

Welcome Address  
by Consul General Rolf Schütte  
at the Memorial Concert  
on the occasion of the  
60th Anniversary of the Berlin Airlift  
St. Mark's Lutheran Church, San Francisco  
Friday, May 2, 2008

**Guten Abend, meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren,  
Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**a very warm welcome to all of you!**

**It is a wonderful sight to see beautifully restored St. Mark's Church filled to the very last seat. I would like to thank Pastor Elizabeth Ekdale and Pastor Christian Jennert and the Congregation of St. Mark's for making their church available for this event tonight.**

**Every year the German Consulate General tries to organize at least one very special public event in this city. Two years ago it was the transmission in Dolores Park of the final match of the World Soccer Championship. A year ago we brought „Max Raabe and Palast Orchester“ to an enthusiastic audience at Temple Emanu-El. Tonight, we have been able to organize for you a concert of classical music. The Junge Deutsche Philharmonie and the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra directed by Stuart Canin and Maestro Kent Nagano have put together a wonderful program. Thanks to them and to generous support from the German Foreign Office we have been able to organize yet another very special event.**

**A concert with young German and American musicians, in a Lutheran church with a strong German historical background and directed by a world-famous Maestro whose origins are in San Francisco, but whose greatest artistic successes are closely related to the cities of Berlin and Munich – you see, we have made every effort to underline the German-American character of this evening.**

**We did so because we wanted to create the right framework for a ceremony that brought here tonight a group of very special guests. I am happy to welcome and to introduce to you veterans of the Berlin Airlift residing in the Bay Area today.**

**This year marks the 60th anniversary of the heroic efforts of the United States and its Allies which saved more than 2 million men, women and children in Berlin from starving, but also saved the freedom of the beleaguered city by preventing the Soviet Union from absorbing West Berlin into the communist bloc.**

**Thus, tonight let us say thank you to some of the pilots and crew members of what in Germany are fondly called the “Candy Bombers“ or „Rosinenbomber“. Their action and the spirit of the Berlin Airlift forged a friendship between two nations that had been enemies just a few years before. The Airlift thus became the foundation of a partnership that would eventually bring down the Berlin Wall. Sixty years after the Airlift, Germany has reunited in peace and freedom and the Cold War has ended, but new challenges – such as international terrorism or climate change, to name just two - make the transatlantic partnership more crucial than ever.**

**Tonight, we remember those heroic days and express our gratitude to the Berlin Airlift veterans through this memorial concert and through their decoration with the German-American Friendship Award. This decoration is reserved for those Americans that have made a special contribution to the German-American friendship.**

**Dear Veterans,  
it is an honor for me to decorate you with the German-American Friendship Award. But the German Ambassador in Washington and I as Germany’s representative on the West Coast are not alone in expressing our gratitude on this occasion.**

**I have received letters from Klaus Wowereit, the Governing Mayor of Berlin, to each and everyone of you present here tonight. Let me read to you and to the audience the text of the Mayor’s letter:**

*(read the Mayor’s letter)*

**But now I would like to ask the veterans to come to the stage and receive the German-American Friendship award as well as the letter by Berlin’s Governing Mayor Klaus Wowereit.**

**Give them a big hand. Thank you all.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,  
it is now my great pleasure to invite the orchestra to the stage. After the intermission, Maestro Kent Nagano will introduce their work and the**

**history of the cooperation between young German and American musicians to you.**