



San Diego Symphony[®]

RAFAEL PAYARE | MUSIC & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PRESS RELEASE

**San Diego Symphony Appoints Lea Slusher as
Executive Director of The Rady Shell at
Jacobs Park**



ASSETS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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San Diego, CA — The San Diego Symphony Orchestra Association announces the appointment of **Lea Slusher** as **Executive Director of The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park**, expanding her leadership role at a moment of continued artistic growth and increasing national and international visibility for the Symphony's outdoor waterfront venue.

Slusher previously served as Vice President for Artistic Planning and Rentals, where she played a central role in shaping the Symphony's artistic vision, programming strategy, and artist partnerships following the opening of The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park in August 2021. During her tenure, she cultivated strong relationships with leading artists, presenting institutions, the San Diego Padres Special Events Team, promoters, and audiences, helping establish The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park as a dynamic and distinctive cultural destination.

In her new executive role, Slusher will assume expanded responsibility for programming, financial performance, commercial partnerships, fundraising, and the long-term strategic growth of The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, while continuing to contribute to artistic planning at Jacobs Music Center, the San Diego Symphony's indoor venue in Downtown San Diego. Her leadership will further advance the Symphony's commitment to artistic excellence, financial sustainability, and audience engagement across both venues.

"Lea's visionary leadership, creativity, and commitment to excellence have been instrumental in the success of The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park," says **Martha Gilmer, President and CEO of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra Association**. "This appointment recognizes her extraordinary contributions and positions her to further elevate the venue's profile in San Diego and on the world stage."

"To be recognized for leading The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park into its next chapter means an enormous amount to me," says **Slusher**, "especially having been part of the project since before the venue was built. As we approach our sixth year, I'm more excited than ever to continue bringing world-class artists to San Diego while strengthening the partnerships and financial foundation that ensure The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park remains a top-tier destination for artists and audiences alike."

Looking ahead, Slusher emphasizes the venue's role as a creative hub: "The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park is not just a stop on a tour—it's a place where artists create. By partnering with artists to develop programs with orchestra, we're helping shape performances that can live beyond San Diego at major festivals and orchestras around the country. Whether with orchestra or not, our goal is to give our community access to exceptional artistry while having a meaningful impact on the music being made."

About Lea Slusher

Lea Slusher plays a pivotal role in shaping the San Diego Symphony's artistic vision and expanding its audience reach. Her leadership spans artistic strategy, creative partnerships, programming, and audience engagement, drawing on an extensive global network of artists, agents, managers, and industry colleagues. She has been instrumental in developing innovative, accessible programs—both with and without orchestra—that resonate with diverse audiences and strengthen the Symphony's connection to the community.

In San Diego, Slusher has negotiated and renewed major multi-year partnerships with the San Diego Padres Special Events Team, Ticketmaster, and Steinway & Sons. She serves as the lead decision-maker for rental activity at The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park™, balancing artistic standards with revenue generation while cultivating key promoter relationships, including Live Nation and AEG–Goldenvoice. She has also led institution-wide financial and operational reviews, overseeing departmental assessments, expense analysis, staffing alignment, and long-range financial modeling.

Slusher joined the San Diego Symphony in August 2018. Prior to her tenure in San Diego, she served as Director of Artistic Projects at Carnegie Hall in New York from 1994 to 2018, where she was heavily involved leading special artistic projects and collaborations across genres.

About the San Diego Symphony

The San Diego Symphony, recognized for its artistry, innovation, and community impact, stands in the vanguard of California orchestras and is among the nation's Tier 1 orchestras. Under the leadership of President and Chief Executive Officer Martha Gilmer and Music and Artistic Director Rafael Payare, the Symphony's 82 full-time musicians—graduates of the world's most celebrated schools of music—perform for more than 250,000 people each season.

Over the course of a century, the Symphony has grown into one of the region's most influential cultural institutions, earning national recognition for its artistic excellence and commitment to community engagement. From the stunning waterfront setting of The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park to the revitalized indoor Jacobs Music Center, the Symphony offers a dynamic range of experiences, including Masterworks, jazz, film-with-orchestra, Broadway, and family concerts, and free Music Connects performances throughout San Diego. Through its Learning and Community Engagement programs, the Symphony reaches more than 65,000 people annually, fostering connection through the shared power of music. www.sandiegosymphony.org

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