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On December 6, 2006, nearly two years after our last meeting in the Apostolic Palace, I had finally found my way back to Kraków to visit my friend Stanislaw Dziwisz. In the interim, he had been appointed to lead the Catholic Archdiocese in the Polish royal capital by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. That spring, in the same Saint Peter's Square where the Papal funeral rites had been held, I had witnessed with enormous pride the grand ceremony, called a consistory, by which the Adjunct Prefect of the Pontifical Household had been created a Prince of the Church. From the youthful Father Dziwisz, whom I had first encountered in Rome in 1988, to the now augustly titled His Eminence Stanislaw Cardinal Dziwisz, Archbishop of Kraków, his had been a long and remarkable priestly road.

As I walked into the same rooms at the Curia Metropolitana Kraków that I had when I first met Cardinal Macharski at the very beginning of this magical musical and spiritual journey, I noticed that the Archbishop's study had been changed. It seemed simpler, more elegant, yet more humble, than I had remembered. To me, it seemed that Cardinal Dziwisz wished to live in a way that reminded him of his daily life with Pope John Paul. Or perhaps it was I who had changed, finding comfort and ease in these high church environs where my old friend now made his new home. When I first went to Kraków in 1987, I had never met a Catholic priest. Now, after seventeen years of Papal service, I was back where it had all begun.

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Cardinal Dziwisz greeted me with sad but welcoming eyes. He looked much older. Grief had taken its toll. We spoke quietly, his first words seeming strange.

“Maestro, in which language shall we speak now? Would you prefer Italian or Polish?”

It is true that my Polish had deteriorated since the passing of the Pope, but I don't think that was why His Eminence asked me that odd question. It seemed to me that in the midst of the Italian-speaking Curia at the Vatican we had found our familiar connection through a shared Kraków experience by using His Holiness', and Cardinal Dziwisz's, native language. And now that he was back home, living in Poland again for the first time in more than two and a half decades, it was as if he needed to find the right language to continue our close but unique relationship as we followed our separate ways after John Paul.

In truth, we ended up speaking (and still do) a mixture of the two languages, sometimes mixing them in the same conversation, as if the two experiences of Poland and the Holy See are inextricably bound together in our minds and in our hearts. In any case, our relationship goes on. Our love of the Pope, shared by millions, is matched by our shared desire to see his powerful legacy flourish. Cardinal Dziwisz has published a book on Catholic-Jewish topics coauthored with an important rabbi. He has convened a meeting of the heads of many faiths in memory of a similar convocation called by His Holiness at Assisi in 1986. I have found as many ways as I could to make music that honors the profound influence that John Paul has had on my life and on my artistic vision. And together, His Eminence and I have gone on imagining events of music and spirit out into the future.

During the course of this first, quiet conversation in Kraków, I thanked His Eminence, and through him His Holiness, for the incredible honor that had been bestowed upon me the year before. In November 2005, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI awarded me the Silver Star of Saint Gregory, the highest order of Pontifical Knighthood that had ever been accorded a Jew in the history of

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the Holy See. The ceremony had taken place after the concert to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, one of the last to be planned with His Holiness' active involvement.

"Maestro," His Eminence said, "I know the Holy Father would have been so pleased with your Washington concert. Peace among all religions was so very close to his heart. And the Star of Saint Gregory, it was the gift of His Holiness, and you deserve this high honor for all you have accomplished. I am deeply gratified that Pope Benedict saw fit to honor our Holy Father's wish in this regard."

"If I could only thank His Holiness in person ..." I answered, stopping short as I saw the deep emotion coming over the face of my friend.

I waited. Then went on.

"And it was also so extraordinary to be able to perform the Beethoven "Missa Solemnis" in Cologne, as His Holiness and I had planned. We had the Royal Philharmonic, you remember, the orchestra that performed at the Papal Concert to Commemorate the Shoah. And the London Philharmonic Choir from our Reconciliation Concert. It was also a great honor that Pope Benedict XVI offered his deep insights on Beethoven's great work via video from Val d'Aosta. We all felt His Holiness' spirit with us in that magnificent, immense cathedral.

"Eminence," I said, "I have brought you a recording so you can experience our concert for yourself." As I offered him the DVD, I flashed back to 2002 when I had given a similar recording of our Kraków 9/11 concert to His Holiness at Castel Gandolfo. In that instant, I felt that Cardinal Dziwisz may have remembered that heart-warming moment as well.

He thanked me, and we fell silent. It was many moments before we looked each other in the eye again.

Then we rose and gave each other a warm hug, and I turned to leave. As I was about to leave his study, Cardinal Dziwisz stopped me and brought me back to his desk. He went through an open door into a neighboring room, looked for a small book on a crowded desk, and quickly scribbled something on a piece of paper.

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“Maestro, here, these are my cell phone numbers, both the one for Poland and the one I use when I am abroad. Please call me, Maestro. We must stay in touch.” And with that, he graciously saw me out of his study to the outer door that leads to the stairs that would start me on my journey back to New York.

Now, when I phone him, in whatever language I choose, he does not even need me to speak my name. “Eminence,” I need only say, and his reply comes back immediately, “Maestro, welcome, from the heart! Thank you for calling. Are you here in Kraków? When shall we see each other next?” I always hear in his, the voice of John Paul. If not the Pope’s actual voice, then surely one that embodies His Holiness’ spirit. Cardinal Dziwisz has made it clear that my powerful Polish connection will go on.

So, I was especially moved when, in December 2009, Polish television (TVN) produced a documentary on my life and work with the Pope. It too was called “Papieski Maestro”—The Pope’s Maestro. This was the first such program ever created about my life in John Paul’s native land. The young Polish director, Aleksandra Bajka, was as sensitive and insightful as any journalist I have ever encountered. Her film told my whole story, from my earliest days, taking bassoon lessons in the pit of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, to my going to Kraków as Music Director of the Kraków Philharmonic. She told of my meeting Cardinal Macharski, my friendship with Monsignor Dziwisz, and finally, of course, my growing relationship with His Holiness. She even filmed me on Ellis Island in New York harbor, where my grandmother Ida Levine had landed as an impoverished immigrant, having left Warsaw for America in search of a better life for her and her family in 1907.

Two tableaux in Aleksandra’s film stand out:

In one, I am standing at the crossroads of Krochmalna Street, where my grandmother had once lived as a Yiddish-speaking Jew in an almost completely self-enclosed Jewish city-within-a-city, in Polish Warsaw. During World War II, Krochmalna Street had been cut in two, with one end leading to a bridge into the Jewish Ghetto set up by the Nazis as a holding-pen to keep my people before they were

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shipped off to their annihilation at Treblinka and other death camps scattered around the Polish countryside. At the other end, Krochmalna had been utterly destroyed as the Poles, the Soviets, and the Nazis fought bitterly over Warsaw's liberation in the winter of 1945. In place of the rubble, a new Warsaw had been built up after the war, and the few blocks of the original Krochmalna Street that had still remained intact now intersected with a wide and spacious thoroughfare newly named John Paul II Boulevard. As I looked up at the street sign that marks this oddest of intersections, it seemed as though my family's entire history, from our simplest origins to my privileged Papal service, was mirrored in this most prosaic of municipal signposts.

The other, more surprising, tableau in the documentary was even more revealing. During her rare on-air interview with Cardinal Dziwisz, Aleksandra had asked His Eminence to describe my relationship with Pope John Paul. He had never spoken about this before in all the twenty-one years we had known each other. But now, on Polish television, Cardinal Dziwisz said, in the quiet reverential tone he always uses when speaking of Pope John Paul, "On the occasion of his first concert, he visited with His Holiness, and there began a deep spiritual friendship between Maestro and the Holy Father."

When I watched this film in the winter of 2010, I could not believe my eyes and ears. I had not heard words anything like that since the moment after my first Papal Audience in February 1988 when then-Monsignor Dziwisz had told me, "Maestro, the Holy Father has asked me to tell you that he thinks you have a great soul." I had kept those humbling words in my innermost heart all this time, never allowing myself to speak them out loud. And now Cardinal Dziwisz, the only person in the world who could bear such witness, was announcing to Poland and to the whole world what I had never dared say openly.

"A deep spiritual friendship," His Eminence had said.

My extraordinary journey of music and spirit into the hallowed world of Pope John Paul II transforms my life and my art to this day.

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My seventeen years with John Paul taught me many things. The power of music and spirit to foster hope, transformation, healing, and love. The mysteries of faith, not one faith but three—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The potential for reconciliation and redemption, even in the face of the sadness and violence of both the past and the present.

My music-making now is different than it was. I am more patient. I listen for the stillness as well as the roar. I look for the longer story in the musical tales that are there to be told. I have learned to hear the meaning that lies cached beneath the surface of the notes. I know now that music is spirit made sound. That it has the power to make us whole. And yes, to bring us peace.