

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is, for me the best part of being President of the Festival, because it gives me an opportunity to thank you all for all your hard work.

I think of the Festival as being something like an orchestra, consisting of many component parts, each section with a leader, working behind the scenes for eventual perfection, the whole brought together by the conductor.

Obviously I can't mention each of you by name, but please be assured that your contribution to our Festival is much valued, however, I do want to comment on how very fortunate we are in our leaders, our Vice Chairmen, Marie Grant and Pauline Davies, and our conductor, Keith Lowe, all of them committed to making our Festival so successful – thank you all very much.

An Orchestra, which only plays Beethoven, however beautifully, might soon fail to attract younger players and audiences and so it is with the Festival. If we allow ourselves to rest on our past achievements we will soon lose our appeal, but I also believe it is those achievements and our past history which have interested people like Steinways and The Halle in becoming involved with the Festival. We are delighted to have their support and that of our other sponsors, and there are several exciting opportunities ahead. These opportunities will also, we hope, encourage younger people to take part in the Festival, not only as competitors, but as members of the audience and stewards as well. However, we should never lose sight of the fact that it is our strong past, which allows us to move forward and open our Festival to innovations whilst still remembering our core values.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am extremely proud of being President of such a successful Festival, and one with such a thrilling future, and I look forward to another fantastic Festival in 2010.