Notes and Markings for Your Messiah Score

# Using the “T. Tertius Noble” [G. Schirmer edition](https://www.jwpepper.com/Messiah/441725.item#/submit)

## Morton Community Chorus, Phil Witzig Conductor

**General items applicable to all numbers:**

* Consonants, consonants! It’s hard to have too much consonant sound in a large auditorium with a lot of ring. Try underlining key consonants as a reminder to emphasize them. Listen to this stunningly beautiful piece called [Flight Song](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUvE6i1l2do) sung by the St. Olaf Choir. Notice how they pronounce their consonants. Especially notice the “h” and “c” sounds! This recording showcases some great choral technique from a great college choir!
* Don’t sing “r’s” like we say them, with the “rrrr” sound. The word “for” for instance should be sung “fo-ah” with the “-ah” at the tail end of the note. “Together” should be sung “togeth-uh,” etc.
* “R’s” at the beginning of words can be sung with a *slight* bit of a roll if you can. This is Baroque music!
* Don’t slide up or down to notes! This is sometimes called “scooping.” Sing every note on the right pitch from the very beginning to the every end of its time value.
* Let your face express whatever emotion is in the lyrics we are singing. Happy songs should have a happy expression. Outright smiles are sometimes difficult when singing certain vowels, but the overall expression of your face should be pleasant. When singing a song like “Surely He Hath Born Our Grief,” our expressions should be more grave.
* Sing with good support so that the tone is always pretty. Messiah has a lot of loud singing, but make sure you don’t over-sing. As Dr. Joe Henry says, “never louder than beautiful.”

**Notes on Specific Choruses:**

4.  **And the Glory:**

* Sprightly tempo, conducted with one beat per measure, or a triplet under each beat. Walz-like lilt on the downbeat of each measure.
* Don’t over-sing on this first number! You’ve got a long ways to go. The excitement of the music itself and the enthusiasm for how you sing it will provide everything needed to make this wonderful opening chorus pop!
* Measure 38: hold the ‘ed’ of ‘revealed’ over to the downbeat of measure 39.
* Measure 57: Altos, tenors, basses, ditto instruction of measure 38. Hold the dotted half note to the downbeat of measure 58. Sopranos, however, hold for two counts and breath on count 3.
* Measure 73: hold the dotted half note to the downbeat of measure 74.
* Measure 124: Sops cut 1st count short to breath after “together” before count 2 “for.” The rest hold the dotted half to the downbeat of measure 125.
* Measure 129: Sops and altos breath between “it” and “for” on count 1. Ten and bass hold dotted half over to downbeat of 130.
* Lot’s of “t” sound on cutoff at end!

7.  **And He Shall Purify:**

* Throughout song, anytime you sing the opening theme “And He shall purify,” crescendo and decrescendo on the word “purify.”
* Measures 3-5, Sops think light and high!
* Measures 16 and 19, accent the word “sons” on each of these two measures, as in, “the SONS.”
* Measure 24: all voices breath on the upbeat of count 1, after “-ness” and before “in”
* Measures 46 and 47: altos and tenors look to me for your entrance queue. I’ll give it to you!
* Measure 55: all voices breath on the upbeat of count 1, after “-ness” and before “in”

9.  **O Thou That Tellest:**

* Throughout song, on each entrance of “O thou…” accent “thou,” as in “o THOU.”
* On measures 115, 116, 119, 120, 129, and 130 the cutoff of the first word should be on the third beat of the 6-count measure. Watch, and I will give you cutoffs.
* Measure 117 and 127: on the pickup beat to these measures, begin the phrase “say unto the cities of Judah behold your God!” soft and crescendo through to God.
* Measure 133: Sops, tenors, basses hold “Lord” to the downbeat of measure 134. Altos breath on measure 133 after “Lord” and before “the.”
* Measure 134: altos decrescendo over the measure.
* Measure 135: everyone soft beginning at the pickup to measure 135. The phrase “The glory of the Lord” should be soft.
* Measure 136: all breath after “Lord” and before “is.” Begin a quick crescendo on the phrase “is risen upon thee.”
* Measure 139: All cut off “thee” of measure 138 on downbeat of measure 139.

12.  **For Unto Us:**

* Generally, sing at moderate tempo and don’t rush.
* Emphasize the “f” sound of each “for” throughout song.
* Circle the dynamic markings through the song. Most entrances at the beginning are marked soft, but they should be sung with greatest excitement!
* On each phrase of “For unto us” make sure not to swing up to the “for.” If necessary, put an ever-so-slight break before the word “for” so you can hit it on pitch without sliding up to it.
* Each time the theme “and the government shall be upon his should,” start a bit softer than whatever the dynamic marking is and crescendo through to the highest note of the phrase, then decrescendo somewhat.
* Measure 37: phrase “Prince of peace” together but change the quarter note on “peace” (count 3) to an eighth note, cutting off “peace” short for a breath. “Prince of peace” should sound “long, long, short.” All voices should sing the “c” of “peace” together in time.
* Measure 53: ditto instructions for measure 37.
* Measure 72: ditto instructions for measure 37.
* Measure 89: sing “Prince of Peace” as a single phrase, but do not cutoff “Peace” short. Keep the count 3 quarter note a quarter, cutting off “Peace” on the downbeat of count 4.
* Measure 90: all voices breath after “Father” and before “The.”
* Measure 91: hold half note on “Peace” over to the downbeat of measure 92.

17.  **Glory to God:**

* At the expense of repeating myself, underline key consonants as a reminder to emphasize them.
* Mark “soft but exciting” at the beginning.
* Measures 3-4: on word “highest,” lean in on “high” and back out on “-est.” Mark the same on word “highest” in measures 13, 28.
* Measures 5-7: Have a pleasant expression on your face as you sing “and peace on earth.” Mark the same on each repeat of this phrase in measures 14-16 and 29-31.
* Measures 10-13: Change dynamic entrance to mf, then begin to crescendo through phrase.
* Measures 14-16: tenors and basses, mark “Don’t scoop.” I.e., don’t swing up to the first note.
* Measures 29-31: Change dynamic to mf on “and peace on earth.”
* Measure 33: write “Exciting!” While exciting is often associated with loud, and it is marked forte, how you sing this is much more important. Let the excitement in your voice and expression create the pop we need. Being only “loud” and nothing else is hard on your voice!

22.  **Behold the Lamb:**

* Measure 4: On word “Be-hold” start softer on “Be-“ and crescendo into “-hold.” Altos do this first in measure 4, but all parts should do this throughout the song wherever the phrase “Behold the Lamb of God” appears.
* Measures 7-8, all parts circle the “cresc.” mark wherever it appears in your part. The crescendo should continue through measure 11 when it begins to descrescendo in the second half of measure 11 through measure 12.
* Measure 13: on the pickup to measure 13 mark “p” or soft.
* Measure 14-15 crescendo over these two measures
* Measure 16: on the pickup to measure 16 suddenly “p” again.
* Measure 17: on pickup to measure 17 “f” or loud again.
* Measure 18: Sops on pickup to measure 18 “p” or soft again. Each part begins the phrase “that taketh away…” in measure 18 soft and remains soft through measure 21.
* Measure 22-23: Sops on pickup to measure 22 mark “mf” on “that taketh away.” Each part that enters this phrase in measure 22 or 23 mark “mf.”
* Measure 23-26: through these measures crescendo through to count 2 of measure 25, then begin to decrescendo through measure 26.
* Measures 27-29: mark “mf” which continues to the end.
* Measure 28: Put a big breath mark after the first count of measure 28, after the word “away” and before “the.”

24.  **Surely He Hath Borne:**

* Each time you sing “Surely” throughout the song it should be very dramatic with lots of “sh” sound at the beginning.
* Measure 7-8: on pickup to measure 7 at “He hath” mark “p” followed by a gradual crescendo over measures 7 and 8. No breath between measure 8 and 9. Connect “sorrows” with “surely.”
* Measure 10: on pickup to measure 10 begin “p” and crescendo to a “mf” above “griefs.”
* Measure 11: on pickup to measure 11 on word “and” begin a decrescendo to the end of measure 11.
* Measure 13: circle dynamic of “mf” where you come in.
* Measure 15: all voices breath after count 2 of measure 15, after the word “transgressions.”
* Measure 16: Tenors breath after count 3 after the word “bruised.” Sops, altos and basses breath after count 4 after the word “bruised.”
* Measure 17: all voices breath at the same time after “bruised” and before “for.”
* Measure 18-19: begin crescendo on measure 18 through “iniquities” in measure 19.
* Measures 19-21: beginning on count 4 of measure 19 at each entrance of “the chastisement” should be very forceful and accented.
* Measure 22-24: begin to smooth out and decrescendo where each voice enters on the phrase “of our peace.”
* Measure 23: Tenors alone on count 3 “was” can crescendo and decrescendo on word “was.”
* Measure 24: Lots of “n” sound between the word “on” and “him.”

25**.  And With His Stripes:**

* The sops come in with “And with his stripes we are healed.” At each repeat of this phrase, when sung over half notes, sing it fairly straight like a tick-tock clock. This theme repeats throughout the whole song many times. Each voice should sing it straight and even without accent wherever it occurs.
* Measure 7: on the theme “And with his stripes we are healed” sung on top of quarter notes, the beginning word “and” should be softer and then the second word “with” should be tossed out a louder and the rest of the phrase sung gradually over a decrescendo. Again, this them happens throughout the song in many places sung by all voices. At each instance of this theme throughout the song, do the same.
* From the beginning of the song through to D (measure 55) all voices should continue basically at the beginning general dynamic of “mp,” although at all times the musical lines should ebb and flow louder or softer as parts come in and out.
* Beginning at letter D, begin to be “mf” and more dramatic.
* From letter F to the end, “f” and very dramatic.

26.  **All We Like Sheep:**

* Generally throughout song, each phrase of “all we like sheep” should be sung like “all we, like, sheep” where commas represent a pause in the tone.
* Measure 9-10: The basses and altos have the first theme phrase of “have gone astray” sung over eighth notes. The phrase should be sung smoothly and connected but the dynamics of the phrase should ebb and flow to match the music. All voices should sing this theme in this manner wherever it occurs throughout the song (meas. 19-20, 35-41, 56-59)
* Measure 11: Sops begin theme of “we have turned every one to his own way” sung over 16th notes. This theme should be sung as cleanly and dramatically as possible at a general “mf” volume level. This theme 16th note melismatic run is generally subservient to another more important musical theme going on. All voices should sing this them throughout the song in the same manner.
* Measure 29: all voices make count 3 quarter note under the word “way” into an eighth note so all parts cut off with the sopranos who have to come in on the word “we” on count 4.
* Measure 32-33: at pickup to each measure on the phrase “every one to his own way,” start loud then diminish slightly throughout the phrase. (Sops and altos sing it first in measure 32, then tenors and basses repeat it in measure 33.)
* Measures 47-48: sing the phrase “every one to his own way” like “every one, to, his, own, way” where commas represent a pause in the tone. Essentially this makes each of the first three notes on measure 48 eighth notes instead of quarters. Repeat in this manner on measures 72-73.
* Measures 74-76: this time the phrase “we have turned every one to his own way” should be sung connected.
* Measures 76-80: at each entrance of “and the Lord” start softer and quickly grow into the word “Lord,” then emphasize the beginning of each word of the phrase “hath laid on him” with a heavy lilt. (Think “**H**ath **L**aid **O**n **H**im” as if each word is a heavy burden to bear.) I will begin directing in 2 through to measure 88.
* The general trend of the music in measures 77-82 is that as each voice is layered in, there is a gradual crescendo through measure 82, after which the general trend is to decrescendo from measures 83-87, yet all the while with that heaviness at the beginning of each word.
* Measure 88: big breath after “him” in the middle of the measure.
* Measures 88-end should be intensely soft and introspective but with LOTS of consonant sounds. Underline the key consonants as a reminder to emphasize them. “the iniquity of u sall.” Make sure to wait for the complete downbeat on the word “all” to place the “s” of “us.” The last word “all” should sound like “saul.”

33.  **Lift Up Your Heads:**

* All voices circle the dynamic marking of “mf” where you come in at the beginning. Sing these opening phrases with greatest of excitement but at an “mf” volume. Let the excitement in how you sing it and the music itself provide the pop needed.
* Measure 8: all voices put a breath after “doors” on count 3. This means the word doors has to be cut short to accommodate the breath. All the s’s of “doors” should match.
* Measure 22: ditto comment about breath after “doors” in measure 8.
* Measure 28: mark “mp” or soft
* Measure 29: mark “mf” again. The effect is that measures 27-29 are “loud, soft, loud.”
* Measures 53-54: mark “f”
* Measures 55-58: Sops sing first phrase of “the Lord of Hosts” soft,” followed by other voices soft. Sops then repeat “the Lord of Hosts” a little louder, with the other voices same volume. Repeat in this manner four times, each repeat louder, over these measures.
* Measure 59: mark “f”
* Measures 65-66: repeat how we handled measures 55-58 but with altos starting soft and everyone repeating soft. There are only two repeats for the altos, however, so quickly crescendo over those to measures.

44.  **Hallelujah!:**

* The beginning dynamic is “f” but watch your voice. Don’t over-sing. The music and additional instrumentation (tympani, trumpets, etc) provide extra grandeur, so don’t give everything away at the beginning.
* Measure 12: Underline the “f” of “for” to emphasize that sound. Give me lots of “f” sound. Ditto wherever “for the Lord God Omnipotent” occurs.
* Measure 14: the “r” of “reigneth” can be rolled a slight bit, if you can, to give it extra emphasis. Ditto wherever this word occurs throughout the song.
* Beginning at letter C, slower through measure 40. Also circle beginning dynamic of “p.” Start slow, soft and smooth.
* Measure 37-39: crescendo on the word “come” at the beginning of measure 37, then attach “come” to the forte phrase “the Kingdom of our Lord.”
* Measure 39: all breath after the first dotted quarter note after the word “Lord” and before “and.”
* Measure 40: all breath after the first dotted quarter note after the word “Christ” and before “and.”
* Measure 41: all voices make first note of measure 41 over the word “Christ” into a quarter note so we all match the “st” of “Christ” together with the basses on the downbeat of count 2.
* Measures 41-49: when each voice sings the beginning phrase “and he” the “he” is high in each voices register. No guts, no glory. Go for it with power, especially sopranos who have one of your high A’s in measure 49.
* Measures 51-66: Sops and altos start the first “King of Kings” at about an “mf” and do each repeat of the higher “King of Kings” slightly louder, until you are your loudest at the end. No need to push at the beginning. The lower three voices, as you sing the “forever and ever hallelujah, hallelujah” underneath the sops and altos, sing it more excited than loud. Use this section as a bit of a vocal breather.
* Measures 67-69: at letter F, I will broaden the tempo for 2 ½ measures (through count 2 of measure 69) of the fortissimo section, after which I will be back at original tempo.
* Generally, through the last couple pages which are very loud and exciting, make sure you support the voice and sing with good tone. Never louder than beautiful.

46.  **Since By Man:**

* Underline key consonants throughout this song! Emphasize them!
* Measures 1-6: Sing soft with LOTS of energy underneath to support the voice! We want to end the only a capella section in Messiah in the same key as the orchestra comes in! 😊 The second phrase in measures 4-6 can grow slightly.
* Measure 13: all voices breath after count 1, after the word “dead” and before the word “by.” This will make count one essentially an eighth note. All should match the placement of the “d” in “dead” on the second half of count 1.
* Measures 17-22: ditto comments about energy, etc. Second phrase in measures 20-22 can come up in volume slightly more than at the beginning.
* Measure 25: all voices breath after count 1, after the word “live” and before the word “even.” This again will make count one essentially an eighth note. All should match the placement of the “v” in “live” on the second half of count 1.
* Measures 28-31: beginning in the middle of measure 28 all voices should sing “shall all, so in Christ shall all be made alive” together as a single phrase without breath. Breath on the rest on measure 31.
* Measure 32: breath between “Christ” and “shall.”

51.  **But Thanks Be To God:**

* This whole song I would like to do more at an “excited mf” rather than the forte volume marked. I want plenty of contrast between this song and the last huge “Worthy Is the Lamb.” Think light, happy, joyous.
* Wherever any voice which has a solo on the phrase “Who giveth us the victory” such as the sopranos in measure 5, emphasize the “give” of “giveth” so the phrase sounds like, “Who giv-eth us the victory.”
* Wherever you come up on the end of the phrase “through our Lord Jesus Christ” such as in measures 7 and 8, crescendo a little throughout the phrase to the last two words “Jesus Christ,” so it sings “through our Lord Je-sus Christ.”
* Measure 19: basses lean into the word “be,” tenors lean into the word “thanks.”
* Measures 20-22: Sops lean into the word “thanks” which begins on count 4 of measure 20 and is tied over into count 1 of measure 21. Do the same on the tied over “thanks” from 22 to 23.
* Measure 27: at the soprano solo “Who giveth us” which begins on the pickup to measure 27, sopranos, think light and high. Toss it out without over-thinking that high note! The less you think of it, the less tension your voice will have, and the more pretty and on pitch it will be.
* Measure 31-32: Sops lean into “thanks” tied over from measure 31 to 32.
* Measure 40: Sopranos, this is one of the trickiest entrances in Messiah. Count those resting measures. On difficult entrances like this it might be helpful to write beat counts above the resting measures, such as “1 2 3 4” above measures 38 and 39 and “1 2 3” above the beginning rests of measure 40. Or, better watch me for the entrance queue. 😊
* As we all come into the last 6 measures of the song, you can come up to a forte, but still maintain the general lighter sound. Again, provide dramatic contrast between the end of this song and Worthy Is the Lamb.

53.  **Worthy Is the Lamb/Amen:**

* I can think of no other song in classical music repertoire that has a more grand and glorious beginning as this song! Change the beginning dynamic to fortissimo (“ff”). Sing with full support, power and beauty.
* Measure 3: emphasize the “s” of “slain.” This is a rare chance to be heavy on an “s” consonant. I want lots!
* Measure 6-7: all voices heavily accent each word of “by His Blood.” Give me LOTS of “B” sound on “Blood!”
* Measure 7-11: starting in middle of measure 7 on “to receive power…” come down to a bouncy “mf” and slowly crescendo through to “f” on measure 11.
* Remain dramatic “f” from measures 12-19.
* Measure 19-23: starting in middle of measure 19 on “to receive power…” come down to a bouncy “mf” and slowly crescendo through to “f” on measure 23.
* At letter B, circle the “Larghetto.” This means slightly slower, and I will take this section slightly slower. Also, change the dynamic at B to “mf.” We will allow the unison sound to provide the power.
* From the beginning of the letter B through to letter D, we will ever so gradually crescendo to count 3 of D where we will be ready for the fortissimo.
* Measures 53-55: I will broaden (slow slightly) the tempo for these measures beginning with count 3 of measure 53 on the phrase “Blessing and honour…”
* Measure 56: back to original tempo.
* At letter F, I will conduct this section “allegro moderato” as written, which means moderately fast. Change dynamic at beginning from “f” to “mf.”
* Section F should be sung fairly straight at the beginning, but slowly add drama and volume as each voice is layered in. Measures 90 and 91 can be fairly loud, although with a smooth, flowing sound.
* Measures 102-106 beginning letter G should be sung fortissimo as written, heavily accenting each note.
* Measure 109 to the end: Full power to the end! Never louder than beautiful, again, but support the voice and sing! The general feel is of a driving tempo which pushes toward the grandest climax ever! Throughout, the layering in of voices provides a lot of interest. At each new entrance, accent the entrance a bit. Within all of this drive and energy are opportunities for musicality and nuance. Even though generally fortissimo, do something with each musical line. Never let it be dynamically static. In order for this song to have the volume and drive without getting out of control, each and every person must have this section down cold. You should know it like the back of your hand. Get a good recording of this and listen over and over to become familiar with how it flows. When you know it that well, you can look more at the conductor which will help prevent the tempo from getting away. This chorus, more than any I know, almost sounds “out of control.” Yet it is this sense of being on edge that has the power to viscerally move an audience more than any finale I know. In order to achieve that “on the edge” feeling, it actually must be in TOTAL control by us!
* Measure 151: begin to dramatically slow the tempo.
* Measure 157: I will beat 4 slow counts. Breath on count 4 of this measure, essentially making the second half note into a quarter with a quarter rest.
* Measure 158: Write “big breath” to remind yourself to take a gigantic breath. Again, I will give 4 slow counts, but this time, no breath at the end. Rather continue into the last measure with as much supported, good-tone volume as you have.
* Congratulations. You sang an incredible performance!