



San Diego Symphony.
RAFAEL PAYARE | MUSIC & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PRESS RELEASE



Performance & Venue Image Assets

San Diego Symphony and Music Director Rafael Payare to Perform at Centro Cultural Tijuana

Free concert to feature works by Chabrier, Prokofiev, and Márquez

San Diego, CA (April 28, 2026) - The San Diego Symphony today announced an addition to its spring performance schedule: a performance at the acclaimed Centro Cultural Tijuana (CECUT), an agency of the Mexican Ministry of Culture, on Tuesday, May 12, at 7 p.m. The concert continues the San Diego Symphony's growing role as a cultural connector for the Cali-Baja region through shared artistic experiences.

This free community concert will be led by Music and Artistic Director Rafael Payare and features Emmanuel Chabrier's *España*, Sergei Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5, and Arturo Márquez's *Conga*

del Fuego Nuevo. This program marks the first of a two-performance residency at CECUT in 2026. The date of the second performance will be announced later this summer.

The San Diego Symphony's most recent performance at CECUT was in November 2023 for the performing arts center's annual Día de los Muertos celebration. It was the Symphony's first performance in Baja California in more than 20 years. Concerts in Baja California by the Symphony date back to the 1960s.

More recently, Symphony musicians participated in a 2018 binational chamber music performance at Friendship Park, where San Diego meets Tijuana. Since 2023, the Symphony has been building capacity for cross-border programming including master classes, workshops, and other activities designed to deepen educational and institutional ties.

The collaborative partnership launched in 2023 between CECUT, the Consulate General of Mexico in San Diego, and the San Diego Symphony reflects a shared commitment to cultural exchange and communication between neighboring communities. Tijuana sits just 18 miles from the Orchestra's indoor home, the Jacobs Music Center.

These collaborations have been a priority for San Diego Symphony President and CEO Martha Gilmer since the start of her tenure in 2014.

Gilmer said, "We are so happy that the San Diego Symphony is returning to perform at CECUT in Tijuana. These opportunities to come together through music contribute to our ongoing collective cultural dialogue which is so important. The San Diego-Tijuana region has many bonds through education, commerce, science, and culture. This makes us all stronger and leads to deep connections that enhance our lives."

Music and Artistic Director Rafael Payare is an enthusiastic advocate for strengthening the relationship between the Symphony and Baja California.

Payare said, "This has been very important for me since my arrival, and I am thrilled with how we curated the program for the concert: full of color and energy to celebrate the vibrant cultural ties that connect our regions across the border. Bringing this free concert to the people of Tijuana is how we continue to build bridges across communities."

Admission to the Tuesday, May 12 concert is free with a ticket. Tickets will be distributed at the CECUT box office beginning Tuesday, May 5, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. There is a limit of two tickets per person, and you must reserve them in person.

The box office is located at Centro Cultural Tijuana, P.º de los Héroes 9350, Zona Urbana Rio Tijuana, 22010, Tijuana, B.C., México.

Learn more at <https://www.cecute.gob.mx>.

San Diego Symphony at Centro Cultural Tijuana

Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 7 p.m.

Sala de Espectáculos, CECUT

Rafael Payare, Conductor

San Diego Symphony Orchestra

EMMANUEL CHABRIER: *España*

SERGEI PROKOFIEV: Symphony No. 5

ARTURO MÁRQUEZ: *Conga del Fuego Nuevo*

About Rafael Payare

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 “the San Diego Symphony’s splendid new sound” (*Wall Street Journal*).

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. Works by Brahms, Mahler, Bruckner, and Shostakovich are featured every season with Payare. The Orchestra 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 first California Festival, a statewide celebration of contemporary music featuring the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and San Diego Symphony. On a 2026 Delos release, Payare conducts the San Diego Symphony in Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 7, “Leningrad,” following the success of their digital recording of the composer’s Symphony No. 11. Another of his key initiatives includes the San Diego Symphony Conducting Fellowship Program.

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 numerous appearances 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 for Young Conductors, 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; 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 San Diego Symphony

The San Diego Symphony 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 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's artistic life is anchored by two iconic venues: The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, a striking open air performance space on the San Diego waterfront, and Jacobs Music Center, a historic theater renovated to become a premiere concert hall and architectural landmark. Together, these halls have transformed the cultural landscape of downtown San Diego and established distinctive homes for the Symphony's year-round work. Guided by its mission of Changing Lives Through Music, the Symphony serves more than 65,000 students, families, educators, military service members, and nonprofit partners each year. For more information, visit sandiegosymphony.org.

About CECUT

CECUT is a national Mexican cultural center on the border, founded on October 20, 1982. It is the institution that concentrates the widest and most diverse cultural offerings in the northwest region, and the only infrastructure of the Mexico Ministry of Culture outside the country's capital. It is committed to meeting the artistic and cultural needs of this population, through programs that include various artistic manifestations and themes of traditional and contemporary culture. Additional information is available at <https://www.cecute.gob.mx>.

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