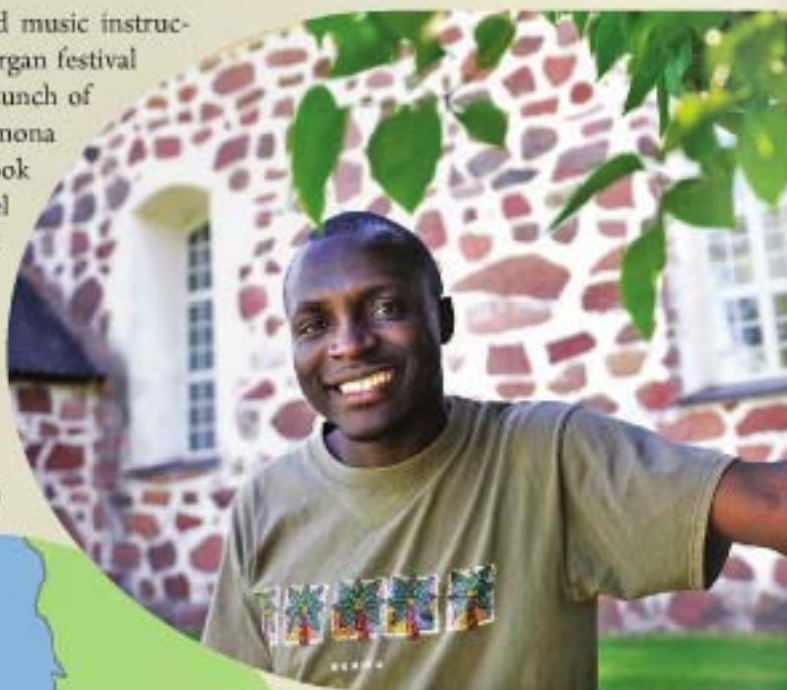


The Organist's Unlikely Venue

In 2004, fresh out of Juilliard, Patrick Kabanda, PA organist and music instructor, had never heard of the far away islands. Or of the exquisite organ festival that has been held there since 1975. He attended the New York launch of *Seven Days of Possibilities*, a book by *New York Times* writer Anemona Hartocollis about Johanna Grüssner, a young jazz singer who took her Bronx public school students to the islands to perform gospel music. Kabanda met Grüssner and her mother, Lillemor, natives of this tiny unknown outpost. In conversation, he revealed he was an organist. They asked for a CD of his playing, which he sent soon after.

Four years passed, and he had forgotten about them. Then, in September 2008, an e-mail arrived inviting him to play at the prestigious 2009 Ålands Orgel (Organ) Festival in the Åland Islands, a semi-autonomous Finnish state on a small archipelago between Sweden and Finland.

Kabanda arrived in mid-June to discover a nature lover's paradise and an organist's dream. Scattered throughout the islands were small medieval Swedish churches and their intricate and eccentric organs, most of them without "preset" capabilities. They were a challenge to play. But play he did—Liszt, Bach, Mendelssohn, Messiaen, Gárdonyi, Weaver, and a budding composer named Kabanda.



(For the full, varied program and to **H**ear pieces from his performance, go to www.andover.edu/magazine.)

"It was wonderful luck to get to play there," says Kabanda, the first African organist ever to participate. "The quality of the musicianship was so inspiring that I went to every concert in the seven days of the festival."

Internationally known organists participated. The local newspaper feted and photographed Kabanda. He explored the picturesque islands and met many people—locals, and internationals drawn to the music. He was struck by "how we are all different, yet connected when it comes to music—our international language."

The young organist, an enthusiastic teacher and member of the Andover faculty since 2004, grew up in Uganda where he developed his interest in the organ as a chorister at Namirembe Cathedral in Kampala. His music brought him to North Carolina and eventually to Juilliard, where he earned a master's degree. No stranger to the world stage, Kabanda also has performed in Asia, Africa, and other parts of Europe.



—Sally V. Holm