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Rafael Payare Extends Contract at the Symphony

Payare will continue as Music and Artistic Director until at least 2028/29

by The Violin Channel / November 24, 2025 / 2 MIN READ

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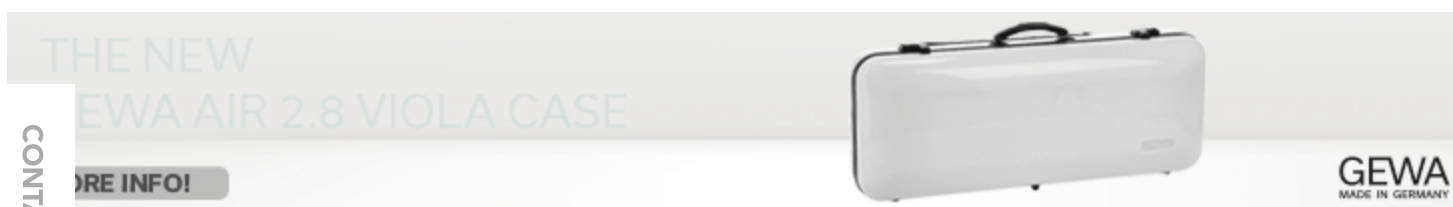


The **San Diego Symphony** has announced that its Music and Artistic Director, **Rafael Payare** has signed a contract extension that will see him remain with the orchestra until at least the end of the 2028/29 season. Payare first stepped into the role in 2019.

During his tenure with the orchestra, Payare has presided over the opening of two new venues: the Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, and the restored Jacobs Music Center in downtown San Diego. He has also appointed 26 new players, conducted a large number of newly-commissioned works, and led community performances at civic centers, schools, and hospitals.

Payare launched his career in 2012 by winning the Malko Competition for Young Conductors before serving as Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Ulster Orchestra from 2014 to 2019.

He has conducted the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Houston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra and the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, among others.



He received his earliest music education in Venezuela's renowned El Sistema program, beginning formal conducting in 2004 with **José Antonio Abreu**. He has led all of Venezuela's major orchestras, including the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra.

"The artistic partnership I share with my wonderful San Diego Symphony continues to thrive, and I'm proud to be part of shaping the orchestra's evolving sound," Payare said. "The extraordinary venues here in San Diego inspire us and allow us to explore and present music in new ways. Together, we'll continue to deepen the orchestra's artistry, achieve new heights, and keep expanding the repertoire. I am so very happy to share this remarkable journey with our audiences."

"We are delighted that Rafael has extended his time with us," said **Martha Gilmer**, Symphony President and CEO. "Rafael's vision for the orchestra and his inspiring musicianship have transformed our Orchestra, deepening both the artistic excellence our musicians regularly bring to the stage as well as our bond with the San Diego community."

"As we look forward to the years ahead, we will take the sound of our orchestra even further. Expanding our reach in our region, nationally and internationally, and developing a deeper

connection with audiences is our top priority. As Rafael has always said, 'the sky's the limit' and we continue to set our sights high. We look forward to this next chapter of extraordinary collaboration and creativity."

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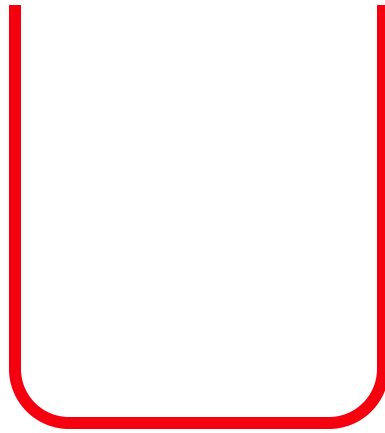
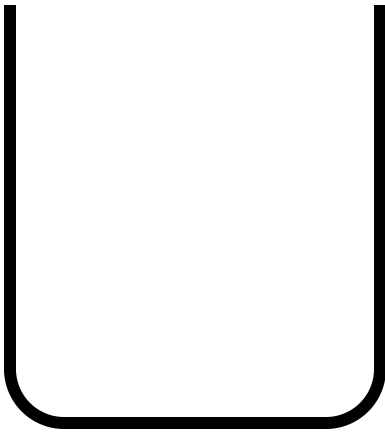


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