

## Reviews of 27 October 2009 Concert by Emma Kirkby and Jakob Lindberg

- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
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<http://thirdcoastdigest.com/2009/10/a-singers-take-on-emma-kirkby/>

### A singer's take on Emma Kirkby

October 28th, 2009

By Barbara Castonguay

Posted in:

Arts & Culture, Culture Desk, Music, TCD Feature 5

I had the good fortune to sing in Dame Emma Kirkby's master class Monday at UWM.

Kirkby is a world-renowned soprano and famed interpreter of early music. A BBC Music Magazine survey of critics put her at number 10 on the list of the 20 singers since the beginning of recording. She's a big deal.

Someone might want to tell her that she's a big deal. Dame Emma introduced herself to each singer personally before the class. She scoffed at the notion of sitting behind a table to judge us and took a seat in the audience. She cracked jokes and had seemingly boundless energy. There was simply no sense of "diva." There was only the text and the music.

Tuesday night, Kirkby and lutenist Jakob Lindberg gave a concert of songs by Henry Purcell and John Dowland, giants of the English Baroque, on the [Early Music Now](#) series.

Kirkby wasted nothing that Purcell and Dowland gave her. She parsed and arranged every word, every phrase, and even every rest into arresting little vignettes. Repertoire that could seem repetitive when performed by someone else revealed its diversity, given the advantage of Kirkby's thoughtful interpretation.

Again, someone might want to tell her that she's a big deal. She sat in a chair next to Lindberg for most of the concert, making it clear that this was a true collaboration rather than a soprano with her accompanist. She listened intently to Lindberg's solos. Her face registered Lindberg's every turn of phrase. No sense of "diva" at all.



In the master class, Kirkby spoke at length with us about diction and how it can convey not only the meaning of the text but also its emotion. In concert, her diction was flawless. Every ridiculous early English word could be understood. Kirkby utilized consonants and vowels – the subtleties of attack on consonants, the edge of nasality or ring of resonance on a vowel — to color the story of the text. This was especially evident in pieces such as "Farewell unkind farewell," where a consonant's presence or absence opened a window into the protagonist's emotions.



In the masterclass, Kirkby spoke with my friend, mezzo-soprano Rebecca Davies, and I at great length about utilizing chest resonance in our Strozzi duet. This surprised me. It's early music, right? Isn't it supposed to be a bit stilted? The opera world seems convinced that healthy singing and early music are mutually exclusive. But here was Emma Kirkby herself imparting

the type of advice many proponents of relatively later *bel canto* style would give to young singers.

At the concert, you could hear and see Kirkby use her entire body for vocal production and to aid in interpretation, from full chest voice in imitation of a moan to the straightest and lightest of tones.

For Kirkby, there is only the text and the music. For the six of us lucky enough to sing for her, there was only inspiration.

I really should be practicing.

*The Kirkby-Lindberg program took place in the Schwan Concert Hall of Wisconsin Lutheran College.*

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Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Review

<http://www.jsonline.com/entertainment/arts/66760237.html>

## **Early music duo blend voice, lute masterfully**

By Elaine Schmidt, Special to the Journal Sentinel

Posted: Oct. 27, 2009

Soprano Emma Kirkby and lutenist Jakob Lindberg make an absolutely perfect musical pair, performing in a seamless blend of style and expression.

Playing in the Early Music Now series at Wisconsin Lutheran College Tuesday evening, the duo performed a program of music by John Dowland and Henry Purcell. For the most part, they stayed away from the best-known pieces of the two composers.

Kirkby sings with exceptional clarity, adding always-tasteful, facile ornaments of the sort one expects from an instrumentalist. She uses vibrato not as a constant element of her sound, or as an ornamental add-on or historical affectation, but as a subtle, natural variation of color and energy that helps tell the story of the song.

She sang several numbers seated, standing to give added dramatic presence to a few selections. She mixed an effortless, ringing, high sound with an earthier low register, using her entire range with flawless control that allowed her to make the sort of dynamic tapers that leave the listener breathless.

Her pitch was flawless as she delivered animated interpretations that were wedded to the texts.

When the duo turned their attention to a couple of the better-known pieces of Purcell, "Music for a while" and, as an encore, "An Evening Hymn," their interpretations were revelatory in the details and interpretive nuance they brought to the familiar tunes.

Lindberg's lute, which had been dated to about 1590, is a delight to hear. It is thought to be the oldest lute with its original soundboard that is in playable condition. Listening to its sweet, colorful sound was like hearing history.

The instrument has a remarkably present, versatile sound. With it, Lundberg created a wide range of effects from feather-light sounds to ringing harmonies.

Lindberg accompanied Kirkby through her numbers, matching and supporting her interpretations impeccably. He also took the spotlight a few times with solo lute numbers, bringing out individual melodic lines, each with their own distinct sound and color.

Kirkby and Lindberg, that exquisite voice and fabulous lute sound, perform as two halves of a whole. They are simply meant to perform together.

Kirkby and Lindberg answered enthusiastic applause with encore selections.

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Shepherd Express Review

<http://www.expressmilwaukee.com/article-8592-milwaukee-symphony-orchestrarss-sensational-lsbluebeardrss-castlers.html>

Wednesday, November 4, 2009

*(following the review of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's Sensational 'Bluebeard's Castle')*

## **Early Music Now showcases Kirkby, Lindberg**

By Rick Walters

Earlier in the week Early Music Now presented the world's most famous star of Renaissance and Baroque music, British soprano Emma Kirkby, performing music of John Dowland and Henry Purcell with lutenist Jakob Lindberg at Wisconsin Lutheran College. Most singers attempt a restrained tone in early music. Kirkby is so perfectly suited to it that the opposite is true. Though her flawless light voice is small in sound and her dynamic range naturally limited, few classical singers perform with Kirkby's exuberant, expressive freedom. Each phrase seems to come from her entire body with spontaneous joy. No artist uses English diction more tellingly. Singer and lutenist created a parade of magical moods, whether in dance-like high-spirits or ponderous contemplation. Lindberg's lute solos were an amazing display of the instrument's capabilities.