



**KEITH JOHN**

**ORGAN OF GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL**



**SCHUMANN ~ J.S. BACH**  
**S. S. WESLEY ~ LISZT**  
**CAPOCCI ~ ELGAR**

The organ in Gloucester Cathedral has, for the last fifty years, been the source of controversy, delight and confusion. The 1971 re-build by Hill, Norman and Beard with Ralph Downes as the Consultant raised more than a few eyebrows at the time. I actually heard conversations such as “where’s the Tuba?” Oh dear, they just “didn’t get it”. The cathedral, its Choir and Organist John Sanders became custodians of an unique English Classical Cathedral Organ, devoid of all the over-powering over-blown romantic stops which typically smothered each other. Instead, the organ possessed clarity, fiery reeds, sparkling upper-work and the ability to lead choir and congregation perfectly in both Nave and Quire. Its new East Choir Organ was ideal for accompanying the choristers and for keeping their tuning so superb as recordings from those days demonstrate.

Keith John and I were in the cathedral choir together and have kept in touch all our lives. In the 1980s, he and I decided that I would make some recordings of this special instrument, played by Keith. It is these recordings you hear today, thankfully preserved, having been tucked away in drawers and forgotten about until now.

I recorded these tracks from the east side of the instrument using two AKG microphones. The Wesley was recorded much earlier (1974) by persons unknown. Mandy Timms (now Balsdon) was the console assistant. I have remastered all tracks and we hope they will bring back many memories of this very special sound.

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These performances (apart from the Wesley) were privately recorded during the course of two cold evenings in February 1986. Only the Elgar is edited, taken from two performances on the last evening.

The Wesley concluded a private service in April 1974 which featured liturgical music by renowned Gloucester music teacher, Patience Gobey.

What is special about all of these recordings is that they are played on the Gloucester Cathedral organ as Ralph Downes designed and intended it to sound after the major restoration and rebuild of 1971. The instrument has since been enlarged and modified in many ways, so much so that the striking sounds of Downes’ original conception, which consisted of a carefully voiced organ enclosed in two historic cases, have now been lost.

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