

Welcome remarks by Consul General Rolf Schütte  
at the concert and reception on the occasion of the  
visit of “Max Raabe and Palast Orchester” to the  
German Residence in San Francisco, March 14, 2007

**A very warm welcome to all of you here tonight! Thank you for coming! I welcome you also on behalf of my Austrian colleague from Los Angeles, Martin Weiss. Thanks also to the Academy of Art that has put a vehicle in our front yard that does not usually park there. It is a 1931 Cadillac and serves as a little hint on what you can expect here tonight.**

**If we were in Germany today, I would start my little welcome address with some remarks on the theme „Veronika, der Lenz ist da”. If we were in Paris, I would start with “Le Bistro du Port”. But as we are in San Francisco today I will start with “San Francisco”.**

**“Veronika”, “Le Bistro” and “San Francisco” – the titles of only three of so many wonderful songs written by Walter Jurmann, whose widow Yvonne is our guest of honor here tonight. Thank you so much for coming up from Los Angeles for this event. The year when Walter and Yvonne Jurmann were married, was the year when I was born. And many of his world-famous “Schlager” (as we say in German) or “top hits” (as you say in English) were composed even a few decades earlier, in the golden ‘20s and ‘30s. Nevertheless, songs like “Veronika”, “Schade, dass Liebe ein Märchen ist” or “Mein Gorilla hat ‘ne Villa im Zoo” are songs that have become real evergreens, that are as popular in Germany today as they were when they were written.**

**But what about “San Francisco”. The title song of the 1936 movie starring Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy was sung by Jeanette MacDonald. 70 years ago. But when you go to the most popular entertainment club in San Francisco today, this is the song that is performed in the grand finale of the show. It is this song written by Walter Jurmann and not that other song .. well you know which one I mean.**

**And which modern composer can claim that not only a street is named after him in his home town (Vienna), but that memorial plaques for him can be found in both Vienna and Berlin and who wrote the official song of a wonderful city like San Francisco?**

**However, I must add that it almost created an uproar in this city before Jurmann’s song was made the official song. Because: San Francisco already had an official city song. Well, you know what I am talking about, that**

**other song. But let me read from a paper that was as important and influential in this city as it is today ( I say this in the presence of the editor and of the most popular columnist of this paper who are with us tonight).**

**The San Francisco Chronicle on May 4, 1984 reported about a most unusual event under the dome of City Hall. Under the title “Throng Joins S.F. Song Wars” the paper writes:**

**“The song “San Francisco” was the resounding choice of the people at a boisterous, boozy City Hall party last night that one celebrant said “looked like a preview of the last days of Pompeii”.**

**And a little later in the article:**

**“In fact, every time “San Francisco” was sung or played – and that must have happened at least a dozen times (including a rendition by the Gay Men’s Chorus) – the mob cheered and whistled”.**

**Leah Garchik’s predecessor as columnist of the San Francisco Chronicle, Warren Hinckle, had called Jurmann’s song a few weeks before “the greatest song ever written about San Francisco” and “a robust, rinky-dinky, sock-it-to-‘em warbler that perfectly captured the spirit of the rowdy and independent and optimistic place that is everybody’s favorite city”. It sure is my favorite city too.**

**The evergreens written by Walter Jurmann and other Austrian and German composers in the ‘20s and ‘30s, many of them Jewish, but equally cosmopolitan “Weltbürger”, are an important part of the repertoire of one of the most famous orchestras from Germany in our days: “Max Raabe and Palast Orchester”. But you will hear tonight and tomorrow at Temple Emanu-El and the day after tomorrow at the Excelsior Center in Oakland that there is much more than “San Francisco” to enjoy. This orchestra can be heard on the biggest stages of the world, from Berlin to New York, from Ilseburg to San Francisco. But talking about good music is like talking about good food. Let the music play.**

**Thank you, Max Raabe. Thank you, members of the “Palast Orchester”. Thank you, Yvonne Jurmann. Thank you for coming here. Welcome to San Francisco!**

**As the lyrics of the San Francisco city song say:**

**“San Francisco, open your golden gate,  
You let no stranger wait –outside your door.”**

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As a small token of our gratitude to Max Raabe and the Palast Orchester as well as to Mrs. Jurmann, my partner Bertolt Schmidt, member of the group “Germanamericanartists” has designed this special poster for this event.