

SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY

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RAFAEL PAYARE NAMED NEXT MUSIC DIRECTOR OF THE SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY

Acclaimed Conductor to Serve as Music Director Designate Effective Immediately

San Diego, Calif. – The San Diego Symphony today announced internationally acclaimed conductor Rafael Payare will become the orchestra’s next music director. Payare will begin a four-year contract immediately, serving as music director designate for the first year, and begin the role of music director on July 1, 2019. Payare will debut at the San Diego podium in his new role January 2019, when he kicks off the fourth annual San Diego Symphony January festival.

As the San Diego Symphony’s music director, Payare – currently music director of the Ulster Orchestra, principal conductor of the Castleton Festival and honorary conductor of Sinfonietta Cracovia – will succeed Maestro Jahja Ling, whose tenure began in 2004-05 and culminated in the 2016-17 season. Beginning in the 2019-20 season, Payare will conduct the San Diego Symphony for 10 weeks each season including performances in the Bayside Summer Nights season at the orchestra’s summer home.

Since being awarded first prize at the Malko Conducting Competition in 2012, Payare is celebrated as one of the most exciting conductors of his generation and has made debuts with: the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic, London Symphony, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks and Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, amongst others.

“When Rafael conducted the orchestra in January there was a deep connection, and the musical bond and obvious potential for their relationship was clear,” said Martha Gilmer, San Diego Symphony CEO. “I first heard about Rafael Payare because of the unique musical relationship he had with the preeminent conductor, Lorin Maazel. Lorin was an intellectual musician with discerning taste. That he recognized Rafael’s talent and innate musicianship was an affirmation for me of Rafael’s considerable gift. He has the perfect balance of bringing out the best in the musicians, encouraging and leading

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them to achieve more than they imagine possible. Rafael has a calm assurance on the podium. The musicians spoke of their ability to take artistic risks knowing that he was secure in his own vision and knowledge of the score. I could not be more excited about this musical partnership.”

As San Diego Symphony’s music director, Payare will shape the musical vision for the orchestra moving forward. His international experience and profile will attract the very best orchestral players and guest artists to San Diego. In addition, his own personal story about the important role that music has played in his life supports his vision to reach into the community to find new and enduring ways for the San Diego Symphony to play a greater role in the vitality and vibrancy of the San Diego community and region.

“I had an immediate connection and chemistry with the orchestra,” said Payare. “There was no wall between us, only a desire and eagerness to try new things which I find very exciting. Given what we achieved in just one week together in January, the sky is the limit. I am also inspired to create an atmosphere of inclusiveness in the San Diego region. I feel a special connection to San Diego. I grew up living on the edge of the sea, so I immediately felt at home.”

Born in 1980 and a graduate of the celebrated Venezuelan education program, El Sistema, Payare began his formal conducting studies in 2004 with José Antonio Abreu. He has conducted all the major orchestras in Venezuela, including the Simón Bolívar Orchestra. Having also served as principal horn of the Simon Bolivar Orchestra, he took part in many prestigious tours and recordings with conductors including, Claudio Abbado, Lorin Maazel, Sir Simon Rattle and Giuseppe Sinopoli.

In May 2012, Payare was awarded first prize at the Malko International Conducting Competition, and in July 2012, he was personally invited by his mentor, the late Lorin Maazel, to conduct at Maazel’s Castleton Festival in Virginia. This led to a close association and in July 2015, he accepted the position of Principal Conductor of the Castleton Festival. Following Lorin Maazel’s death in July 2014, Rafael was invited to take over his scheduled concerts with the Vienna Philharmonic in January 2015, conducting three concerts at the Vienna Musikverein and the Theatre des Champs-Elysees in Paris in Maazel’s memory. Payare returns to conduct the Vienna Philharmonic in June 2018 in Vienna and on tour.

In addition to the Vienna Philharmonic, highlights of his 2017-18 season include performances with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, the Czech Philharmonic, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Staatskapelle Dresden, the Minnesota Orchestra and his Berlin subscription debut with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. He will soon continue a Bruckner symphony cycle with the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra in Denmark.

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“The search committee has been meeting regularly since 2015 to identify the next exceptional leader for our Orchestra. I am extremely proud of the committee’s expertise and diligence. It has been an exciting process, and we are elated with the result. Rafael Payare is the person we unanimously felt could lift the orchestra artistically. The committee comprised of musicians, board and staff were unified in their selection of Rafael,” said Dr. Warren Kessler, San Diego Symphony Orchestra Chairman of the Board and Search Committee.

Samuel Hager, chairman of the orchestra committee, member of the bass section and member of the search committee said: “We are very pleased with the search process, which included significant input from all the members of the orchestra. A strong and meaningful musical connection with the orchestra and the ability to enhance the orchestra’s artistic growth has always been a priority in choosing a music director. Rafael Payare brings a high level of energy and charisma to the podium that really engages the musicians. That coupled with his genuine musicality makes him a very exciting choice. We are really looking forward to working with Payare on the stage and in the community as our new music director.”

Payare will become the 13th music director in the San Diego Symphony’s 108-year history.

About the San Diego Symphony

Founded in 1910, the San Diego Symphony is the oldest orchestra in California and one of the largest and most significant cultural organizations in San Diego. The Orchestra performs for over 250,000 people each season, offering a wide variety of programming at its two much loved venues, Copley Symphony Hall in downtown San Diego and the Embarcadero Marina Park South on San Diego Bay. The orchestra’s 82 full-time musicians, graduates of the finest and most celebrated music schools in the United States and abroad, also serve as the orchestra for the San Diego Opera each season, as well as performing at several regional performing arts centers. For over 30 years, the San Diego Symphony has provided comprehensive music education and community engagement programs reaching more than 65,000 students annually and bringing innovative programming to San Diego’s diverse neighborhoods and schools. For more information, visit www.sandiegosymphony.org.

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