

29 October 1896: 'It is merely obsolete and useless, that is all'. This did not appear in Balling's selection.

On Sunday 31 January 1897 he gave a recital for the Musical Society of Balliol College with H. H. Joachim on the violin and the music historian Ernest Walker (who had also written a Romance in B flat as a solo for Balling) as pianist and accompanist. No doubt Balling gave other recitals but no programmes of these exist in the present collection.

Balling made what must have been his strongest appeal for the instrument in a carefully prepared lecture for the London branch of the Incorporated Society of Musicians which he delivered in February 1897. The manuscript in Balling's hand runs to forty-four pages, secured with a metal pin, and it is corrected throughout. The initial opening paragraph has been deleted, yet it throws light on Balling's personality:

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, before beginning this paper may I ask to be excused if you find my pronunciation at fault. If there be in your opinion, flaw or defect in any view brought forward, — I shall be glad if you will remember that not one is so expressed that it will not readily lend itself to some modification.

The actual opening paragraph was certainly not apologetic and infinitely more forceful:

It is a well-known fact that every new thing which is brought forward must fight its way through all the conservatism, jealousy, suspicion, and, worst of all, laziness which is piled up in every direction, and around everything. Further, it has been experienced often enough, that the better new things are, the greater appear to be the difficulties put in their way, although their success is all the greater afterwards in spite of this.

Balling went on to give a full scientific account of the processes by which Ritter had arrived at the shape and dimensions of the viola alta. He describes its initial trial when Hans von Bülow was conducting the small orchestra of the Duke of Meiningen. The concert-master Fleischauer played the viola obbligato in Berlioz' *Harold in Italy*, making such an impression that Bülow at once ordered several instruments for his ensemble. We do not know where these were made nor by whom. Perhaps they were costly, far above normal viola prices, and this may well have been a deterrent to their wider adoption. Balling went on to detail Wagner's association with and praise for the larger viola and quoted the composer's congratulatory letter. This is still of interest as confirming Wagner's extraordinary sense of the potentials of the orchestra.

Let us hope that this improved and exceedingly ennobled instrument will be sent at once to the best orchestras and be recommended to the best viola players for their earnest attention. We must be prepared to meet with much opposition, since the majority of our orchestral viola players, I grieve to say, do not belong to the flourishing string instrumentalists. Enthusiastic leadership in this pioneer work will certainly bring followers, and finally the conductors and intendants will be obliged to encourage the good example set.