



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

*I have now completed three years as Chairman, and over that time I have had nothing but the utmost support from all the committee and all the helpers. It is a privilege to be part of such a wonderful organisation, and I am proud and honoured to be the Chairman of a group of people that are friendly, helpful and committed to the cause, and who unstintingly give of their time to the support of the children and to the arts in particular. We still have our annual quirks to deal with, but at no time do we let them become issues – only challenges – which we handle with a smile. This is down to lots of hard work by lots of willing people - hard graft but great fun – and I thank you all for your support.*

*The four days of the last year's Festival were yet again capped by a wonderfully varied, but extremely talented Finalé. At the same time, however, it was tinged with a certain amount of sadness as a result of Sarah Roache's untimely death. It was therefore wonderful to see both Bill Roache and his daughter Verity attend the Finalé in such sad circumstances. It showed the fortitude of them both. In his own style, Bill paid his own compliment to the whole team of organisers for not just the Finalé, but to the way the four days seem to run so smoothly – to which I add my own thanks.*

*We also had another important guest at the Finalé – Kathy Stott – the international pianist – who, as a board member, was representing the Hallé Orchestra. As you are all aware we have entered into a partnership with the Hallé to help promote music within the community. The Hallé's vision of encouraging performance and showcasing and nurturing talent is shared by the Festival, and we know that this partnership will complement the Hallé's Education Programme of promoting the enjoyment and understanding of music in all sectors of the community. This partnership continues into 2010 with the possibility of a 'Masterclass' following the Festival, sponsored by the Festival, facilitated by the Hallé, with individual coaching in the morning and group classes in the afternoon.*

*However, this past year has not been without its challenges. We are all only too well aware of the current world economic climate. As a result it becomes more and more of a challenge to find sponsors to support us. However, where some of our sponsors have cut back in their commitment, others have stepped up to the plate and surpassed their contributions for last year. I give my great thanks to Mark Jones of Emerson Holdings who has now taken on the 'printing' commitment. Mark and the Jones family are major sponsors (and Friends) of our Festival, and this extra commitment has come at just the right time for us. Printing is one of the most significant costs incurred by a Festival, so to have the 'Emerson family' commit to this for the foreseeable future as one of their many contributions to the local community, is very, very welcome.*

*With the name of the Hallé Orchestra as a major sponsor, I have spent some time in the local state schools promoting the Festival. As a result we already have commitment from local state schools to enter more performers this year, along with a bigger commitment from the local private schools especially in the speech and drama arena. I still have some meetings to attend at other state schools, but it is looking bright for the future of our Festival, and our commitment to 'music for all'.*

*Finally, a little reminder!! I know we have yet to have the May 2010 Festival, but just remember that 2011 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of an 'Alderley Edge Festival Society' and we are looking forward to doing something special to celebrate this wonderful event. We have come a long way since 1911, a journey originally taken by a few, for the many who love the arts. Long may we continue on that journey, with the belief that the youth of today, like their predecessors, still have something to offer. If we can nurture a small element of the talent that is evidently out there, then our journey has been well worth while. To all of you - committee, performers, and other volunteers - I again thank you for helping us along our way.*

**Keith R. Lowe**