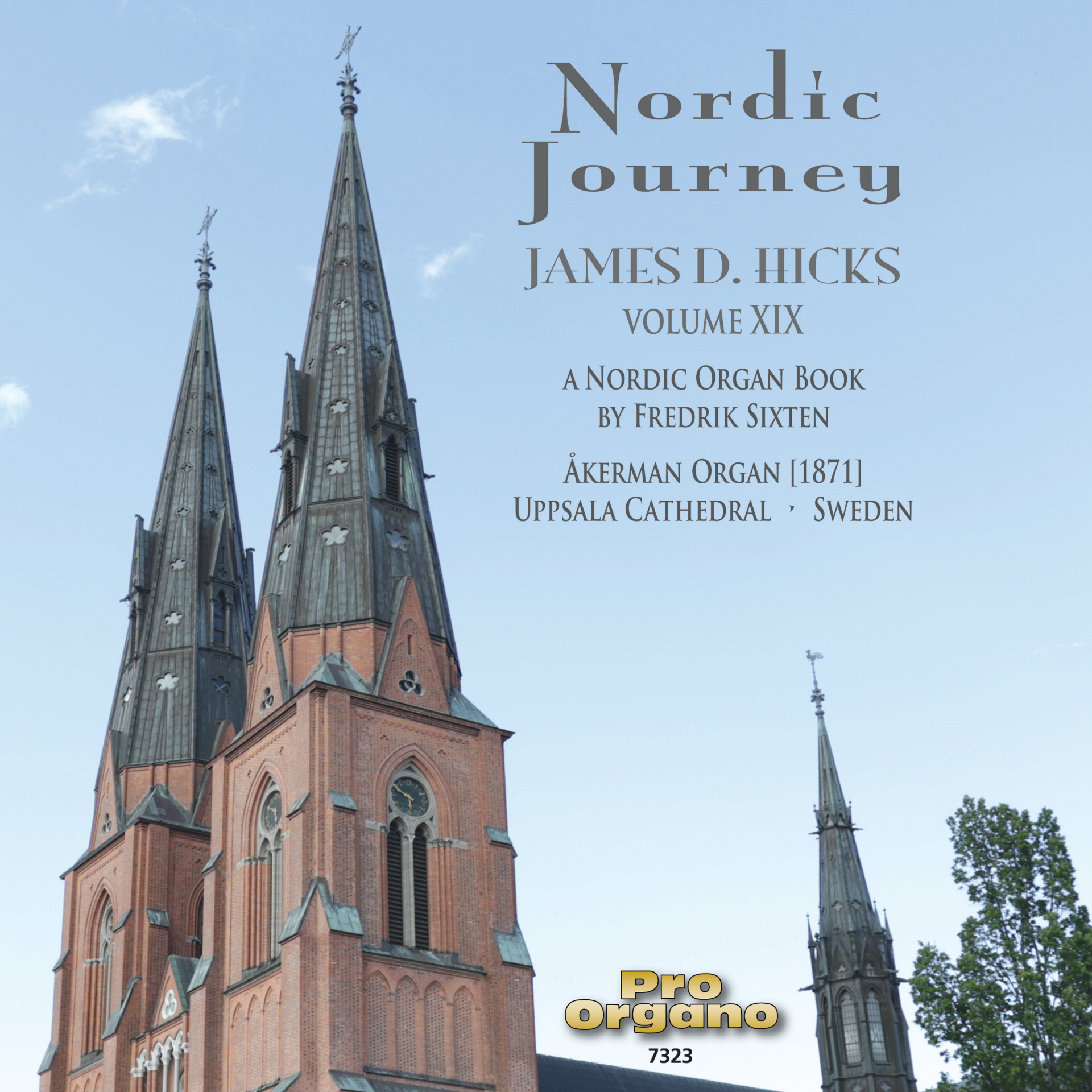


Nordic Journey

JAMES D. HICKS

VOLUME XIX

A NORDIC ORGAN BOOK
BY FREDRIK SIXTEN

ÅKERMAN ORGAN [1871]
UPPSALA CATHEDRAL • SWEDEN

Pro Organo
7323

Pro Organo

Location audio engineering, videography, cathedral photos and photo of James D. Hicks: Jean-Philippe Apel
Audio & Video post-producer: Frederick Hohman, Pro Organo, South Bend, Indiana. **ProOrgano.com**
Recorded in Uppsala Cathedral,Sweden on June 25, 26 & 27, 2025

Nordic Journey

VOLUME XIX – A NORDIC ORGAN BOOK, BY FREDRIK SIXTEN

Program Notes by James D. Hicks

I commissioned ***A Nordic Organ Book*** from Swedish composer Fredrik Sixten for inclusion in my long-running recording project *Nordic Journey*. The opus dates from 2024. Comprised of twenty-four miniatures in all major and minor keys, the intent of the endeavor was to demonstrate some of the ways a modern, twenty-first century composer might approach the pipe organ. Employing both original themes and borrowing from the vast heritage of Nordic folk music, Fredrik Sixten has created a unique collection that uses the past as a foundation for the creation of something completely new and relevant for the time in which it was composed. Each movement has a duration of little more than two minutes, and these miniatures offer an encyclopedic array of musical possibilities, all inserted within a radically compressed motivic canvas. Not one note is wasted or out of place, and *A Nordic Organ Book* thus achieves a rare and concisely presented means of expression. The composer makes note of several prior collaborations between us, quoting several themes from these past endeavors. In addition, the collection exists as a valuable resource for students wishing to learn more about contemporary repertoire for the pipe organ.

Using the recently restored 1871 Åkerman organ in Uppsala Cathedral as the vehicle in which to present this important new music, *Nordic Journey XIX* seeks to balance the creation of new music within the Nordic heritage of the past. Housed in perhaps the spiritual center of Nordic Christendom, the sacred space of Uppsala Cathedral, with its historic west gallery organ, is the physical embodiment of Sixten's approach, one that is grounded in tradition but seeks to build new musical paths upon that foundation.

Acknowledgments

Having access for recording purposes to such a sacred and historic structure as Uppsala Cathedral is a privilege in and of itself. With this in mind, I am indebted to Ulric Andersson and Robert Patrick Christopher Bennesh of the cathedral's music staff for making this project possible. I am grateful to Robert in particular for his extremely helpful assistance in the premiere of this music by Fredrik Sixten and his warm hospitality. With this recording, the talented recording engineer Jean-Philippe Apel has now led his eighth *Nordic Journey* project, and I remain grateful for his expertise and friendship. There is no doubt that the leadership of Frederick Hohman, founder of Pro Organo, is instrumental to all of these endeavors. His keen aural instincts are second to none, and I wish to acknowledge his willingness to listen to all of these recording sessions from afar, offering essential interaction along the way. Finally, I wish to thank my wonderful wife Elisabeth Hicks for her ongoing love and support and who in this endeavor offered important insight into various interpretative matters, particularly concerning the registrations heard in the final movement of the Sixten composition.

The following description of the various movements found in *A Nordic Organ Book* has its impetus from notes provided by the composer. Its current form was edited by James D. Hicks.



A NORDIC ORGAN BOOK by FREDRIK SIXTEN

#1. a-minor • Prelude • 2:59

A Nordic Organ Book opens with a rhythmically vital composition, an essay full of vigor and energy. In recognition of the first commission in the *Nordic Journey* recordings, *Variations for Organ* (appearing on *Nordic Journey Volume I*, dating from 2010 and recorded on the Setterquist organ at Linköping Cathedral, Linköping, Sweden - Pro Organo #7239), the composer here employs the same Swedish melody that he used in the older work. It is a theme from Åhl Village, located in Dalarna, the province most connected with folk traditions of the country. The work is in three sections, fast-slow-fast, concluding with a brief and quiet coda.

#2. C-major • Processional • 2:19

Taking his cue from the mature works of J.S. Bach, this second composition reflects the majesty of the older master's iconic *Prelude and Fugue in E-flat major, BWV 552*. Sixten's essay, with its dotted rhythms and dignified mien, builds upon the older model by inserting pungent chords and quickly moving arpeggiations. The composer leads the work to a more mystic attitude, but extends the dotted figurations. After a passage containing double pedalings underneath the continued long-short manual doublings, Sixten guides this second prelude back to its original presentation before concluding *Processional* on a second inversion C major chord in the highest range of the keyboard. All thematic material in this composition is original and created by the composer.

#3. d-minor • Arabesque • 1:43

The culture of the Åland Islands has played an important role in several volumes of the *Nordic Journey* recordings. Although technically a part of Finland, this archipelago is an autonomous self-governing community whose heritage is Swedish. In this fast paced third work, Sixten crafts swiftly moving flute arabesques over a pedal part that alternates between pizzicato eighths and the quotation of a bittersweet melody from Åland.

#4. F-major • Chorale • 2:45

Perhaps the most overtly Romantic of these twenty-four compositions, number four seems to take its genesis from the late nineteenth-century French school with its lyricism and harmonic identity. The original theme appears first in the pedals and then later on in a larger registration in the manuals. A brief shadow clouds this musical ray of sunshine before returning to the pastorale of its opening.

#5. g-minor • Canon on the octave • 3:51

A repetitive rhythmic idea evokes the feeling of a journey in the Nordic lands before presenting one of the most famous Swedish folk songs, *Gammal Fäbodpsalm*, a theme perhaps best known in a setting for organ by Oskar Lindberg (1887-1955). Sixten treats this Swedish theme as a two-part canon in the manuals while the "journeying" theme continues in the pedals. The work then concludes with the ideas found in the beginning.

#6. B-flat major • Blues • 2:41

Blues is an important influence on much contemporary Scandinavian expression. Sixten himself



The center façade of the 1871 Åkerman organ in Uppsala Cathedral, Sweden.

composed a work entitled *Mourning Blues* in 2006 and here returns to this means of expression. He presents this original melody three times with varying moods before concluding the piece in a manner typical of the form.

#7. c-minor • Fantasia • 2:11

Sixten composed a work for 2011's *Nordic Journey Volume XI* entitled *Cantabile* which employed an old Danish folksong, *Jag vet en dejlig rosa*. He wrote at that time that "the Nordic folk tunes have always played an important role in my musical output. It expresses the melancholic soul of me…and this tune is often connected to Denmark because of its lyrics; in this case, a heartfelt love song." In this new work, the theme occurs in an improvisational style, replete with contrasting passages.

#8. E-flat major • Fanfare • 1:42

Here Sixten creates a festive and joyful piece that contains an original theme. The mood is only briefly interrupted as Sixten uses one passage to set the melody in a minor key before returning the work to its original mood.

#9. f-minor • Impromptu • 2:50

The Norwegian folk song used for this composition was also employed in Sixten's 2013 work *Lamentation* found in *Nordic Journey Volume IV-Modern Masters*, recorded in Sweden during the summer of 2013 at Västerås Cathedral. The theme has a dark and even sinister character, before temporarily giving way to a short, more lyrical passage and concluding strongly with a virtuosic and impassioned coda.

#10. A-flat major • Kvaðdansur • 2:12

The fascinating culture of the Faroe Islands has informed several productions within the *Nordic Journey* endeavor. This ancient and self-governing archipelago of eighteen islands located in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean has developed its own distinctive artistic culture. The Faroese chain dance dates from the Middle Ages and its circular formation is one of the country's most enduring creations. Sixten's treatment of this communal dance juxtaposes strict rhythms in the left hand and pedals with a playful melody in the right hand.

#11. b-flat minor • Prelude & Fugue • 2:35

Employing only original themes, this condensed Prelude & Fugue covers a lot of ground in a short period of time. Alternating between lyric, expressive passages and quite dramatic outbursts, the composition seems to evoke something of the witty utterances of French master Francis Poulenc, one of the important influences on the art of Fredrik Sixten.

#12. D-flat major • Pedal etude • 2:28

One of the salient characteristics of the pipe organ is that one not only performs with both hands, but, in addition, both feet. As such, this collection makes note of this basic premise with a study for the pedals. The *cantabile* vocality of the double pedal part exists in contrast to the static rhythmic ideas presented in the manuals. All thematic material is original and by the composer.

#13. e-flat minor • Ostinato • 2:18

Sixten introduces the fifteenth-century Swedish

ballad *Örjansvisan* (thought by some musicologists to be the earliest surviving secular melody from this country) in the pedals, and then develops it into two different ostinatos. This ancient melody reappears, but now in parallel harmonies in the manuals and a concluding pedal solo, which then fades away into the air.

#14. G-flat major • Nocturne • 2:53

This is an impressionistic, atmospheric essay for manuals only. It is cast in three sections with the outer passages developing motives from a Greenlandic theme, while the glittering middle section presents the melody in cascading flourishes.

#15. g-sharp minor • Chaconne • 2:21

Reusing a chaconne-theme from the fifth movement of Sixten's 2016 *Symphonia Aurora Borealis* (recorded in 2017 on the restored Steinmeyer organ located within Nidaros Cathedral, Trondheim, Norway as a part of *Nordic Journey Volume VII)*, the composition unfolds in a set of five variations that conclude with a modified version of the original idea.

#16. B-major • Trio-canon on the fifth • 2:11

Sixten fashions this work as a lyric piece for primarily three voices. His original theme begins in the right hand after a brief accompaniment in the left hand. The pedal then follows the right hand as a canon but on the fifth. Here, Sixten achieves a bucolic feeling of repose.

#17. c-sharp minor • Toccata • 1:50

A powerful Icelandic theme, *Sofðu imga ástin min*, serves as the foundation for this toccata. Sixten first employed this melody as a part of his 2018 *Nordic Variations*, a work recorded at the Hallgrímskirkja, Reykjavík, Iceland as a part of *Nordic Journey Volume VIII*. The thundering chords of the outer sections frame a brief but jaunty scherzo in its middle.

#18. E major • Rhapsody • 1:41

Punctuated by energetic, driving figuration, this piece contrasts all of the relentless movement with a simple, straightforward melody that seems to evoke a Latino derivation.

#19. f-sharp minor • Ballade • 2:33

Perhaps the most intimate movement of the collection, this composition derives its theme from a small Swedish village in Estonia. Conceived only for one manual, the work nevertheless displays an astoundingly complex array of rhythm and polyphony.

#20. A-major • Scherzo • 2:01

Cloaked by glittering manual figurations, the primary theme appears immediately in the pedals; triadic in nature with a marked emphasis on the first note in each iteration. Amidst all of the quickly moving manual work, Sixten provides contrast with a legato second theme and the *Scherzo* then proceeds with its energetic vitality, only to be concluded with three quarter triplets and a final A major chord.

#21. b-minor • Hambo • 2:14

The Nordic culture possesses many versions of folk dances, but perhaps the Hambo is one of the best known and popular of these traditions. Set in ¾

time and using original thematic material, Sixten presents his take on old expressions but bringing the form into the twenty-first century with its rhythmic syncopations and advanced chord progressions.

#22. D-major • March • 1:56

Conceived as a joyous march, the work had its impetus as a processional during the baptismal liturgy for the composer's first grandchild.

#23. e-minor • Passacaglia • 3:58

Influenced by the *Passacaglia* he wrote for *Nordic Journey Volume IV*, Sixten returns to his unique interpretation of the form by presenting the original theme in the organ's upper register, gradually descending until it is finally placed in the bass. After a series of variations, it is juxtaposed with the North Swedish folksong *Vårvindar friska* before the piece reaches a somewhat enigmatic conclusion.

#24. G-major • Finale • 3:19

The final composition of *A Nordic Organ Book* combines fragments of Nordic folk music with a more extroverted style of American expression and thus bringing the collection to a triumphant and satisfying conclusion.

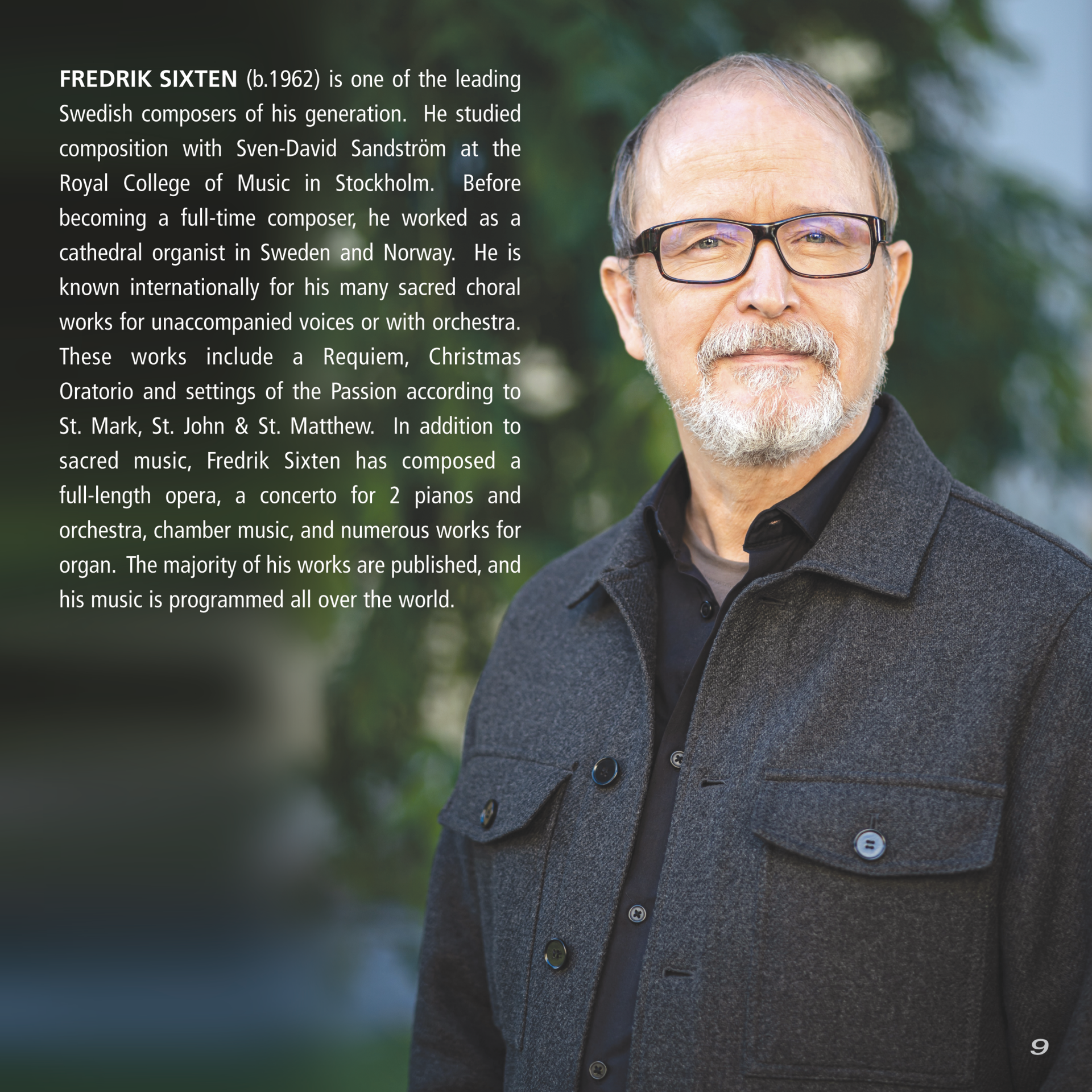
David Wikander (1884-1955)
Elegi fiss moll • 3:31

A native of Dalarna, Sweden, David Wikander spent the bulk of his career in Stockholm, serving as organist at the Storkyrkan and becoming the city's first cathedral organist. He is known for his editorial work with the publication of new hymnals and his vocal and choral compositions form the vast majority of his output. Wikander's organ works can be divided into two periods with the earlier group influenced by late Romanticism and the latter concerning itself with the new neoclassic influences from Germany during the 1920s. As such, his early productions such as the *Elegi* heard on this recording demonstrate an ability to write sensitively wrought melodies existing within a typically late Romantic chromaticism. *Elegi* probably dates from the period between 1910 and 1913. Wikander was a close friend of Oskar Lindberg from his earliest student days, and perhaps some of the national Romantic spirit of the latter informed the work of the former.

Johan Peter Knut Lönngren (1816-1874)
Sonat för orgel: III. Allegro risoluto • 4:10

This Swedish composer from the nineteenth century was born and studied in Stockholm before spending the bulk of his career in Växjö. His body of work includes compositions for piano and two orchestral symphonies. His three-movement *Sonata in c-minor for organ* probably is his only essay for that instrument. The excerpted final movement which concludes this recording is an exciting, dramatic piece conceived in a fine mainstream Romantic style, and is a perfect match for highlighting the full organ sonorities of the Åkerman organ.

FREDRIK SIXTEN (b.1962) is one of the leading Swedish composers of his generation. He studied composition with Sven-David Sandström at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. Before becoming a full-time composer, he worked as a cathedral organist in Sweden and Norway. He is known internationally for his many sacred choral works for unaccompanied voices or with orchestra. These works include a Requiem, Christmas Oratorio and settings of the Passion according to St. Mark, St. John & St. Matthew. In addition to sacred music, Fredrik Sixten has composed a full-length opera, a concerto for 2 pianos and orchestra, chamber music, and numerous works for organ. The majority of his works are published, and his music is programmed all over the world.





James D. Hicks is pictured at the console of the 1871 Åkerman organ in the gallery of Uppsala Cathedral.

James D. Hicks is a concert organist living and working out of Califon, New Jersey, USA. A graduate of the Peabody Conservatory of Music, Yale University, and the University of Cincinnati, Hicks has also studied at the Royal School of Church Music in the UK. James held liturgical positions throughout the USA over the course of thirty-five years and now devotes himself to concert, publishing, and recording projects.

Over the past fifteen years, James has researched the music of the Nordic lands and the result is an ongoing venture entitled *Nordic Journey*. The endeavor places emphasis on new music. He has commissioned over seventy-five compositions from Nordic composers and other musicians in northern Europe, and he has researched repertoire from the past that has hitherto never been recorded or published. With the Autumn 2025 release of *Nordic Journey Volume XIX / Nordic Organ Book by Fredrik Sixten*, the series now comprises thirty-one discs, all produced for the American label Pro Organo with distribution digitally worldwide by Naxos of America LLC, accessible through the usual digital streaming platforms.

A parallel aspect of the *Nordic Journey* project is the production of hardbound editions that include premiere publications of many of the works James has commissioned as well as several previously unavailable compositions from earlier eras. The Norwegian firm Cantando released the *Nordic Journey Series Volume I* in 2018 (now available at www.musikkforlagene.no) and Norsk Musikkforlag published The *Nordic Journey Series Volume II* in 2020). Norsk Musikkforlag has most recently produced the third volume in October 2022. A fourth volume of this series is set for a 2025 release.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, James wrote the first full-length book devoted to the complete works for organ by Norwegian composer Kjell Mørk Karlsen on the occasion of the artist's seventy-fifth birthday.

In addition to his endeavors concerning the organ and its literature, James is an enthusiastic exponent of traditional music from the British Isles, performing on a number of instruments associated with these traditions. James is an avid hiker and has walked the historic Hadrian's Wall trail in Northern England as well as traversing numerous sections of the Appalachian Trail in the USA.

To learn more about James D. Hicks, you are invited to visit his website at **www.jamesdhicks.com**.

THE NORDIC JOURNEY SERIES OF ORGAN RECORDINGS

In January 2010, the producer for the Pro Organo label, Frederick Hohman, joined talents with James D. Hicks, in producing and releasing the very first ***Nordic Journey*** recording. Little did they know then how this concept would grow over the next 15 years. As long as conditions permit, this journey will likely continue. In these recordings, many of them double-CD releases, James D. Hicks has brought a greater appreciation for composers from the Nordic lands, with literature spanning over four centuries. An even greater achievement has been Dr. Hicks' commissioning and recording of new organ music by living composers, ranging from those who are quite young and new to the music scene, to those who have had many decades of experience and renown.

With each new ***Nordic Journey*** release, producer Hohman has created a documentary video, using footage, often with composer and artist interviews, acquired on location during the recording sessions. These videos range in duration from just a few minutes to over 20 minutes.

Nordic Journey videos are accessible on the Vimeo video-sharing platforms. Internet addresses are provided here. Videos may be also found on the recording label's product pages at the website: **ProOrgano.com**.

VOLUME I • item 7239 • LINKÖPING, SWEDEN
https://vimeo.com/673916977

VOLUME II • item 7262 • MALMÖ, SWEDEN
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VOLUME III • item 7263 • SKARA, SWEDEN
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VOLUME XVI • item 7310 • ULM, GERMANY
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VOLUME XVII • item 7316 • BODØ, NORWAY
and REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND
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VOLUME XVIII • item 7319 • PORI, FINLAND
https://vimeo.com/1073398858

VOLUME XIX • item 7323 • UPPSALA, SWEDEN
https://vimeo.com/1115676937



A distant exterior view of Uppsala Cathederal at dusk on June 27, 2025

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THE ÅKERMAN ORGAN IN UPPSALA CATHEDRAL

There are two substantial pipe organs in Sweden's Uppsala Cathedral. In 2009, an organ by the Italian firm of Fratelli Ruffatti was inaugurated in the Cathedral's north transept. The Ruffatti instrument follows an eclectic design, with 70 stops, 4,175 pipes and 37 bells, all controlled from a moveable console.

The organ heard in this recording is a much more historic instrument, and is situated in the Cathedral's west end, built in 1871 by the Swedish organ builder Per L. Åkerman. The 1871 organ replaced a large baroque organ by Johan Niclas Cahman, known as the the greatest 18th-century Swedish organ-builder. Åkerman, born in 1826, received an organ-building degree in 1852 from the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm. From 1854 to 1857 Åkerman studied abroad in Belgium, France and Germany, during which time he was known as a gifted pipe voicer.

The 1871 Åkerman organ in Uppsala reflected the builder's study of French Cavaillé-Coll organs, with bold scaling and harmonic flutes, as well as with barker lever key action and ventils for reeds and upperwork. The console of the organ at Uppsala Cathedral showed influences of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll's organ in Ste Clothilde in Paris, home to the famous organist and composer César Franck. The organ has 50 stops distributed over 3 manuals and pedal, with 2,532 pipes, and it is an example of Romanticism in organ-building. The organ was rebuilt in 1939-1940, with another renovation in 1976 by Walter Thür. Some of the organ's original stops were altered in the rebuild and renovation, however, the organ retains its overall original character.

ORGAN SPECIFICATION • UPPSALA CATHEDRAL, SWEDEN

MANUFACTURED / INSTALLED IN 1871 BY ÅKERMAN

I HUVUDVERK

Principal 16
Borduna 16
Principal 8
Gamba 8
Fl. harm. 8
Oktava * 4
Rörflöjt 4
Kvinta * 2-2/3
Oktava * 2
Cornett III * from C
Mixture III-IV * 2
Mixture II-IV * 1-1/3
Trumpet * 16
Trumpet * 16

II POSITIV

Principal 8
Fl. trav 8
Gedackt 8
Oktava * 4
Fl. oct. 4
Flageolette 2
Kvinta * 1-1/3
Sesquialtera II
Mixture IV * 1-1/3
Dulcian * 16
Trumpet * 8
Cromorne * 8
Tremulant

III SVÄLLVERK

Principal 8
Salcional 8
Voix céleste 8
Rörflöjt 8
Principal * 4
Fl. oct. 4
Waldflöjt * 2
Cornett III * from C
Mixture V * 1-1/3
Fagott * 16
Corno * 8
Oboe 8
Tremulant

PÉDAL

Principal 32
Principal 16
Subbas 16
Kvinta 10-2/3
Violoncelle 8
Gedackt 8
Oktava * 4
Kontra basun * 32
Basun * 16
Fagott 16
Trumpet * 8
Clairon * 4

Traditional manual and pedal couplers.
Manual compass C - f3
Pedal compass C - d1
Barker machines.
Mechanical Stop Action.
Jeux de combinaison *
for reed stops and upperwork.



Nordic Journey

VOLUME XIX

A NORDIC ORGAN BOOK
BY FREDRIK SIXTEN

JAMES D. HICKS

THE 1871 ÅKERMAN ORGAN
UPPSALA CATHEDRAL • SWEDEN



1 - 24 **Fredrik Sixten** [b. 1962]
• ***A Nordic Organ Book*** [2024]
24 Contemporary Organ Miniatures
in all 12 Major and all 12 Minor Keys. • 59:31

25 **David Wikander** [1884-1955]
• ***Elegi fiss moll*** [1913] • 3:31

26 **Johan Peter Knut Lönngren** [1816-1874]
• ***Sonat för orgel:***
III. Allegro risoluto • 4:10

7323

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