



Rafael Payare

Conductor

With his innate musicianship, charismatic energy, gift for communication, and irresistibly joyous spirit, Venezuelan conductor Rafael Payare is “electrifying in front of an orchestra” (*Los Angeles Times*). The 2024-25 season marks his third as Music Director of Canada’s Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (Montreal Symphony Orchestra/OSM) and his sixth as Music Director of California’s San Diego Symphony (SDS). Other current positions are Principal Conductor of Virginia’s Castleton Festival, a post he has held since 2015, and Conductor Laureate of Northern Ireland’s Ulster Orchestra, where he was Principal Conductor and Music Director from 2014 to 2019, making multiple appearances at London’s BBC Proms.

The 2024–25 season sees Payare and the San Diego Symphony inaugurate San Diego’s newly renovated Jacobs Music Center with a star-studded opening night concert featuring a world premiere composed for the occasion by Texu Kim. Payare goes on to conduct a full roster of performances at the venue over the season, bookended by Mahler’s Second and Third Symphonies. With the OSM, he leads a similarly full season in Montreal, tours to eight European cities with pianist Daniil Trifonov, and releases his third album with the orchestra on the Pentatone label; an all-Schoenberg recording to mark the composer’s 150th anniversary, this follows their spring releases of Strauss’s *Ein Heldenleben* and Mahler’s *Rückert-Lieder* in 2024 and of Mahler’s Fifth Symphony in 2023, named an Editor’s Choice by both *Gramophone* and *BBC Music* magazines. The conductor rounds out his season with high profile returns to the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and London’s Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

Last season, Payare celebrated OSM’s 90th anniversary with performances of Mahler’s First and Seventh Symphonies, Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, Janáček’s *Glagolitic Mass*, and Messiaen’s *Turangalîla-Symphonie*. He led the SDS for its first appearance in a full decade at Carnegie Hall, in three programs at the inaugural California Festival, and at Centro Cultural Tijuana’s annual Día de los Muertos Festival. These engagements continued his transformative tenure with the orchestra, following their commercial album debut with Shostakovich’s 11th Symphony, “The Year 1905,” and their concert for the opening of The Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, the orchestra’s open-air bayside venue, which wowed the national press. Payare’s other recent highlights include debuts at the Royal Opera House, at the Edinburgh Festival, and with the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Orchestre national de France, and Staatskapelle Berlin, with which he reunited for *Turandot* at the Berlin State Opera this past summer.

Since winning first prize at Denmark’s Malko Competition for Young Conductors in 2012, Payare has made debuts and forged longstanding relationships with many of the world’s preeminent orchestras. His U.S. collaborations include engagements with the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Pittsburgh Symphony, while his notable European appearances include dates with the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, Orchestra dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, and Vienna Philharmonic, which he has led at the Vienna Konzerthaus and Musikverein; on a Baltic tour; and at Paris’s Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. Payare has undertaken concerto

collaborations with soloists including Piotr Anderszewski, Emmanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman, Elīna Garanča, Sergey Khachatryan, Gil Shaham, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Daniil Trifonov, Alisa Weilerstein, Frank Peter Zimmermann, and Nikolaj Znaider. Also a dedicated opera conductor, before appearing at Covent Garden he made his celebrated Glyndebourne Festival debut with *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, as well as leading *Madama Butterfly* and *La bohème* at Stockholm's Royal Swedish Opera, *Tosca* at the Royal Danish Opera, Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* at the Castleton Festival, and a new production of *La traviata* in Malmö, Sweden.

Born in Barcelona, Venezuela, in 1980, Payare first discovered classical music at the age of 14, when he began playing horn in the El Sistema program. After just three weeks he joined the Symphony Orchestra of Anzoátegui, before becoming part of the National Children's Orchestra of Venezuela, with which he toured Europe, Asia and the Americas. From 2001 to 2012 he served as Principal Horn of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, taking part in prestigious tours and recordings with Gustavo Dudamel and other eminent conductors including Claudio Abbado, Lorin Maazel, Sir Simon Rattle, and Giuseppe Sinopoli, who first inspired Payare to conduct himself. Receiving conducting training from El Sistema founder José Antonio Abreu and from subsequent mentors Maazel and Krzysztof Penderecki, Payare went on to lead all of Venezuela's major orchestras. Today he is himself an inspiration to younger musicians, continuing his long-standing involvement with El Sistema and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra and enjoying a close relationship with London's Royal College of Music, where he conducts the symphony orchestra each season. He has also led youth projects with the Chicago Civic Orchestra, Orchestra of the Americas, and Filarmónica Joven de Colombia, and conducted a tour with the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland. Payare resides in San Diego and Montreal with his wife, acclaimed cellist Alisa Weilerstein, and their two young children.

www.facebook.com/RafaelPayareConductor

www.instagram.com/rafaelpayareconductor

twitter.com/rafaelpayare

© 21C Media Group, August 2024