

Brian Salkeld. Recognition of the role played by recordings was exceedingly slow to be established in Britain, for it took Patrick Saul many years to gain proper support for his British Archive of Recorded Sound, whereas in Europe, and especially Germany, the value of such institutions had already been recognised. From the outset the Sound and Music Centre has been an integral part of the National Library's activities.

The documentation of our musical history is taken a stage further with Adrienne Simpson's intriguing account of the Simonsen Opera Company's tour of 1876. Fanny Simonsen was perhaps the best known opera singer of her generation but today she is a shadowy figure, not even appearing in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* except as an addendum. With such building blocks as this the history of opera in New Zealand can gradually be written. Adrienne Simpson, National Library Research Fellow for 1991, has chosen the nineteenth-century touring opera companies as her special topic and her symposium on *Opera in New Zealand: Aspects of History and Performance*, to be published in 1991, admirably extends the range of writings.

Finally, another link with the European tradition is outlined in the account of Michael Balling's campaign to introduce the viola-alta into musical life. He believed fervently that this larger-sized instrument was more effective than the customary viola, a view supported by Wagner, who had several in his Bayreuth orchestra. New Zealand audiences heard its foremost living exponent in recitals over a period of three years from 1894-6. Unfortunately the enthusiasm it aroused in Nelson and elsewhere was not reflected in sufficient strength by European critics but the account of Balling's endeavours recorded in the British press makes an absorbing postscript to his regime here as founder of the Nelson School of Music, one of the most luminous of all episodes in New Zealand music history.

I wish to thank the staff of the Alexander Turnbull Library for their courteous and skilled help in producing this special issue, especially to Joan McCracken, Marian Minson and Mr J. E. Traue, former Chief Librarian, and Philip Rainer. I hope these articles will bring added depths to our still incompletely documented musical past and stimulate others to explore it, thus enlivening and strengthening the music of the future.

John M. Thomson  
Guest Editor