



San Diego Symphony

RAFAEL PAYARE | MUSIC & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Diego Symphony Announces First-Ever European Tour in Spring 2027

Music and Artistic Director Rafael Payare leads the Orchestra's landmark international debut across five major cities

San Diego, CA (August 27, 2026) — The San Diego Symphony announces a major milestone in its history: the Orchestra's first-ever European tour, taking place over nine days in spring 2027. Under the direction of Music and Artistic Director Rafael Payare, the Symphony will perform five concerts in some of Europe's most prestigious venues, introducing international audiences to the "San Diego Sound."

The tour is being made possible through the leadership support of philanthropists Jean and Gary Shekhter, whose title sponsorship reflects their longstanding commitment to advancing San Diego's cultural, educational, and civic institutions.

"Having traveled extensively around the world to hear the best orchestras and classical musicians of our time, we know how important it is for an orchestra to take this step and be heard by audiences across Europe," said Jean and Gary Shekhter. "We are proud of the artistic accomplishments of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra, and it is an honor to be part of such a landmark occasion for San Diego."

Others who have joined in support of this exciting project are Una Davis, Ross Caleca and Hayley Janecek, Dorothea Laub, Jaqueline and Jean-Luc Robert, and Laurie Sefton Henson.

"We are so grateful to all of our supporters who have helped bring this ambitious project to life," says San Diego Symphony President and CEO Martha Gilmer. "Together, their early support has laid the foundation for an initiative that will have lasting artistic impact."

This tour represents a significant moment of artistic arrival for the Symphony, reflecting years of growth, investment, and deep community connection. Since Payare's appointment in 2019, the organization has expanded its national and international profile, bolstered by the transformation of the Jacobs Music Center and the opening of The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, which have helped redefine the region's cultural landscape. The Orchestra's artistic reputation has also been strengthened by international acclaim for Payare's artistry and his palpable connection with

orchestras and audiences, both in the concert hall and on recordings. As *The Wall Street Journal* put it, “Exuding a podium manner of extreme, yet unforced, exuberance...Mr. Payare puts a high premium on bringing joy to concert audiences.”

The Orchestra's recent Delos label recording of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7, *Leningrad*—the first recording made in the newly renovated Jacobs Music Center—has further elevated its international profile, earning enthusiastic reviews for both the performance and the recording. *Le Devoir* called the recording “quite simply a hi-fi demonstration disc—a magnificent achievement.”

"I share great pride in the artistic and organizational achievements that the San Diego Symphony has made over the past several years," said Concertmaster Jeff Thayer. "I am excited about the evolution of this extraordinary group of people and profoundly grateful to all those who have made this milestone possible. As we embark on our first European tour, it is important for our audience at home, as well as our new audiences abroad, to hear and to understand what the San Diego Symphony has become."

“This tour is a defining moment for our orchestra, and for San Diego,” says Gilmer. “Over the past several years, this community has invested in what the Symphony can become—artistically and as a civic institution. Taking our Orchestra to Europe is a way of honoring that investment. It’s an opportunity to share the openness, energy, and ambition of our city and Orchestra with new audiences encountering us for the first time. Just as importantly, it challenges us to meet the highest international standard for what an orchestra can be.”

The itinerary includes appearances at several of Europe's most celebrated concert halls, including Barcelona's UNESCO World Heritage-listed [Palau de la Música Catalana](#), Hamburg's architectural landmark [Elbphilharmonie](#), and Dublin's [National Concert Hall](#), as well as performances at Toulouse's historic [La Halle aux Grains](#) and Paris' acclaimed [La Seine Musicale](#), placing the San Diego Symphony on stages associated with the world's foremost orchestras and soloists.

The tour opens April 28, 2027, at Barcelona's Palau de la Música Catalana, featuring Spanish pianist Javier Perianes performing Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto in A Minor. This program also includes *Kauyumari* by Grammy-winning composer Gabriela Ortiz, Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story* by Leonard Bernstein, and the Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin* Suite by Béla Bartók.

The Symphony then continues to Toulouse, Hamburg, Paris, and Dublin where they will be joined by internationally acclaimed violinist Leonidas Kavakos performing Dmitri Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 1. Additional repertoire heard in these cities includes *The Firebird* Suite (1919) by Igor Stravinsky, highlighting the orchestra's programmatic versatility.

“In Europe, a visiting orchestra's performance represents more than a concert—it is a cultural exchange,” says Payare. “The San Diego Symphony has a voice with such brilliance and spirit, it should be heard in concert halls around the world.”

The 2027 European tour represents both an introduction and an offering: a chance to share the artistic energy, diversity, and cultural vitality of the San Diego region with audiences abroad. It also

reflects a full-circle moment for the Symphony, which has long brought the world's music to San Diego and now joins the global stage in return. This tour marks the beginning of a broader international presence for the San Diego Symphony in the years ahead.

2027 European Tour Performance Schedule (*full programs listed below*)

- April 28 – [Barcelona | Palau de la Música Catalana](#)
 - April 30 – [Toulouse | La Halle aux Grains](#)
 - May 3 – [Hamburg | Elbphilharmonie](#)
 - May 4 – [Paris | La Seine Musicale, Patrick Devedjian Auditorium](#)
 - May 6 – [Dublin | National Concert Hall](#)
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About Rafael Payare, Music and Artistic Director

With his charismatic energy, innate musicianship, and technical brilliance on the podium, Rafael Payare is always “electrifying in front of an orchestra” (*Los Angeles Times*). Since September 2019, he has been Music and Artistic Director of California’s San Diego Symphony Orchestra, where he is widely credited with inspiring what *The Wall Street Journal* termed “the San Diego Symphony’s splendid new sound.”

Payare has helped usher in a bright new era for the San Diego Symphony. He and the orchestra drew international notice with the openings of The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, their bayside open-air venue, and Jacobs Music Center, their newly renovated indoor home, where the Symphony “finally has a San Diego venue that permits it to sound like the world-class orchestra they’ve been since Payare took over” (*San Diego Union-Tribune*). In recent seasons, the orchestra has presented festival programming including two weeks dedicated to Brahms, “Upright and Grand: A Tribute to the Piano,” and “It’s About Time,” a focus on percussion that included performances on both sides of the U.S.–Mexico border. Payare features works by Brahms, Mahler, Bruckner, and Shostakovich every season, regularly programs new music by composers including Matthias Pintscher and Gabriela Ortiz, and recently commissioned Symphony No. 6: *Monarch* by San Diego Symphony composer-in-residence Jimmy López. In 2023, Payare joined Gustavo Dudamel and Esa-Pekka Salonen to launch the California Festival, a statewide celebration of contemporary music featuring the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and San Diego Symphony. He also launched the San Diego Symphony Conducting Fellowship Program. In 2027, Payare leads the orchestra on its first European tour, with performances in Barcelona, Dublin, Hamburg, Paris, and Toulouse. Their 2026 release of Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 7, *Leningrad*, on the Delos label follows the success of their digital recording on Apple’s Platoon of the same composer’s Symphony No. 11.

Beyond San Diego, Payare is Music and Artistic Director of Canada’s Orchestre symphonique de Montréal—with which he has made four Pentatone recordings and appeared numerous times on Medici.tv—and Conductor Laureate of Northern Ireland’s Ulster Orchestra, where he previously served as Principal Conductor and Music Director, making multiple appearances at London’s BBC Proms. Since winning first prize at Denmark’s 2012 Malko Competition, he has forged relationships

with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the Boston, Chicago, and Pittsburgh Symphonies; the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras; the Los Angeles and New York Philharmonics; and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Staatskapelle Berlin, and Vienna Philharmonic. He has also led productions at London's Royal Opera House, the Glyndebourne Festival, Royal Swedish Opera, and Royal Danish Opera.

An alumnus of Venezuela's El Sistema program, Payare founded Montreal's El Sistema OSM. He lives in San Diego and Montreal with his wife, cellist Alisa Weilerstein, and their two children.

About the San Diego Symphony

The San Diego Symphony Orchestra stands among the nation's leading orchestras and serves as a dynamic cultural ambassador for the United States and the San Diego region. Led by President and Chief Executive Officer Martha Gilmer and Music and Artistic Director Rafael Payare, its 82 full-time, internationally distinguished musicians bring artistry of the highest caliber to audiences at home and abroad. Globally connected and firmly grounded in its community, the Symphony is anchored by two iconic venues: The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, a striking open air performance space on the San Diego waterfront, and the recently renovated Jacobs Music Center, a premier concert hall and architectural landmark. The Orchestra presents a broad and ambitious repertoire, from cornerstone symphonic works to major new commissions and collaborations with leading artists of our time, positioning San Diego as a destination for conductors, soloists, composers, and creative partners. Guided by its mission of Changing Lives Through Music, the Symphony's community programs serve more than 65,000 students, families, educators, military service members, and nonprofit partners each year. In schools and neighborhoods throughout the region, its programs integrate music into daily learning and expand access to live performance. Learn more at www.sandiegosymphony.org.

About the Guest Artists

Javier Perianes

Spanish pianist [Javier Perianes](#) is internationally acclaimed for his performances with the world's leading orchestras and conductors in the major concert halls of Europe, North America and Asia. Equally at home as a recitalist and chamber musician, he appears regularly at renowned festivals including the BBC Proms, Lucerne Festival and Salzburg Whitsun Festival. An exclusive Harmonia Mundi recording artist, Perianes received Spain's National Music Prize and was named Artist of the Year by the International Classical Music Awards.

Leonidas Kavakos

Greek violinist [Leonidas Kavakos](#) is recognized worldwide as one of today's most distinguished musicians, acclaimed for his artistry, musicianship and exceptional technique. He performs with the world's leading orchestras as both soloist and conductor and has built an award-winning discography spanning the core violin repertoire. In addition to his international performing career, he was appointed professor of violin at the Basel Academy of Music in 2024 and was elected to the Academy of Athens for his contributions to music.

San Diego Symphony Orchestra with Rafael Payare, Music and Artistic Director
2027 European Tour Programs

Barcelona - April 28, 2027

Palau de la Musica

Gabriela Ortiz: *Kauyumari*

Robert Schumann: Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54 with Javier Perianes

Leonard Bernstein: Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

Béla Bartók: Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*

Toulouse – April 30, 2027

La Halle aux Grains

Gabriela Ortiz: *Kauyumari*

Dmitri Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No. 1 with Leonidas Kavakos

Leonard Bernstein: Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

Igor Stravinsky: *The Firebird* Suite (1919 version)

Hamburg - May 3, 2027

Elbphilharmonie

Gabriela Ortiz: *Kauyumari*

Dmitri Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No. 1 with Leonidas Kavakos

Béla Bartók: Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*

Igor Stravinsky: *The Firebird* Suite (1919 version)

Paris - May 4, 2027

La Sienne Musicale, Patrick Devedjian Auditorium

Gabriela Ortiz: *Kauyumari*

Dmitri Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No. 1 with Leonidas Kavakos

Leonard Bernstein: Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

Igor Stravinsky: *The Firebird* Suite (1919 version)

Dublin – May 6, 2027

National Concert Hall

Gabriela Ortiz: *Kauyumari*

Dmitri Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No. 1 with Leonidas Kavakos

Leonard Bernstein: Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

Igor Stravinsky: *The Firebird* Suite (1919 version)

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