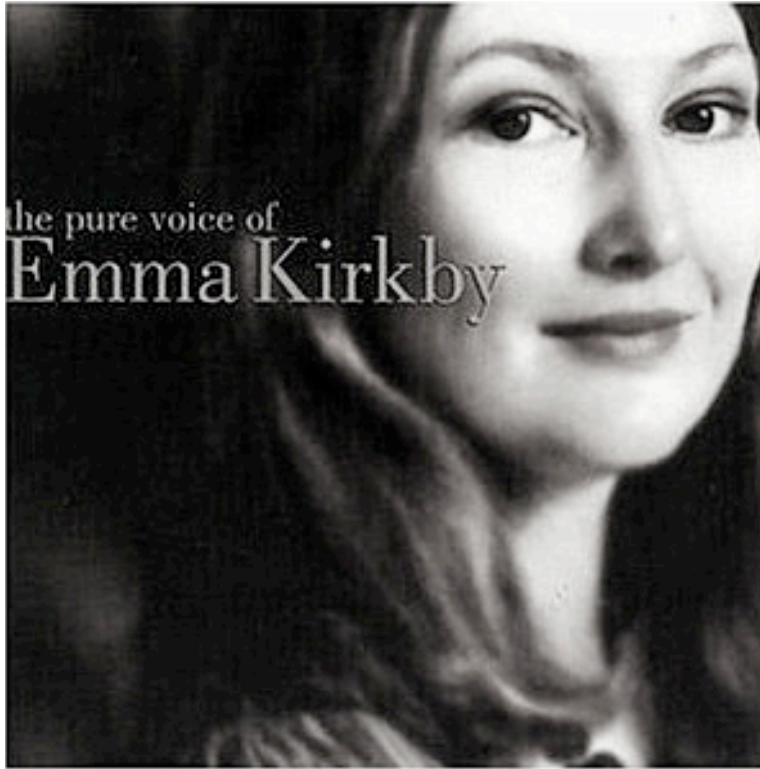




# The Sound of Whiteness: Early Music Performance Practice in Britain

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San Francisco, 2011  
AMS Committee on Women & Gender



*The Pure Voice of Emma Kirkby*. Decca, 1998. Image from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

Quote 1 (All emphasis mine)

“For two decades, Emma Kirkby’s *clear* agile voice has epitomized the *pure* sound in the singing of early music. She remains one of the treasures of the music world.”

*Toronto Globe and Mail*, date unknown. From <http://www.rayfieldartists.com/emmakirkby.html>. Accessed 21 Feb. 2010.

Quote 2.

“Tessa [Bonner] had a refreshing *clean* and exceptionally *true* voice. . . . Tessa was in her element, her musical instincts and ambitions perfectly at one with the *voice nature had given her*.”

Andrew Parrott, ‘Tessa Bonner: Early Music Soprano with a Clear, True Voice,’ *The Guardian*, 12 January 2009. Available at [www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/jan/12/tessa-bonner-obituary](http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/jan/12/tessa-bonner-obituary). Accessed 13 Jan. 2009.

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## Quote 3.

“With a vocal timbre that combines the vibrato-free so-called *white sound* of a *British choirboy* with the body of a mezzo-soprano, [Ellen] Hargis kept the vocal lines as *clean* as an instrumentalist but also used unintrusive feats of color and word pronunciation to create great poetic awareness of what she was singing. The effect was entrancing.”

*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4 March 2005. Available at <http://calartists.mymcn.org/ehargis.html>. Accessed 21 Feb. 2010.

## Quote 4.

“The soprano Emma Kirkby produces a ‘*white tone*’ which is scarcely distinguishable from that of a *choir boy* in some items, and this makes for a commendable *purity* of intonation.”

*Gramophone*, December 1975. Via the *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. white.

## Quote 5.

“The people in the neighbourhood were encouraged to be friendly to [the British Hondurans] and the girls have interpreted this rather widely.... There have been a number of marriages and births, and much intercourse is allowed, even in the Camp.... There are already sufficient births of foreign extraction in this country without the added complication of colour.... I feel that unsophisticated country girls should be discouraged from marrying these black men from Equatorial America.”

Letter from the Duke of Buccleuch to the British Prime Minister, 1942. Cited in Sonya Rose, ‘Sex, Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain,’ *The American Historical Review*, 103/4 (Oct. 1998), 1147-1176 at 1156-1157.

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### Quote 6.

“The performance [of Josquin’s ‘Ave Maria . . . virgo serena’] is adequate and quite lively, but it catches little of the *limpid purity of the music*. The charge of arbitrary and unmusical changes of dynamics and tempo could be laid at its door, but compared with other performances . . . this is a very mild offender. Not so ‘Miserere mei Deus’ . . . This *sublime work* . . . is treated . . . *barbarously*. The non-committal black-and-white of a “*clean text*” edition of early music seems to tempt conductors to the projection of their fantasies with almost as much power as the ink-blots of a Rohrschach test.”

Jeremy Noble, ‘Sixteenth-Century Music on Records I: Sacred Music,’ *Music and Letters* 39/2 (April 1958), 154-159 at 154.

### Quote 7.

“From the viewpoint of racism, there is no exterior, there are no people on the outside. There are only people who should look like us and whose crime is not to be. The dividing line is not between inside and outside but rather is internal to the simultaneous signifying chains and successive subjective choices. Racism propagates waves of sameness until all those who resist identification have been wiped out.”

Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London & New York: Continuum, 1987), 197.