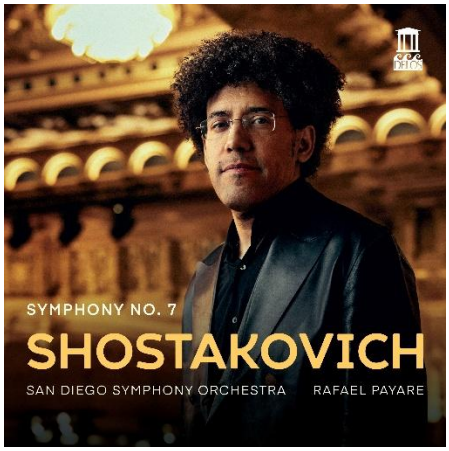
TRANSLATION

Music Map

Review

Andrea Rossi

November 9, 2026



Shostakovich*: Symphony No. 7*, "Leningrad"

The live recording of Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 60, "Leningrad," performed by the San Diego Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Rafael Payare, is more than simply another addition to the discography of this monumental work: above all, it is a declaration of artistic intent.

The album documents a pivotal moment in the history of the American orchestra, which is currently experiencing a period of exceptional artistic growth. It also highlights the orchestra's ability to take on one of the most demanding symphonic works of the twentieth century.

The "Leningrad" is a symphony that defies simplification. Composed during the terrible siege of the Soviet city by Nazi troops, it has often been interpreted as a symbol of resistance and a historical testament. Yet its enduring power lies above all in the ambiguity of its message and the extraordinary force of its orchestral writing.

Payare approaches this complexity while avoiding both celebratory rhetoric and spectacular excess. His interpretation favors the construction of a coherent narrative, in which the great climaxes emerge naturally from a carefully managed interplay of internal tensions.

From the very first measures, the quality of the work accomplished with the orchestra is apparent. The strings demonstrate cohesion and warmth of tone, while the winds bring precise characterization to each solo passage. In the famous "march" episode of the first movement, often performed as a straightforward display of orchestral power, Payare instead opts for a gradual and relentless buildup, emphasizing the unsettling, almost mechanical character of the theme's obsessive repetition.

The result is a sense of menace that slowly takes hold, making the final orchestral explosion all the more effective. The San Diego Symphony Orchestra responds with remarkable discipline and emotional commitment.

The third movement, the symphony's lyrical heart, finds in the American ensemble a sensitive interpreter, capable of conveying the most intimate nuances of Shostakovich's writing without losing the sense of unease that permeates the entire work.

In the finale, the orchestra's overall strength comes fully to the fore as it meets the composer's immense technical demands with confidence and cohesion. The acoustics of the renovated Jacobs Music Center also play a decisive role.

This recording, the first made in the hall following its renovation and the beginning of the orchestra's collaboration with the Delos label, serves as an ideal showcase for the orchestra's new sonic profile.

The live recording succeeds in capturing both the full weight of the orchestra and the score's smallest details, offering a broad dynamic range and remarkable clarity of individual lines. More than a straightforward document of a performance, this album represents a successful meeting between a major work of the repertoire and an orchestra in the midst of an impressive artistic ascent.

Rafael Payare once again demonstrates that he possesses a clear-sighted and compelling interpretive vision, while the San Diego Symphony Orchestra confirms that it can compete with the finest American ensembles, even in the most demanding corners of the symphonic repertoire.

An intense, disciplined, and deeply communicative "Leningrad," which provides the most promising possible beginning to a recording partnership with a very bright future.