

Sixty years after the events to be described, Alfred Hill still betrayed a reticence about these Wellington years. The press reviews of his concerts had been glowing but he appeared less than eager to discuss them. 'I was very unhappy in the Wellington Orchestral Society' he said, eventually. 'Otto Schwartz, the former conductor who'd known me before I went away, made my life a misery. I suppose he resented this chip of a boy.'² Other players would disagree with Alfred's tempi suggestions and create difficulties and the Minute Books show that Alfred's concept of a 'classical' programme, including a symphony each concert, often provoked disagreement. Frequently lonely at home, he relied on his musician father Charles, proprietor of the hat shop on Lambton Quay, for moral support.

The Wellington Orchestral Society consisted of about forty unpaid players, mainly amateurs, strengthened by a few professionals, often music teachers, some of whom would be paid. Founded in 1875, the Society, after the usual successes and vicissitudes of such organisations, came to life again in 1889 under a local violinist J. B. Connolly. A spirited musician, Angelo Forrest, conducted it in 1891 for a time, and when he resigned in the same year Otto Schwartz was appointed temporary conductor from 19 May until the return of Alfred Hill. Schwartz, a keen chamber music player on violin, viola and cello, had put together a fine library, ordering it direct from European publishers. Some of this music seems to have become part of the Society's library. Schwartz's brother Guido played French horn; both brothers originally came from Hamburg.

The Society had to cover its costs and there is no record of any subsidy or even of a substantial donation. It showed their pride in themselves that when the Wellington Horticultural Society offered a donation of £5 if they would play at the forthcoming Chrysanthemum Show, they refused: 'It was resolved that as it would clash with the musical profession were the Society to undertake such a performance, the offer be declined'.³ When Alfred Hill took over the Society it had a debit balance of £32.18.6 for 1891, £25 of which was owed to Berlin music publishers.

Alfred Hill appeared first before Wellington audiences at a private matinée on 17 January 1892 when he was reported as saying that he wished 'to enable the people of Wellington to enjoy what he had been enjoying in Europe'. He would try to 'raise the tone of music in the city and increase the appreciation of what was good'.⁴

His first orchestral concert took place on 5 February 1892 when he and Robert Parker (with whom his relationship was never close) shared the conducting, the soloist being the visiting pianist Henry Kowalski. Kowalski had an enthusiastic reception for his