

# Having Told the Hive the News

for any group of eight or more voices

Holland Hopson



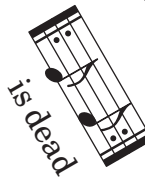
It is my duty to declare



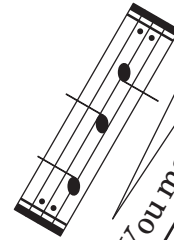
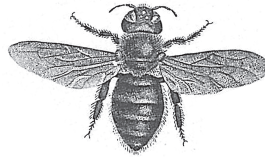
declare



King George the Fifth is dead.



is dead



You may be



You may be sorry,



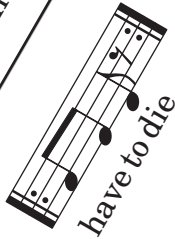
I am not



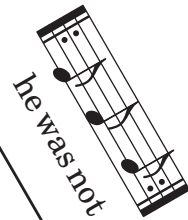
but I am not



besides, we all have to die



have to die



he was not



He was not an int'resting man

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2013

Maintaining a constant pulse of ♩=104,

Each singer begins when ready and sings the six phrases in the outer honeycomb in any comfortable octave. The phrases are sung in order, repeating each phrase as many times as desired before moving to the next phrase. Rest as necessary for as long or short as desired between repetitions of phrases or before moving to the next phrase. Each phrase may be sung in unison or canonically in any metrical alignment with itself or other simultaneously sounding phrases. Try to stay within two or three phrases of the rest of the group; do not move too far ahead or lag too far behind.

Once a singer has performed a main phrase in the outer honeycomb, the associated sub-phrase in the inner honeycomb becomes available for him or her to sing and repeat at any time during the piece. As the piece progresses each singer can choose from their current main phrase in the outer honeycomb and any of the available sub-phrases in the inner honeycomb.

After a performer has sung all six phrases in the outer honeycomb, he or she sings only the sub-phrases in the inner honeycomb until he or she decides to stop.

Singers are encouraged to listen carefully to each other and to periodically drop out to listen to the texture created by the group.

Dynamics are free except where crescendos and decrescendos are indicated.

Duration is free. A target duration may be decided in advance. Divide the target duration by 7 to obtain an estimated duration for each cell of the honeycomb.

The piece is over when all singers have stopped.

A conductor is not required during performance.

## Program Notes

There's a practice in English folklore of telling important family news to the local bees. Failing to do so results in the hive abandoning their home, the death of all the bees or even the death of a family member. Folklorist Hilda M. Ransome states:

“The superstition of 'telling the bees' still lingers; a friend told the writer that a woman in Sussex lately told her that her baby girl had died because she had forgotten to tell the bees of her birth; and in Oxfordshire the bees are believed to die if not told of a death.” -- *The Sacred Bee in Ancient Times and Folklore*

*Having Told the Bees the News* imagines how information might travel within a hive. Each singer performs 6 consecutive melodies interspersed with 6 melodic fragments. The singers move through the material at their own pace, deciding for themselves when and how often to repeat the phrases. The resulting texture is an example of emergent behavior--similar to the flocking of birds and the swarming of bees--where the actions of individuals bubble up to influence the activity of the whole.

The text is adapted from P.L. Travers “What the Bee Knows,” *Parabola* 1981