



## **Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Appoints Didi Balle Playwright in Residence**

**Baltimore, Md. (May 2, 2013)** – The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO) announces the appointment of **Didi Balle** as the organization’s first-ever **Playwright in Residence**. Balle (pronounced “BAHL-ee) is a writer and director whose credits include the creation of a new genre for orchestras and actors: the Symphonic Play™. This position formalizes the partnership that the BSO under Music Director Marin Alsop initiated with Balle in 2008 when the Orchestra commissioned and performed Balle’s *CSI: Beethoven*.

In past seasons, the BSO has performed Balle’s symphonic plays to critical acclaim. The *Baltimore Sun* said of the BSO’s 2008 performance of *CSI: Beethoven*, “[In] this look beneath the epidermis of a musical giant, *CSI: Beethoven* cut smoothly and entertainingly.” This two-night event blended excerpts from each of Beethoven’s nine symphonies with live theatre, forensic science, medical inquiry, and visual images to solve the mysteries of Beethoven’s deafness and early death at age 56.

In 2010, the BSO performed Balle’s “Analyze This: Mahler and Freud,” the imagined dramatization of the legendary psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud’s meeting with composer Gustav Mahler. On April 19 and 20, 2013, the BSO will perform the world premiere of “Wagner: A Composer Fit for a King,” which explores the backstage drama behind the making of *The Ring*, punctuated by orchestral selections from Wagner’s monumental works. The play was commissioned by the BSO to celebrate 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the composer’s birth. It examines Wagner’s relationship with the fanatical patron, 18-year-old King Ludwig, who rescued the composer from financial ruin and helped bring his masterpieces to the stage. Next season on February 28 and March 1, 2013, the BSO will investigate the cause of death of another great composer in Balle’s *CSI: Mozart*.

Additional commissioned projects in future seasons will be announced at a later date.

### **Didi Balle, Playwright**

DIDI BALLE's credits as a professional writer and director include numerous commissions, broadcasts and staged productions of her work spanning symphonic plays, radio musicals, plays, musical theater, song cycles and opera. She's created a new genre of writing with her plays for actors and orchestras: **Symphonic Plays™**.

Didi's shows have been produced and performed by companies from The Baltimore Symphony to New York City Opera to The Manhattan Rhythm Kings; in venues from Lincoln Center to Verizon Symphony Hall to the Barbican Center for the Arts in London, with performances broadcast live from the BBC to NPR.

Most recently Didi was commissioned by the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra to write and direct a new Symphonic Play™ for Maestro Yannick Nezet-Seguin and the Philadelphia Orchestra: "[Shostakovich: Notes to Stalin](#)". This compelling Symphonic Play™ for actors and orchestra dramatizes the compelling life story and harrowing political rule in 1930s Russia that shaped the creation of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony. The Symphonic Play™ premiered to great success March 6, 2013 at The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Verizon Hall.

"[Shostakovich: Notes to Stalin](#)" marked Balle's second commission of a new Symphonic Play with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Ms. Balle wrote and staged directed the Philadelphia Orchestra's 2011-12 Annual School Concert. Didi's Symphonic Play™ for children and orchestra, "[Elements of the Earth: A Musical Discovery](#)" delved into the secret life of "Isaac Newton, mathematician by day, alchemist by night."

Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony commissioned Didi to write and direct "[A Composer Fit For A King: Wagner and Ludwig II](#)" for a program celebrating the 200th anniversary of Wagner's birth. The Symphonic Play™ will be a seamless blend of music and theatre dramatizing the real-life story behind the making of The Ring Cycle. It premieres April 19, 2013 at Strathmore Music Center; and April 20, 2013 at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. This symphonic play marks the 4th creative collaboration of a new concert work by Music Director Marin Alsop with Writer-Director Balle.

Currently, Didi is researching and writing two new Symphonic Plays™ for world premieres with Maestra Marin Alsop and the BSO in the 2013-14 season: "CSI: Mozart" and "The Brahms Triangle" for 2014-15 season. Ms. Balle is also researching and preparing to write and direct a new Symphonic Play™ for Young Audiences: "Einstein and the Honey Bee" weaving a tale of music, botany and science.

Balle received her M.F.A. from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts Music Theater Program where she was awarded the Oscar Hammerstein Scholarship as a playwright-lyricist. Her first writing job was co-writing a weekly radio musical-comedy serial with Garrison Keillor called "[The Story of Gloria, A Young Woman of Manhattan.](#)" Didi is also a published writer and journalist and worked as a contributing editor for The New York Times Syndicate for 13 years. Her print work includes publication of cover stories, numerous articles and reviews in national magazines.

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