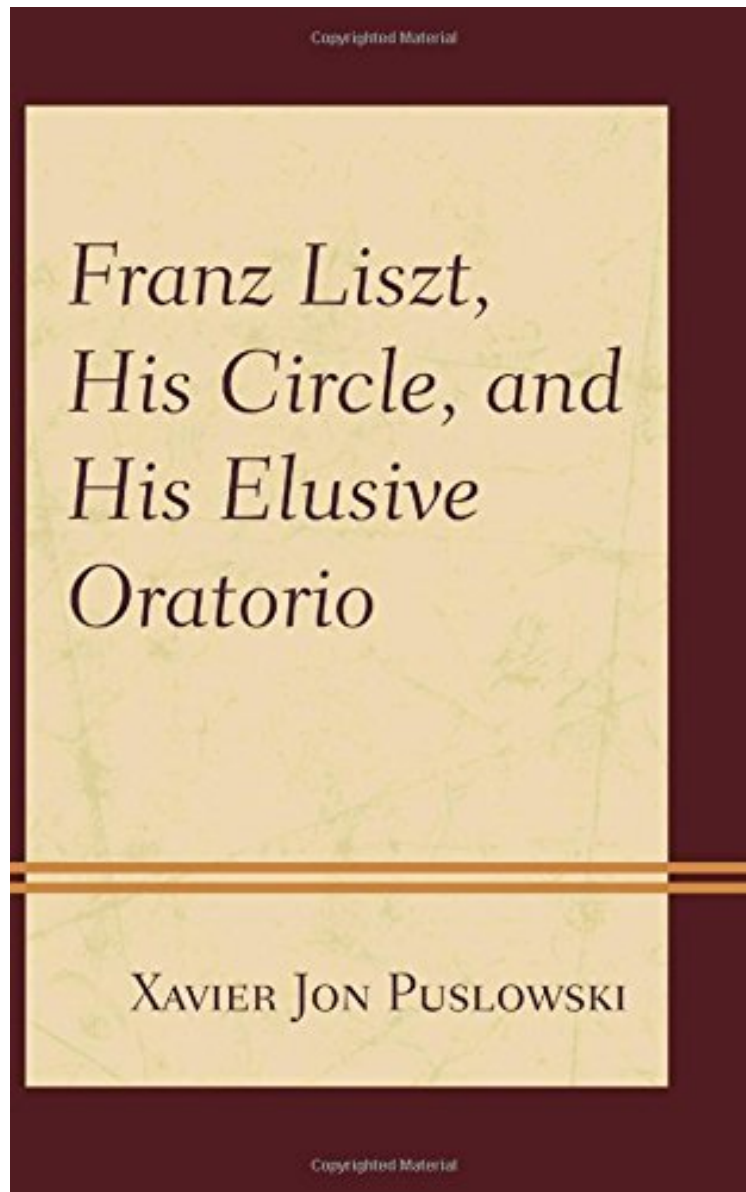


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Franz Liszt, His Circle, and His Elusive Oratorio

Xavier Jon Puslowski

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Xavier Jon Puslowski : Franz Liszt, His Circle, and His Elusive Oratorio before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Franz Liszt, His Circle, and His Elusive Oratorio:

Many scholars, concert pianists, and classical music fans deem Franz Liszt the preeminent pianist of the nineteenth

century. In *Franz Liszt, His Circle, and His Elusive Oratorio*, Xavier Puslowski engages in a detailed study of the links between Liszt, his contemporaries, and his milieu. Drawing on Liszt's famous *Saint Stanislas Oratorio* as a focal point, Puslowski brings together the history of the Romantic period in classical music and the intersection of key figures and historical events in his story of Liszt's achievements told from a distinctly historicist perspective. Readers get a new view of Liszt as Puslowski brings together a remarkable cast of characters. Friend and rival, Frederic Chopin, stands tall as a symbol of Poland's fight for independence; the remarkable French people's poet Pierre Beranger makes his entrance; virtuoso violinist Niccolò Paganini takes center stage later in Liszt's life; the indefatigable French composer Hector Berlioz and the domineering Richard Wagner assume their roles in this musical drama; and finally two of Poland's premier violinists, Karol Lipinski and Henryk Wieniawski, stand side by side with Russian pianist Anton Rubinstein, as the story of Liszt's influence reaches across national boundaries and time itself to make its presence felt.

The spate of Liszt books appearing since the 2011 bicentennial of his birth has yielded some treasures, including the current volume. The title gives only the barest clue to the contents; in fact, the book provides a thorough account of Liszt's interest in Poland, which had ceased to exist as a formal political entity by the end of the 18th century. The oratorio is not Liszt's *Christus...but Saint Stanislas*, a work that occupied the composer for years but remained unfinished at his death. *Saint Stanislas* was to have been Liszt's crowning contribution to the 'Polish purpose,' which was important to him and some of his contemporaries (the circle of the book's title). Puslowski not only documents the tortuous development of the oratorio but also examines several of Liszt's relationships in light of Poland's then role in European culture. The book, with its fascinating perspective, constitutes an unexpected but lovely...biography. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty. (CHOICE) Now there is another reason to get excited about Liszt. It comes in the form of an erudite book written by Xavier Jon Puslowski about a rarely remembered oratorio that Liszt struggled to write almost all his adult life. . . . There was . . . a wider circle of friends and lovers and passions of the man and its all recounted with great scholarship in this book. . . . The prose is elegant, leaps and bounds in vaunted glissandos and darting arpeggios almost the prose itself were composed on a piano after Liszt. Who could ask for anything more? (Jazz da Gama) About the Author Xavier Jon Puslowski taught at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and served as an economist with the U.S. Department of Energy.