



**San Diego Symphony**

Rafael Payare | Music Director

**San Diego Symphony CEO Martha A. Gilmer**

named one of

**Top 30 Professionals of the Year  
by Musical America Worldwide**

*The distinguished award—this year titled **The Pandemic: Meeting the Moment**—was given to performing arts industry professionals who navigated through and out of COVID-19 with creativity, dedication and resilience*



SAN DIEGO - Today, Musical America Worldwide announced that Martha A. Gilmer, CEO of the San Diego Symphony, was named one of the Top 30 Professionals of the Year for 2021. This year's list – titled **The Pandemic: Meeting the Moment** received a record number of nominations across the country. As the performing arts industry continues to bounce back from the ongoing pandemic, the staff, board and musicians are thrilled Gilmer has been awarded this prestigious honor and amongst such noble peers.



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“I am deeply honored by this recognition and to be among such dedicated arts leaders who have navigated these difficult times,” said Gilmer. “Our goal was always to sustain the musicians of the San Diego Symphony and support their continued music making with Music Director Rafael Payare who was in San Diego throughout the pandemic. We never dreamed how important the creation of The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park would be at this critical time – our new outdoor venue was a crucial element in our ongoing ability to welcome audiences back. I’m grateful to the board, to Rafael, to the orchestra, and to the staff for working hard together toward the best possible outcome during this perilous time. I was surrounded by tremendous support and understanding as we worked through it together.”

During her seven-year tenure at the San Diego Symphony, Gilmer has opened the Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, including spearheading the capital campaign, appointing the up-and-coming conductor Rafael Payare as Music Director, hired a staff of world-class symphony administrators, and of course, oversaw thoughtful navigation of the covid-19 pandemic for the organization. “I cannot imagine anyone more deserving of this recognition than Martha Gilmer. Martha’s creativity, vision and humanity have been ever present during this rocky time in history,” said Music Director Rafael Payare. “She has been an incredible partner and friend, and I could not be prouder to be working with her.”

Earlier this year, Musical America Worldwide put out a call for nominations of the leaders who have helped the performing arts industry navigate through the ongoing pandemic. They received more submissions than ever before, which showcased the incredible creativity, dedication, and resilience of the field. Two recent board chairs and board members, Warren Kessler and Dave Snyder, crafted the initial nomination of Martha for this award. During his submission Snyder explained “She guided us through the Pandemic and managed the necessary concessions and sacrifices such that all constituents pulled together to overcome the loss of opportunities to perform for public audiences and generate earned revenue. Through all that, Martha has remained intrepid in her good humor, her fostering of an environment of mutual respect, and her commitment to achieving the impossible.”

Once the recipients were notified, all were thrilled, including Kessler who noted, “I am particularly thrilled and excited that Martha Gilmer has been appropriately recognized by Musical America, the worldwide voice of the performing arts industry. Her seven-year association with the San Diego Symphony, which has included the time of the pandemic, has placed the Symphony in an enviable position.”

In addition to Gilmer being included in the prestigious list of arts administrators, Nancy Laturno, Chief Executive Officer of the Mainly Mozart festival was amongst the recipients. The San Diego based chamber music organization presented a series of drive-in concerts during the height of the pandemic in July 2020 featuring musicians from all around California, including many San Diego Symphony members, and put on a total of five orchestral festivals over the last year. This ongoing partnership amongst the San Diego Symphony and the Mainly Mozart festival has been important throughout the years and is



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indicative of the innovative and world-class arts community that is alive and well all throughout San Diego.

To read the full Musical America announcement and to see the full Top 30 Professionals of the Year for 2021, please visit [www.musicalamerica.com/news/?categoryid=7](http://www.musicalamerica.com/news/?categoryid=7)

## **About Martha A. Gilmer – Chief Executive Officer, San Diego Symphony Orchestra**

Martha A. Gilmer was named Chief Executive Officer of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra in October 2014 and leads the institution in realizing all areas of its mission: expanding its programming, increasing its community engagement, heightening its artistic profile, and building its capacity to share transformative experiences.

Working with the Board and staff, Gilmer created the strategic plan that has been guiding the Symphony since 2016. Among the major changes she has initiated are the appointment in 2018 of the internationally acclaimed Rafael Payare as SDSO's 13<sup>th</sup> Music Director and the appointment in 2019 of the distinguished Edo de Waart to serve as the first principal guest conductor in SDSO's century-long history. She initiated the city-wide arts festival now held each January in San Diego, inaugurated the Jazz @ the Jacobs series, and rebranded the Bayside Summer Nights series. Expanding on SDSO's summer programming and community outreach, she partnered with the Port of San Diego to develop and open the Symphony's first permanent outdoor venue, The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, along with integral improvements and upgrades to Embarcadero Marina Park South, while overseeing the fundraising campaign that secured 99 percent of the project cost from private sources. Since its opening in August of 2021 The Rady Shell has garnered the attention of regional and national news outlets, record-breaking concert attendance, cementing its place in the San Diego arts community and skyline for years to come.

Known for her history of collaborating with many of today's most talented guest artists and composers and for her commitment to contemporary music, Gilmer has engaged leading guest artists for their San Diego premieres, commissioned new works, and presented important West Coast premieres.

Martha Gilmer came to SDSO from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, where in the course of a three-decade career she rose to the position of Vice President for Artistic Planning and Audience Development. At the CSO, she developed long-term relationships with many of the most outstanding artists and composers of our time and developed a host of innovative programs connecting the orchestra with new audiences in Chicago and around the world. She is a graduate of the Northwestern University School of Music and has been active as an alumna, serving on the Visiting Committee and the Dean Search Committee and delivering the 2000 commencement address. She frequently writes and lectures about music.



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