

There was something of the musically baroque in him with his naturally human modesty and noble simplicity. There was a compulsive way in which he extracted the finest expression from a chorus, which for him came before everything, even before the rectitude of all details . . . He always embraced all great music with his whole personality.

Following his return to Germany Balling seems to have put to one side the cause he had advanced so fervently, the acceptance of the viola *alta*. There is no mention of his taking it up again although this does not preclude the possibility that he did. But before deciding that it was indeed a lost if idealistic pursuit, it is salutary to compare Balling's (and Ritter's) campaigns with a similar one that did succeed, that of Lionel Tertis (1876-1975) who struggled for the recognition of the viola itself. In 1910 Tertis had provided illustrations for a lecture on the viola read before the incorporated Society of Musicians in London by Mr Stanley Hawley. He played the Bach Chaconne in an exact transposition a fifth below as well as a miscellaneous selection of works. At that time the viola was truly 'a neglected instrument' and there followed what became known as 'the Tertis campaign' for recognition of its unique tonal qualities. Tertis also encouraged composers to write for it. It is noteworthy in the present context that Tertis played on a large viola 'to achieve his aim of a rich and resonant C-string tone which bordered on the quality of a cello and avoided the characteristic nasal quality of the smaller viola'.²⁶ Tertis's ideal viola may well have resembled the tone of Ritter's viola *alta*. Tertis also designed a large viola in collaboration with the English maker Arthur Richardson which would produce depth of tone. By 1922 Tertis had deserved a full-scale article by the critic Edwin Evans in the *March Musical Times*. Around 1952 the present writer heard him give a similar lecture in the Senate House of the University of London, but by then it was an account of a battle that had been won on every front even in composition, exemplified by the fine viola concertos of Hindemith and Walton. The viola campaign started with several advantages: players did not need to acquire or learn a new instrument, they had rather to look at an existing one from a fresh point of view. By comparison, that for the viola *alta* was fraught with almost insuperable difficulties, much greater than those which faced Boehm in the introduction of his keyed flute. It is tantalising nevertheless not to have had first hand experience of how the instrument sounded and how it blended in small and large ensembles. To have heard Michael Balling and Maughan Barnett playing together at Thomas' Hall on Wednesday 5 February 1896, when Balling played the Ritter and Rubinstein works, might have provided some of the answers.