
Emma Kirkby

Selected Reviews

'The Golden Age Revived' – Recital with Jakob Lindberg (lute) – Kings Place, London (January 2016)

"Emma Kirkby can certainly do melancholy, as she proved in this delightful concert with lutenist Jakob Lindberg, given as part of Kings Place's "Baroque Unwrapped" series. As we discovered the lute song embraces more than that. Kirkby's very first song made the point. She came on stage, beamed sweetly at the audience, and sat while Lindberg tuned, apparently lost in thought.

Then without warning she leaped up. "So Beautie on the waters stood, when Love had sever'd earth from flood," she sang with delighted surprise, her gestures bringing these abstractions vividly to life. It was a song about creation, and a complicated business it clearly was for the Almighty. He had to separate earth from fire, teach the "orbs" how to spin in their separate orbits, and make everything ring with "heavenly harmony".

It was all a far cry from the pains of love, the usual topic of song. And it set the tone for the concert, which was a fascinating series of disquisitions and miniature dramatic scenes.

Kirkby...had to capture us with her artistry, which was as winning and subtle as ever. When some singers evoke the flowing hand-gestures of Baroque times, it can seem arch. When Kirkby does it, she brings a touch of grace.

Towards the end, a humorous tone appeared, with a song by Purcell about the pouting self-pitying infant Cupid being stung by a bee. Just like you - small but deadly, said Venus, his not-very-sympathetic mother. We laughed at this pair of fantastical beings, revealed by these two fine artists in an all-too-human scene."

– Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph*

'The Seasons' – John Christopher Smith, Christophorus CHR 77382 (April 2014)

"Emma Kirkby radiates joy, gliding easily in and out of lines entwined with solo instruments."

– Berta Joncus, *BBC Music Magazine*

'Haydn à l'anglaise – Songs by Haydn (ed. Shield)', Café Mozart, Nimbus NI6174 (Released January 2012)

"Emma Kirkby sounds wonderful in her songs and duets...with subtle shaping of the melodies, perfect control of dynamics and tempo, incisively intelligent phrasing and (a rare thing) exquisite flourishes of Classical period ornamentation, all completely at the service of expression...this is a pleasant...recital...Aspiring singers should also listen to it for Kirkby's...demonstration of period-style performance and ornamentation."

– Christopher Price, *International Record Review*

"Sparkling Soprano: Emma Kirkby fizzes in Haydn's English songs" – **Geoff Brown, *BBC Music Magazine***

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Montéclair – Cantates à voix seule', London Baroque, BIS-CD-1865 (Released August 2011)

"Kirkby's vocal purity, dexterity and almost unrivalled skill in executing fully articulated Baroque trills equip her particularly well for this repertoire...Kirkby's ability to shade her notes and evoke emotions without undue recourse to vibrato is still almost unrivalled. Equally impressive are her facility and creativity with ornamentation...Kirkby's singing is marked by her usual high intelligence and impeccable taste"

- Andrew O'Connor, *International Record Review*

"Emma Kirkby has thrilled us for years with her sparkling Italianate virtuosity. She's no less outstanding in the subtleties of French singing, decorating lines with nuanced trills, turns and leaning dissonances, while sustaining an irresistible sense of purpose and forward direction. Her brief liner biography explains that she initially sang 'for pleasure – and still does', and the sense of sheer enjoyment in this music-making is palpable"

- George Pratt, *BBC Music Magazine*

"Kirkby embellishes every note with a grace, lightness and sparkle which other sopranos in careers half as long have already lost. Her taste serves expression. Baroque swirls, shakes, roulades and turns float as weightlessly as cherubs on a church ceiling. Her silence surrounding Lucretia's death are as eloquent as her harrowing sighs. She engages with the instruments...Kirkby is still peerless in a repertoire she herself is constantly expanding"

- Rick Jones, *Classic FM*

'Salzburg Barock - Music at the Court of Prince Archbishops', Bell'Arte Salzburg/Siedel CD Berlin Classics 0300120BC (Released June 2011)

"[Emma Kirkby's] superb instrument, bright, highly flexible and subtly shaded, and she deploys it with supreme intelligence. Moreover, she can...dispatch with ease the flamboyantly florid Gaudete et Exultate by Abraham Megerle...and the punishing passagework of the Ninnberg Abbey Ach kommet von Himmel. She also shines in Hofer's wonderful miniature Nisi Dominus for soprano and two violins. The elder Biber's motet O Dulcer Jesu, an athletic and emotionally wide-ranging dialogue for soprano and solo violin in scordatura tuning...is the crowning jewel of the programme both for its writing and for Kirkby's and Siedel's electrifying performance...I cannot recall the last time I enjoyed a Baroque music recital disc as much as this one"

- Christopher Price, *International Record Review (IRR Outstanding)*

'Orpheus in England: songs and lute solos' - Dowland, Purcell, BIS-SACD-1725 (Released January 2011)

"...a touch of winter frost', 'Kirkby conveys both intellectual appreciation and a deep emotional connection with their words', 'the voice may be less beautiful than it was, but her singing is more beautiful than ever'"

- Anna Picard, *BBC Music Magazine*

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'The Queen's Music', BIS-CD-1715 (Released October 2010)

"Emma Kirkby, the Swedish soprano Susanne Rydén and the English baritone Peter Harvey, all specialists in the historically informed performance of Baroque music, have the light, brilliant, flexible voices necessary to do these lovely works full justice. Kirkby is warmer than the more crystalline-sounding and considerably younger Rydén, but she is no less agile and thus the two sopranos are a perfect match in the eight sometimes almost declamatory, sometimes highly florid works they sing together" - **Christopher Price, *International Record Review***

"The vocal colours of Kirkby and her fellow soprano Susanne Rydén complement each other beautifully, while Peter Harvey's resonant baritone and the countertenor Mikael Bellini add other shades"

- **Stephen Pettitt, *The Sunday Times***

"Many of the settings exploit the sensual intertwining of two soprano voices over a basso continuo...Emma Kirkby, dewy-voiced as ever, and Swedish soprano Susanne Rydén make exquisite partners, ever-sensitive to the music's subtle nuances and graceful ornamentation" - **Kate Bolton, *BBC Music Magazine***

"If the [Queen's] musicians could play and sing with as much charm as the performers on this recording, then one can understand the desire of the Queen completely. Impeccable vocal technique, smooth text articulation and a high expression characterize the vocal works, the experience of the very emotionally recited instrumental playing sets an excellent addition. Here, Emma Kirkby (after all, highly respected now as the "Grand Dame" of the early music scene) and her singing partners deliver sensitivity, drama and an incredible variety of nuances in the expression - that is unique in that light, these works have beautiful jewels on." - **Éva Pintér, www.klassik-heute.de**