

valuable presents. Balling later spoke highly of Maori music, especially of the traditional waiata. He had witnessed funeral rites and haka and on some such ceremonial occasion had played viola solos for a chief who had presented him with a carved stick (probably a tokotoko) inlaid with paua shell.⁶

Balling's enduring and unique contribution to Nelson's musical life culminated in his setting up the School of Music, declared open on 8 June 1894. The prospectus described him as 'for six years Solo Viola Player at Wagner Festivals in Bayreuth'.⁷ At a concert held two weeks beforehand, on 22 May 1894, the Nelson *Colonist* had written that 'Mr Balling's great talent is so fully appreciated that it is needless to say more than that he delighted his hearers last evening'.⁸ Balling dominated the Nelson scene through the magnetism of his personality and the power of his musical gifts, whether as lecturer, conductor or performer.⁹ But within a year or two, almost inevitably, Nelson proved too remote and small to contain his gifts and Europe began to attract him once more. By the end of 1895 he was anxious to leave but before doing so he made a farewell tour of New Zealand with the English musician and composer Maughan Barnett (1867-1938), playing his viola alta in remote towns as well as cities. Their programme usually included a sonata by Rubinstein, which in Wanganui was hailed as a work of 'nobility and grandeur . . . Herr Balling goes to Europe and we are sure that his career there will be one that is well justified by his capacity as a musician and as an artist and by the nobility of his instrument'.¹⁰ At a Farewell Grand Concert in Nelson on 3 February 1896 Balling was presented with a silver inkstand to which he responded with graceful compliments: 'Nelson is not a large place', he said, 'and some may say it is a sleepy hollow, but I find it can recognize the good'.¹¹

On arriving in London, Balling determined to renew his campaign for the acceptance of the viola alta. A small collection of programmes, press cuttings etc., the manuscript of an address Balling gave to the London section of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, a letter from Hermann Ritter, and two editions of the classic book on the subject, E. Adema's *Hermann Ritter und seine Viola Alta* (Wurzburg, 1881, 1894), came into the possession of Ashley Heenan some years ago and which he generously made available to the author. They lay for some years as an annex to New Zealand material until the present occasion seemed an apposite moment to record the light they throw on what may well have been Balling's last attempt to win recognition for an instrument to which he had become devoted. The documents themselves evoke the atmosphere of the time and complement Balling's activities in Nelson. They include a striking photograph of Ritter, his instrument lying on a table behind him. Unfortunately there are no manuscript letters from Balling.¹²

Ritter himself had demonstrated his viola alta earlier in London, for the *Musical Times* of January 1886 gives an account of the occasion,