

Michael Stern

Germantown News

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Glittering reception opens Iris's sixth season

The Iris Chamber Orchestra with Conductor Michael Stern opened its sixth season Saturday night, October 8 at the Germantown Performing Arts Center, with featured soprano Kallen Esperian in what was a glittering gala.

World renowned soprano and Memphian Esperian with the IRIS Chamber Orchestra gave a stunning season opening concert featuring Berlioz's Overture to Beatrice and Benedict, Chausson's Poème de l'amour et la mer for soprano and orchestra, Richard Strauss' String Sextet from Capriccio, Selections from the Gershwin songbook and Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2.

Favored by many to be the most important winner of the Luciano Pavarotti Vocal Competition in her early twenties, Kallen Esperian has partnered with star quality like Pavarotti and Domingo from La Scala to the Metropolitan Opera. She was featured in the film 'Distant Harmony' while in China with the great Pavarotti and in recent years has emerged as the 'Verdi' soprano of choice by international opera houses.

She has triumphed in Carnegie Hall in one of her signature roles, Desdemona, opposite the Otello of Carlo Begonzi. She has been performing in the world's preeminent opera houses for a dozen years and has evolved into a world-renowned Verdi soprano.

She has performed numerous concerts with Luciano Pavarotti, some of them televised on PBS. A CD and video of her Pavarotti Plus at Royal Albert Hall was released by Decca in 1996. She also has an album of American Folk Songs, entitled "AMERICAN TREASURE" on the Pro Organ label.

In addition to opera, Esperian is a wonderful recitalist and concert performer. She is one of the "Three Sopranos" who have concertized throughout the world. She has performed with many of the world's major orchestras and has sung numerous performances of the Verdi Requiem with many of the world's great conductors.

Michael Stern is recognized as one of the most dynamic American conductors of his generation. Stern is the founding Music Director of The IRIS Chamber Orchestra, now beginning its sixth season. Under Stern's direction the orchestra has been unanimously heralded for its varied programming, with special emphasis on American contemporary

music, and for its acclaimed recordings on the Naxos and Arabesque labels. Dedicated to revitalizing all aspects of the concert experience, IRIS has embraced as a central part of its mission a deep commitment to furthering American composers.

The combination of Stern and Esperian made for a stunning, shining evening.

The reception following the performance was made even more fabulous by the Iris Guild, whose 60 members made the surroundings beautiful with flowers and food. All the flower arrangements were created by garden club members, and the foods were prepared by the Guild members, who tripled their favorite recipes to provide food for the one thousand guests.

"The guild all worked together, and it was fantastic," said Pat McCaleb of the Reception Committee. "The tables were gorgeous."

Other members of the Reception Committee were Mary Miesse, Jo Cyr, Bonnie Everson, Suzann Thompson, Nancy Comas, Barbara Dodge, Dorothy Lee, Dorothy Steen and Betsy Brunson.