

Mendelssohn Piano Concerto in G minor and his own paraphrase from *Faust* and a 'Galop of Bravoura'. The applause was thunderous, the building rang with bravos and a laurel wreath was thrown from the dress circle on to the stage.<sup>5</sup> Kowalski, who in Alfred's words 'liked to sparkle', when interviewed later in Sydney declared that Wellington bore the palm for music in New Zealand and had a capital orchestra conducted by a very clever young musician.<sup>6</sup>

Alfred Hill's inaugural concert with the Society itself took place on Monday 14 March 1892 in the Opera House. The programme included Spohr's 11th Concerto for violin, played by Alfred, a work 'not yet heard in Wellington' and Alfred's recently completed cantata in the high Victorian chromatic style, *The New Jerusalem*. 'The spectacle was one of the most pleasing that any citizen in a young country in an out of the way part of the world like this could wish for' wrote the *New Zealand Times*.<sup>7</sup> The Orchestral Society was held to be unequalled in the colony. This atmosphere of elation finds no reflection in the Minute Book.

So began what should have proved an artistically stimulating collaboration; musical standards certainly rose, but tensions between conductor and orchestra increased. The Orchestra's repertoire was enlarged—Alfred included works by his Leipzig teachers Hans Sitt and Carl Reinecke for instance—and the programmes grew to eight to ten sheets and began containing analytical notes. Encouraged by the approval of the Wellington critics, the Society decided to put in hand rehearsals of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

In July 1892 an overseas company led by a gifted violinist, Ovide Musin, arrived in Wellington. A pupil of Ysaye, Musin was one of that brilliant assembly of string players to emerge from Belgium in the second half of the nineteenth century. When Musin's agent wrote to the Society asking for the use of the orchestra, the committee agreed to play for a contribution of five guineas to the Drum Fund.<sup>8</sup>

Musin dazzled Wellington. His programmes had style and integrity and his supporting artists (his wife Madame Annie Tanner-Musin and the pianist Eduard Scharf) had comparable abilities, something that could not be said of many other visiting artists. Alfred formed a friendship with Musin which was later to prove crucial, when at the height of the crisis in 1896, Musin and his company returned.

The Society's affairs continued in an unspectacular way. They declined to play at the opening of the Poultry Show: 'Without any discussion it was decided that the request could not be entertained'.<sup>9</sup> They performed Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with great success