

CHART IV
THE BASIC ENGLISH VOWELS

Front Vowels		
(sit)	(set)	(sat)
Central Vowels		
(see)	(sun)	(sod)
Back Vowels		
(soon)	(soak)	(saw)

Listed below are musical examples from Handel’s *Messiah* which are selected to illustrate these nine basic vowel sounds.

Ex. 4, G. F. Handel, *Messiah*, “Every valley shall be exhalted,” Number 3, mm. 27-28.

TENOR SOLO

the crook-ed straight, and the rough plac-es
(sun) (soon)

Ex. 5, G. F. Handel, *Messiah*, “But thanks be to God,” Number 51, mm. 1-9.

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

Andante (♩ = 69)

But thanks, but thanks, thanks, thanks be to God, but thanks. but
(sun) (sat) (see)(soon)(sod)

But thanks, but thanks, thanks, thanks be to God, to God, thanks be to
(sun)(sat) (soon) (sod) (sat) (see)(soon)

But thanks, but thanks, thanks, thanks be to God, thanks be to
(see)(soon)(sod) (sat) (see) (soon)

But thanks, but thanks, thanks, thanks be to God, thanks be to
(sun) (sat) (sun) (sat) (see)(soon)(sod) (sat) (see) (soon)

thanks, thanks, thanks be to God, who giv-eth us the vic-to-ry, the vic-to-ry thro'
 (sat) (see) (soon)(sit)(set) (sun) (sit)(soak) (see) (soon)

God, thanks be to God, who giv-eth us the vic-to-ry thro'
 (sod) (soon) (sod) (sun) (see)(soon)

God, thanks be to God, to God, who giv-eth us the vic-to-ry thro'
 (soon) (sod) (soon) (sit)(set)

God, thanks be to God,
 (sod) (sat) (see)(soon)

our Lord Je-sus Christ,
 (saw) (sun)

our Lord Je-sus Christ, who giv-eth us the
 (sun)

our Lord Je-sus Christ, who giv-eth us the vic-to-ry, who
 (soon) (sit)(set) (sun) (soak)

who giv-eth us the vic-to-ry, the vic-to-ry thro'
 (soon)(sit)(set) (sun) (sit)(soak) (soon)

One way of approaching vowel formation in singing is to think in terms of the placement (front, central, back) and spatial (open, closed) characteristics of these vowel sounds, as illustrated in Chart V.