

remarking that it is 'fast superseding the old viola in Germany'.<sup>13</sup> The third edition of Ritter's *Die Viola-alta oder Altgeige* is reviewed in the same issue. Ritter's letter, written from Würzburg on 7 November 1896, is addressed 'Dear Sir' and informs the (unknown) recipient 'I shall not fail to give my permission for translating the *two* small books in English . . . I beg you to give my compliments to Herr Balling'.<sup>14</sup>

An early announcement of Balling's plans appeared in the *Musical Courier*. 'The viola-alta, which excited the admiration of Wagner and Rubinstein, will be played by its greatest exponent at Queen's Hall next Wednesday afternoon. The opportunity for musicians to hear this comparatively unknown instrument will be improved, and we may look for a rare treat'.<sup>15</sup> The same article describes Balling's New Zealand sojourn:

He had been led to believe that music was in an advanced state there, but found the reverse. He took a philosophical view of the matter, however, and started the first school of music in New Zealand at Nelson. He was obliged to act as principal, conductor and teacher of the various departments which he sought to establish.

The writer also mentioned that Balling 'is now preparing a book on his adventures'.

Three Wednesday afternoon recitals were planned in the small recital room of Queen's Hall at 3 p.m. on 28 October, 4 and 11 November, 1896, in association with the pianist Mr Carl Weber, the vocalists Miss Large, Mlle de André, and the accompanist Signor Tramezzani. The programme for the second of these recitals (that for the first is not with the collection), included Nardini's Sonata for viola alta and piano with Balling and Carl Weber, and Ritter's *Italian Suite* for the new instrument, a solo by Balling, who also played a Sarabande, Air and Gavotte by J. S. Bach. Songs and piano solos were interspersed. The same pattern occupied the third and final programme with Balling playing works by Ritter, Vieuxtemps and Mayer-Olbersleben.

Balling afterwards compiled a brochure of press criticisms, naturally selecting the most favourable. The *Standard* wrote:

So distinct are the advantages in many points possessed by the viola alta, that is is somewhat surprising that the instrument, which had gained the approval of Wagner, Liszt, and Rubinstein, and was used in the orchestra at the first Bayreuth Festival, should not have come into general use in this country. As a solo instrument its merits are undoubted, and it could have, apparently, no better exponent than Herr Balling.<sup>16</sup>

Balling's executant skills and abilities were recognized and the special qualities of the viola alta appreciated, as in the *Globe*: 'The upper register, in particular, seems capable of producing that peculiarly penetrating and almost nasal tone which has hitherto been entirely associated with the cello, and has indeed constituted one of its principal charms'. An extreme view had been expressed by the *Manchester Guardian* critic of