

Passionate about the need to identify and nurture young conductors and to help them develop their craft, CSO music director Riccardo Muti initiated the International Chicago Symphony Orchestra Sir Georg Solti Conducting Competition in 2010. From 225 applicants, ten semifinalists, and four finalists, thirty-year-old Shoichi “Sean” Kubota, originally of Tokyo, Japan, was named the winner. As the first Solti Conducting Fellow, Sean is participating in a two-year apprenticeship in which he studies and works closely with Maestro Muti and key CSO guest conductors. Here, Sean talks with the ILAT staff about his appointment.

How did you hear about the Solti Conducting Competition, and why did you apply?

I heard about the competition through a friend in New York, where I currently reside. Maestro Muti had often appeared with the New York Philharmonic, and I was always fascinated by the sound that he creates with the orchestra.

Describe your most memorable experience of the competition finals.

At the final round of the competition, Maestro Muti urged me to conduct like a Japanese samurai!

Since being named the winner of the fellowship, how has your life changed?

The partnership of Maestro Muti and the CSO is one of the greatest marriages between a conductor and an

orchestra. I get to visit this wonderful city often and get to know Maestro Muti and the entire CSO family—I feel very fortunate to be with them.



What are you most looking forward to as the Solti Conducting Fellow?

I’m hoping to find the secret recipe of how the CSO has developed to become the world’s best orchestra. I’m also looking forward to many spectacular programs coming up this season, including the world-premiere pieces by [Mead Composers-in-Residence] Mason Bates and Anna Clyne.

For more information about the Institute, please visit cso.org/institute.