

Brown Bag Music Seminar

with Daniel Molkentin

IPA Toolkit Part II

Putting it to Use!

For the most part, you know how to say the words in Messiah, so it would be silly to write down the IPA for all the words in your score. However, in ensemble singing when there is a discrepancy or alternate pronunciation, everyone needs to agree on what sound to sing and stick to it (most often it's the conductor who decides!). This is where IPA can be a helpful reminder and save a lot of time during rehearsal.

Here are some steps you may take when receiving instructions on pronunciation from the conductor.

Step One- Listen

Often times when the conductor instructs the chorus to pronounce a word or words a certain way (especially after rehearsing it several times) because he/she is not hearing it pronounced the way he/she would like and/or there are noticeable discrepancies. It is then your job to determine whether you are one of the people pronouncing the word(s) correctly or not.

Step Two-Analyze

If hear you are not doing the agreed pronunciation, try to figure out what you are doing that is different from everyone else. For example, in the word “glory,” are you using a “burred r” [ɹ](American “r”)? Sometimes this step will take a few seconds, other times, especially in a foreign language, it may take longer.

Step Three- Correct


After you have figured out what is off, fix it. If you were using a “burred r” [ɹ] in “glory”, replace it with a “flipped r” [r].

Step Four- Write it down

Indicate in your score what you need to do next time (do **not** rely on your memory). If you are not pronouncing an English word the way the conductor requested, it's probably because you're not used to it. If it's a common word, like “easy” (which we're pronouncing [izi]), you may say it many times during week the normal way [izi].

Let's examine the following example from Messiah.

ALTO



And the glo - ry, the glo-ry of the Lord,

If spoken by someone from America, the “r” in “glory” would be burred [ɹ](the American “r” sound), the “r” in “Lord” would be an “r-colored schwa” [ɚ], the “y” in “glory” would be pronounced with a bright [i] sound and the “d”s in “and” and “lord” may or may not be heard. So if IPAed, it would look like this [ænd ðə glɔɹi əv ðə lɔɹd] ([ɹ] indicates an imploded [d])

If spoken by someone from England, the “r” in “glory” may be flipped, the “r” in “Lord” would hardly be pronounced at all, the “y” in “glory” would be an [i] sound, the “o” in “glory” would be a little more round [ɔ], and the “o” in “of” would be pronounced with a round [ɒ] sound. The IPA would look like this [ænd ðə glɔri əv ðə lɔɹd]

Neither of these is what we're doing when singing this movement with OSNY.

Kent gave the following instructions for this passage:

In “glory,” flip the “r” and make the “y” an open [ɪ] sound (for a more historic sound).

We would write that in IPA like this [glɔri] and not [glɔri](Modern MA) or [glɔɹi](American) or [glɔri] (British)

In “Lord”, use a British “r” [ɹ], not an American “r” sound [ɚ]. Add a little schwa sound [ə] after the “d” so we hear it better. We would write that in IPA like this [lɔɹd^(ə)] and not [lɔɹd](American) or [lɔɹd](British)

Now go to your score. Write in the IPA. Write it in as many passages as necessary to remember!

ALTO



And the glo - ry, the glo-ry of the Lord,
 glɔri lɔɹd^(ə)

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Listen to the follow examples.

Exercise A

1. [læ^rd]
2. [læð]

Exercise B

1. [bɪ'hoʊld]
2. [bi'hoʊld]
3. [bi'hoʊld̩]

Exercise C

1. [glɔɪ]
2. [g^(ə)lɔɪ]
3. [glɔɪ]
4. [glɔɪ]

Exercise D

- 1.[haləlujə]
- 2.[halɛɪlujə]
- 3.[halɛluja]
- 4.[haləluja]
- 5.[halɛlujə]
- 6.[halɛɪluja]

Listen to the instructions and indicate them with IPA below.

1.

for the Lord God Om - ni - po - tent reign - eth, Hal - le - lu - jah,

2.

The Ev - er - last - ing Fa - ther, The Prince of Peace.

3.

Be - hold the Lamb of God,