

## **Michael Stern**

*Commercial Appeal (Memphis TN)*

May 9, 2005

### **Midori's passion, grace make perfect moments at IRIS**

Midori conquered Beethoven and the sellout IRIS Chamber Music Orchestra audience with such seeming ease.

Of course it wasn't all that simple. But when the violinist came onstage at the Germantown Performing Arts Centre on Sunday afternoon and cranked up the Beethoven Violin Concerto in D major, it was such a silken performance that it seemed effortless.

Maestro Michael Stern had earlier referred to the work as a "perfect moment of grace and purity and nobility." Midori provided the passion with a wonderfully physical performance that took no note for granted, yet allowed the piece to appear lighter than air.

She was attired entirely in silver, which seemed elegantly appropriate. The most delicate phrases emerged as gossamer whispers while the most vigorous passages held full authority.

Midori's brilliant sense of balance was a delicious complement to Stern's own sense of proportion.

The afternoon's first piece was Hindemith's *Nobilissima Visione*, composed in 1937-38 and not often performed.

The richly textured work is not only a terrific composition detailing the maturation of St. Francis of Assisi, it tracks Francis' evolution from callow adventurer to a deeply religious man who embraced poverty and good works. Hindemith offers an absorbing range of passages to carry us along on the journey.

But what this performance also did was to remind us that, as often as IRIS has splendid guest artists, it is the orchestra itself that is a brilliant star.

Not only was the full group remarkably tight, but several individual musicians worked magic on this complex piece that also had the brass sounding as good as ever.

The nuances of the Hindemith were given full exposure by the deft direction of Stern, who once again brought out the brilliance of IRIS.