recent trouble on one side, knowing that you will think kindly of me when I am gone, I should like to wish the Orchestral Society well. To the younger members might I say that no ambition is too high; to the elders and fathers of the Society, whom we must all respect so much, may I add, have patience and bear with the enthusiasm, shall I say wild zeal of youth. Above all if you choose a leader, let him guide you. And now, goodbye and *auf wiedersehn*—Your late conductor, ALFRED HILL.³³