

Sumer Is Icumin In

Words & Music:
Traditional English

This song is a medieval English round (or canon) and was first notated in 1240. It is the only known 6-part piece of music which was written before the 15th century. When you sing it, it is best a capella (natch!) and in the Middle English, not modern. The way I learned it, all sing the first two lines together ("Sing cuccu, nu..."), then break into a 6-part round. Each part comes in after the previous part has finished the third line. Then, all parts repeat the last "Sing cuccu..." line until all parts are singing it together.

Original Middle English:

Sing, cuccu, nu. Sing, cuccu.
Sing, cuccu, nu. Sing, cuccu.

Sumer is i-cumin in,
*Lhude sing, cuccu!
Groweth sed and bloweth med
And springth the wude nu.
Sing, cuccu!

Awe bleteth after lamb,
Lhouth after calve cu,
Bulluc sterteth, bucke verteth,
turns,
Murie sing, cuccu!

Cuccu, cuccu,
Wel singes thu, cuccu.
Ne swik thu naver nu!

Sing, cuccu, nu. Sing, cuccu.

* *subsequent parts enter here*

Modern English Translation

Sing, cuckoo, now! Sing, cuckoo!
Sing, cuckoo, now! Sing, cuckoo!

Summer is a-comin' in,
Loudly sing, cuckoo!
Grows the seed and meadow blooms
And springs the wood anew.
Sing, cuckoo!

The ewe, she bleats after the lamb,
The cow lows for her calf.
The bullock stirs, the buck-goat
turns,
Merrily sing, cuckoo!

Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Sing you well, cuckoo!
Don't you ever stop, now.

Sing cuckoo, now! Sing, cuckoo!