

# Sumer Is Icumen In

Words & Music:  
Traditional English

*This song is a medieval English round (or canon) and was first notated in 1240, but existed long before then. It is the only known 6-part piece of music which was written before the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Here is a line from the Medieval neume [source lost]s:*



*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 cucu, 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 cucu..." line until all parts are singing it together.*

Original Middle English:

Sing, cucu, nu. Sing, cucu.  
Sing, cucu, nu. Sing, cucu.

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

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

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

Sing, cucu, nu. Sing, cucu.

\* *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 farts,  
Merrily sing, cuckoo!

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

Sing cuckoo, now! Sing, cuckoo!

## Richard Thompson version:

Richard Thompson (bless him!) recorded this as the first cut on his live album "1000 Years of Popular Music" - which includes "greatest hit" songs from the 1000s to present day. Here are his lyrics, slightly updated, sung a capella with percussion & open drone guitar with melody.

Summer is icumen in, loude sing, cuccu!  
Groweth seed and bloweth mead and spring the wood anew.  
Sing, cuccu!

Ew-eh bleateth after lamb, loweth afte calve cu.  
Bullock starteth, buck-eh farteth. Murie sing, cuccu! [*alt: "Loude sing, cuccu!"*]

Cuccu, cuccu, well sing thou, cuccu!  
Ne swik thou naver nu!

[*sing the above 3x, then sing:*]

Cuccu, cuccu, well sing thou, cuccu!  
Ne swik thou naver nu!

Here is a modern notated score [*source lost*]:

Su-mer is i-cu-men in. Lhu-de sing cuc-cu. Gro-weþ sed and blo-weþ med and  
spring þe w - de nu. Sing cuc - cu. A - we ble - teþ af - ter lomb. lhouþ  
af - ter cal - ue cu. Bul-luc ster-teþ. buc - ke uer - teþ mur - ie sing cuc-cu.  
Cuc - cu cuc - cu wel sing-es þu cuc - cu ne swik þu na - uer nu.  
Pes I: Sing cuc - cu nu. Sing cuc - cu.  
Pes II: Sing cuc - cu. Sing cuc - cu nu.