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San Diego Symphony Welcomes Five New Musicians

San Diego, Calif. – The San Diego Symphony is pleased to announce the appointment of five new musicians to the roster in advance of the 2019/2020 season. Music Director Rafael Payare has been in San Diego twice since being named music director last year and was able, along with the audition committee of the orchestra, to complete the rigorous selection process from an exceptional pool of international candidates. All of the new players will complete a probationary period of up to one year with the orchestra before they are granted tenure.

The five new musicians are:

- Christopher Smith, principal trumpet as of July 8
- Qianwen Shen, associate principal 2nd violin as of July 1
- Ai Nihira and Kenneth Liao, violin as of July 1
- Amy Taylor, 3rd flute / piccolo as of August 5

Prior to joining the San Diego Symphony as principal trumpet, Christopher Smith served as 4th/Utility Trumpet with l'Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal (OSM) for 11 years and spent eight years in “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band, where he performed for the President of the United States and other heads of state at The White House. He has also served as associate principal trumpet with the Seattle Symphony, acting principal trumpet with the Pacific Northwest Ballet, and 2nd trumpet with the Des Moines Metro Opera.

As the associate principal 2nd violin, Qianwen Shen comes to San Diego after serving as concertmaster of New England Conservatory Philharmonic Orchestra, New England Conservatory Chamber Orchestra, Mannes School of Music, and New World Symphony Orchestra. She was a fellow of Tanglewood Music Center in 2016, and has appeared in ensemble and solo performances at Carnegie Hall, Boston Symphony Hall, Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall of Singapore, Hong Kong Art Center Concert Hall, National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing China, Shanghai Music Hall, Shanghai Oriental Art Center. Shen has made solo appearances with the National Repertory Orchestra, CIM Orchestra and Orquesta Sinfonica Uncuyo.

Violinist Ai Nihira has served as concertmaster and principal of the Pacific Music Festival Orchestra, Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, Music Academy of the West Orchestra, Yale School of Music Orchestra, CIM Orchestra and CityMusic Cleveland. She has made solo appearances with the National Repertory Orchestra, CIM Orchestra and Orquesta Sinfonica Uncuyo. Nihira was born in Tokyo, Japan, and started the violin at age four in Seattle, Washington, with Mihoko Hirata. She later moved to Los Angeles, California, where she studied with Margaret Shimizu, Richard Schwabe and Henry Gronnier at the Colburn School of Performing Arts.
Violinist Kenneth Liao has spent the past two seasons as a fellow with the New World Symphony. Liao served as acting associate concertmaster of the Des Moines Metro Opera, and also performed as concertmaster with the New World Symphony, Juilliard Orchestra, Pacific Music Festival and the Academy Festival Orchestra at the Music Academy of the West. He has been a substitute musician with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and the Britt Festival Orchestra, and appeared in ensemble and solo performances at venues including Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney Hall, the Kennedy Center, Suntory Hall and Sapporo Concert Hall Kitara, among others.

Amy Taylor, piccolo and 3rd flute, joins the San Diego Symphony Orchestra after seven years as the acting 2nd flutist of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Prior to this, she was the solo piccoloist with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and the associate principal flutist with the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra and a member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. Taylor has performed frequently as an extra with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, including tours to Asia and Carnegie Hall, and has performed with the Detroit, Minnesota, Atlanta and St. Louis Symphony Orchestras on both piccolo and flute.

Subscriptions for the 2019 Bayside Summer Nights and 2019-2020 Indoor season are currently on sale. To purchase, visit www.sandiegosymphony.org or call the ticket office at 619.235.0804.

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. In early 2018, the San Diego Symphony announced the appointment of Rafael Payare as music director. Payare will lead the orchestra’s 82 full-time musicians, graduates of the finest and most celebrated music schools in the United States and abroad. The SDSO also serves 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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