

Cosima Wagner mentions the episode with the touring theatrical company and Balling's sojourn in Paris and London. 'He told me that the number and power of the Jews there is terrifying and that they have mixed extensively [with the population]'.¹⁹ Other references to Balling occur in the same source. In 1903 she attends a performance of *Kobold*, an opera by Siegfried Wagner: 'I am very much looking forward to hearing it under Balling, who has studied it most carefully. Thanks to Mary's royal protection he is now as free as a bird in the air and seems to enjoy what gives him similar pleasure'.²⁰ In 1906 she writes, 'I am also going through *Tristan* with Balling and we find his presence stimulating and diverting'.²¹ In 1907 she continues

Balling is now with us and is an agreeable addition to our life. The striking impression he retains of people as well as of books and nature are stimulating and the unreservedness and simplicity with which he gives of himself does one good and enlivens daily existence. With a clear delivery he declaims the most varied roles from *Sternengebot* [Opera by Sigfried Wagner], which Müller [director of the musical preparations for the festival] played to us and also with Müller executed an enchanting Mozart sonata with [great] warmth of feeling. With him, as with Seidl [one of the most gifted of Bayreuth conductors], I feel as if nature had given him the disposition of a genius whilst it had endowed Mottl [a leading Bayreuth conductor] with a perfect and brilliant talent.²²

In 1908 Cosima records Michael Balling's marriage:

It also happened that in addition to the previous conductors there was a newcomer who has worked to his utmost limit for Bayreuth. This was Michael Balling. This enthusiastic Würzburger who made an artistic journey round the world in need and torment, and who has now happily returned, has found a true friend and wife in Mary Levi but a fortunate guide in Cosima, formed a wonderful quartet with Hans Richter, Muck [another leading Bayreuth conductor] and Siegfried Wagner.²³

There one may leave Balling, by now well established back in Europe. He was soon to become conductor of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester in succession to Hans Richter, a post he occupied from 1912 until 1914, when the outbreak of war found him at home in Germany and compelled to relinquish his English position. True to form, his brief career in Manchester was marked by bold initiatives as when he strove for proper financial support for the orchestra and proposed an opera house to make the city the centre of an English school of composers. 'He was a strong personality in every way and at his first concert had given the impression of a masterful musician', wrote the official historian of the orchestra, C. B. Rees.²⁴ Thomas Beecham, as he then was, denigrated Balling as yet another example of German dominance of English music, but Balling has an honoured place in the Hallé tradition.²⁵ From the acclaim accorded him by Dr Kulz in his Bayreuth funeral oration one might select any of a number of telling tributes but one has a special appeal: