BSO OrchKids Partner with Baltimore City Public Schools at the Ultimate Block Party

Baltimore, Md. (September 14, 2011) – The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra’s OrchKids is partnering with Baltimore City Public Schools to present Baltimore’s first Ultimate Block Party, on Sunday, October 2 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Inner Harbor at Rash Field. The Ultimate Block Party will feature play-based activities for children ages birth to 13, and is based on the science of learning and development. BSO’s OrchKids will be hosting a Bucket Band Circle and Instrument Zoo at the event. Other activities include boat trips, rokkball, recycled art, and robotics. This event is free and open to the public. Please see below for complete event details.

The first Ultimate Block Party took place at New York’s Central Park in October of 2010, and was organized by the non-profit group Play for Tomorrow. Since then, other cities have taken up the mission of promoting the joys of play to simulate learning and healthy development in children, by staging their own Ultimate Block Party. Most recently, Baltimore has embraced this mission and has called on community partners such as BSO’s OrchKids to contribute to the event.

About OrchKids
OrchKids is a year-round after-school music program designed to create social change and nurture promising futures for youth in Baltimore City neighborhoods. Under Music Director Marin Alsop’s artistic leadership and direction, OrchKids is a cornerstone of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra’s efforts to expand the Orchestra’s relevance within the City’s broad and diverse community. In collaboration with several community partners, OrchKids provides music education, instruments, meals and mentorship at no cost to Baltimore’s neediest youngsters.

The program is inspired by Venezuela’s El Sistema, the music program that in 30 years has transformed the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in that country’s most impoverished areas. Like El Sistema, OrchKids is intended primarily to address the most pervasive social challenges affecting underserved youth, using music to cultivate fundamental life skills such as self-expression, cooperative learning, discipline and creativity. With assistance from The Family
League of Baltimore City and the University of Maryland Baltimore County, the BSO has implemented several assessment tools to track if OrchKids participants are achieving social, academic and musical outcomes.

For the 2011-2012 school year, OrchKids serves more than 250 pre-K through fifth grade students at Lockerman Bundy Elementary School and at New Song Academy in West Baltimore. Under OrchKids Director of Artistic Programming Dan Trahey, students receive classroom music instruction during the school day and in after-school sessions four days a week from 3:30-6:15 p.m. A typical after-school session includes classroom music instruction, group instrument lessons, tutoring assistance and a nutritious meal, courtesy of East Side Entrees. OrchKids also frequently have the opportunity to take field trips to local organizations and attend Baltimore Symphony Orchestra concerts.

**COMPLETE EVENT DETAILS**

*The Ultimate Block Party*
Sunday, October 2, 2011 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. – Baltimore’s Inner Harbor at Rash Field

This event is free and open to the public. For more information visit ultimateblockparty.com.

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