Due for Release by Platoon on May 6: MD Rafael Payare Leads San Diego Symphony on Live Recording of Shostakovich’s Eleventh Symphony, “The Year 1905”

(April 2022) — In February 2020, Music Director Rafael Payare led the San Diego Symphony in a live account of Shostakovich’s searing Eleventh Symphony, “The Year 1905,” prompting the San Diego Union Tribune to marvel: “Nothing prepares you for the visceral power of this score in
a concert hall. With Payare on the podium, the San Diego Symphony roared. Now that performance – their last concert together before the pandemic lockdowns – is due for release by Platoon on May 6, marking the company’s first title to feature an American orchestra and the first commercial recording of the Venezuelan conductor’s career.

Composed at the height of the Cold War, in the wake of the 1956 Hungarian uprising, Shostakovich’s Eleventh Symphony depicts one of the most violent and tragic events in Russian history. This was the “Bloody Sunday” massacre of January 9, 1905, when more than 500 peaceful, unarmed demonstrators were slaughtered by Tsarist troops in front of Nicholas II’s palace in St. Petersburg. A programmatic and consciously cinematic lament, the four-movement work uses traditional prisoners’ songs and revolutionary anthems in what is widely understood as a veiled critique of the Soviet regime. Dazzlingly orchestrated and spine-chilling in its evocative theatricality, “The Year 1905” is Shostakovich at his most forcefully accessible and direct.

Music Director Payare explains:

“There’s something very profound about Shostakovich’s music. It’s as though he’s always wearing a mask, but at the same time, he lets you see the true face behind. So, in theory his Eleventh Symphony celebrates the 40th anniversary of the Russian Revolution of 1917, which evolved out of the earlier revolution of 1905. But in his hands, it becomes less of a celebration than a graphic depiction of brutality. He makes us experience the terror and horror of what happened that day. You can almost see and hear and smell it. When he makes us picture the white, snow-covered Palace Square turning red with blood, it’s as vivid as a film. I hear the third movement as a pledge, saying: ‘We won’t forget this.’”

Payare’s performances of the work with the San Diego Symphony were captured live in concert in February 2020 at the orchestra’s home at Jacobs Music Center’s Copley Symphony Hall, which is now undergoing renovations and is set to reopen in October 2023. About having the opportunity to interpret Shostakovich’s symphony with the San Diego Symphony, Payare adds:

“It’s so rewarding to tackle this music with the musicians of the San Diego Symphony. They are always so ready and willing to go the extra mile! Whenever we work together, I feel their response to all my ideas is, ‘Yes, absolutely,’ so we’re really able to dig deeper and just go for it.”

Payare is not alone in noting the special bond he shares with the orchestra. When he launched his San Diego tenure in October 2019, the San Diego Union-Tribune observed: “From Payare’s concert downbeat, ... the San Diego Symphony elevated itself to a new plateau.” Likewise the Los Angeles Times declared:

“Payare has produced great expectations in San Diego. ... He is electrifying in front of an orchestra. Put an electric guitar in his hands and he would look like a rock star. ... San Diego is suddenly a symphonic destination.”

That destination became yet more desirable last August, when Payare and the San Diego Symphony inaugurated The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, the orchestra’s stunning new bayside
open-air venue. Designed to showcase the performance space’s state-of-the-art acoustics, their gala concert drew national notice on CBS and *PBS NewsHour*, which dubbed it “**perhaps the grandest opening of a music venue in the COVID-19 era.**” Payare was hailed as “a **fireball of energy onstage**” and “**musician to watch**” (*Wall Street Journal*), while the venue itself was widely recognized as “a **project of such architectural and acoustical distinction that it would distinguish San Diego on any national cultural map**” (*New York Times*).

**About Rafael Payare**

Rafael Payare is known for his innate musicianship, charismatic energy, gift for communication and irresistibly joyous spirit on the podium. Now in his third season as Music Director of California’s San Diego Symphony, the Venezuelan conductor is poised to begin his tenure as Music Director of Canada’s Montreal Symphony (OSM) in fall 2022. Appointed as Principal Conductor of Virginia’s Castleton Festival in 2015, he also holds positions as Honorary Conductor of Poland’s Sinfonietta Cracovia and Conductor Laureate of Northern Ireland’s Ulster Orchestra, where he served from 2014 to 2019 as Principal Conductor and Music Director, making multiple appearances at London’s BBC Proms.

It was his first-prize win at Denmark’s 2012 Malko International Conducting Competition that first brought Payare to international notice. Since then, in addition to leading opera productions at the Glyndebourne Festival and Royal Swedish Opera, he has made debuts and forged longstanding relationships with many of the world’s preeminent orchestras, including the U.S.’s Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Cleveland and Minnesota Orchestras, and Europe’s London Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich and Vienna Philharmonic. Having begun his musical education in Venezuela’s El Sistema program, Payare served as Principal Horn of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra for eleven years. Today he is married to American cellist Alisa Weilerstein, with whom he has two young children.

**About the San Diego Symphony Orchestra**

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 more than 250,000 people each season, offering a wide variety of programming at its two much-loved venues, Copley Symphony Hall in downtown San Diego (now under renovation) and The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park on San Diego Bay. In early 2018, the San Diego Symphony announced the appointment of Rafael Payare as music director. Payare leads the orchestra’s 82 full-time musicians, who are graduates of the finest and most celebrated music schools in the United States and abroad. The San Diego Symphony also serves as the orchestra for the San Diego Opera each season, as well as performing at several regional performing arts and community centers. For more than 30 years, the San Diego Symphony has provided comprehensive learning 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](http://www.sandiegosymphony.org).
About Platoon

Founded by C.E.O. Denzyl Feigelson in 2016, boutique artist services company Platoon identifies talented artists from around the world, arming them with innovative tools and services to build their careers and reach new fans. The company landed its first success in 2016, when it signed the as-yet-unknown Billie Eilish and helped lay the groundwork for her ascent to global stardom. Subsequent triumphs included BRIT Award-winner Jorja Smith’s Blue Lights and Nigeria’s Mr. Eazi, whom Platoon succeeded in guiding to worldwide attention and acclaim. The company has since built an impressive roster of fiercely independent creative artists, such as Johannes Moser, Xuefei Yang, Oliver Zeffman, Rosey Chan and Daniel Pioro. The Platoon team now spans the globe, from London to New York, Los Angeles, Berlin and Cape Town’s “Creative Lab.” The company’s creative spaces in London and Africa boast 24-hour recording studios. These double as inspiring ecosystems for artists to collaborate freely, and host Platoon’s educational classes in music and marketing. Learn more here.

High-resolution photos are available here.

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Shostakovich: Symphony No. 11 in G minor, “The Year 1905”
San Diego Symphony & Rafael Payare

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Captured live in concert at Jacobs Music Center’s Copley Symphony Hall in Feb 2020

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