

## Phonological Issues in ‘But Who May Abide’ from Handel’s *Messiah*

### **As sung on youtube by:**

Bryn Terfel

Helen Watts

Marietta Simpson

### **a) Find a score of ‘But Who May Abide.’ Make some copies.**

Separate the text from the score, either as poetic verse, or as a text spread in the style of the ones we have been using in class. Using the symbols of IPA, identify IPA vowels for the entire song. Will you use GA or RP? Do you think there are 13 vowels or 15? Which chart will you use, IPA Source or La Bouff. Try to remember the chart we talked about in class that includes the seven basic vowels of Italian. This is always the model for lyric diction Don’t spend too much time on this project. U want what is second nature. Don’t forget to include diphthongs and r-colored triphthongs.

**b) Listen carefully to each youtube recording while following the score.** Listen again for lyric vowel variations. That is, using the examples we’ve talked about in class about the variation of bright [a] and dark [a] that depend on singer’s vocalic idiosyncrasies, identify vowel variations in the different recordings. Use IPA symbols to define these phonemic characteristics. Another example of lyric variations is illustrated by the [y] feeling in the sung [i] vowel (fior di labbra).

### **Example:**

When Terfel sings the second phrase ‘And who shall stand when he appeareth’ ask yourself if the [æ]’s are closed or open in feeling. Are the [e]’s open or closed. Are the [a]’s bright like Italian [a] or darker like the French [ɑ]. What quality does the [i] have, etc.