

KIRILL GERSTEIN



Late last year, our guest soloist Kirill Gerstein received stunning news: he was named winner of the 2010 Gilmore Artist Award, one of the music world's most generous and prestigious honors. "I went kind of blank for a minute," he said. The award bestows a gift of \$300,000 and places the young musician in the company of an elite group of exceptional pianists. He makes his CSO subscription debut in the Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 2.

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The Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 2 is a piece that you grow up with, but I actually haven't played it until this year. This concerto is emotionally more raw and less dressed up than the Third. The Second is much more exposed for the pianist. It demands more from you, emotionally, than the Third, I think.

The sheer emotion of Rachmaninov's music is one reason it is so accepted by the public. It is instantly likeable. He uses the instrument in a clever and fantastic way. The melodies are so infectious. It doesn't need much introduction. So, just listen and enjoy! The concerto needs and deserves a chance to be heard with open ears and an open heart.

I first worked with Charles Dutoit in 2005. He has been a very important mentor to me. I

admire him for his wide repertoire, and for his great knowledge of culture – which is not limited just to music. He's also one of the great inheritors of the French conducting tradition with its unique orchestral color and sense. I'm very grateful to him for his support through the years.

I've known the CSO for a long time. I have sat in on rehearsals, and I know many of the musicians and have performed chamber music with a number of them. Playing the Rachmaninov concerto with an orchestra such as Chicago is particularly meaningful. It is an added pleasure to follow in the footsteps of many of the legendary pianists in performing this work. And, definitely, one of the highlights for me in 2010 is performing with the CSO.