

When Daisies Pied (Spring)

Shakespeare based the song on the Cuckoo Song, one of several secular lyrics dating from c. 1225. The music, composed by Thomas Arne (1710-1778), has a lively tune imitating the cuckoo song. Announced as a “Dialogue in praise of the owl and the cuckoo”, it provides a lyric commentary on the bittersweet mood that dominates *Love’s Labour’s Lost* last scene.

When daisies pied and violets blue,
And lady-smocks all silver-white.
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue,
Do paint the meadows with delight.
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he:
Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo, O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear.

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,
And merry larks are plowmen's clocks,
And turtles tread, and rooks and daws,
And maidens bleach their summer frocks,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he:
Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo, O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear.