

## Pianist shines in symphony concert

By **Pierre Ruhe**  
For the AJC

The Atlanta Symphony seems to hold a telepathic relationship with the Gilmore Artist Award, a prize for pianists that's akin to the MacArthur "genius" grant.

The Gilmore is given every four years to an especially creative pianist at the start of a career. And \$300,000 in prize money isn't bad.

Four years ago, the Gilmore went to poetic pianist Ingrid Fliter. The award was announced just before her performance with the ASO.

For more than a year, Kirill Gerstein has been booked to play this week in Symphony Hall. Born in Russia 30 years ago, educated in America, with a background in jazz piano, he was named the 2010 award winner in January.

What he does is sensational. Franz Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2 is a showy and experimental work that melds thunderous pronouncements

from the keyboard with the intimacy of orchestral chamber music. Gerstein made the hammering, 10-finger runs up and down the keyboard seem effortless and beside the point. An intellectual musician, he took the music apart and put it back together as he played, making the concerto sound at once like bel canto opera and hip modernism.

He returned with an encore: George Gershwin's "Embraceable You" transcribed by the late Earl Wild, where Tin Pan Alley meets Chopin études.

Guest conductor Vassily Sinaisky drew a bright, steely sound from the orchestra in Beethoven's "Leonora" Overture No. 3. Colorful and muscular, his Beethoven was music in three dimensions.

That wasn't the result for Stravinsky's "Pétrouchka," which sounded under-rehearsed.

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Pierre Ruhe is classical music critic of [www.ArtsCriticATL.com](http://www.ArtsCriticATL.com)

### Concert review

**Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**, 8 p.m.  
Saturday, Symphony Hall, 1280 Peachtree St. N.E., 404-733-5000, [www.atlantasymphony.org](http://www.atlantasymphony.org)

