

4.

“Du Chemin and The Chansons of Clément Janequin”

The music of Clément Janequin occupies an important place in the publications of Nicholas Du Chemin. The very first musical imprint brought out by Du Chemin’s new enterprise in 1549 was one devoted exclusively to Janequin’s settings of the Psalms in French translation. Among the sixteen-volumes of the *Chansons nouvelles*, Janequin is represented by thirty-nine chansons, more than any other single composer found in Du Chemin’s chanson books. But in addition to these works, other pieces can be found in Du Chemin’s *Livre de Recueil* series (books that reprinted music previously issued by the firm of Pierre Attaingnant in particular), in the famous musical *Supplément* to Pierre de Ronsard’s *Amours* of 1552, and, finally, in an ambitious pair of chansonniers called *Inventions musicales* (of 1555) that brought together many of Janequin’s most famous narrative compositions, such as the *Le Chant des Oyseaux* and *La Guerre*. Janequin, in short, was even better represented in Du Chemin’s publications than Claude Goudimel, the prolific composer who served as musical editor to Du Chemin between 1551 and 1555.¹

Simply on account of his great volume of chanson production (he wrote over 250 of them), Janequin has often been twinned in the musicological literature with Claudin de Sermisy, the other prolific master of this genre during the second quarter of the sixteenth century, as a paragon of the so-called Parisian style of chanson composition that appeared in the offerings of Pierre Attaingnant, Du Chemin, and other French music printers. But recently (and especially in the writings of Jean-Pierre Ouvrard and Lawrence Bernstein) scholars have come to realize that the principles governing Janequin’s approach to chanson composition can differ markedly from those routinely favored by Claudin.² Even discounting the often rather declamatory style and animated rhythmic fabric prompted by the narrative texts of his justly celebrated programmatic pieces, Janequin’s conception of melodic organization departs considerably from the practice of Claudin, Certon, and other composers closely tied to the chanson as it was written and heard at the royal court. Whereas the latter composers prefer

— 1

1 · For modern editions of Janequin’s chansons, see his *Chansons polyphoniques*, ed. A. Tillman Merritt and François Lesure, 6 vols. (Monaco: Editions de l’Oiseau lyre, 1965-71). For some recent sound recordings of a good selection of his chansons, listen to Janequin, *Chansons nouvelles (1540). XIX chansons nouvelles* (Astree Auvidis E 7785; performed by the Ensemble Polyphonique de France, with program notes by François Lesure and Charles Ravier); Janequin, *La chasse et autres chansons* (Harmonia Mundi France 901271; performed by the Ensemble Clément Janequin); and *Les cris de Paris: chansons de Janequin et Sermisy* (Harmonia Mundi France 901072; performed by Ensemble Clément Janequin, with program notes by Jean-Pierre Ouvrard).

2 · On the history of the French chanson during the first half of the sixteenth century, see Lawrence F. Bernstein, “The ‘Parisian’ Chanson: Problems of Style and Terminology,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 31 (1978), 193-240; and Jean-Pierre Ouvrard, “Pour le rondeau en forme mettre...: Mon confesseur, rondeau de Clément Janequin,” *Revue de Musicologie*, 64 (1978), 203-228.

concise melodic phrasing (with a clear caesura after the fourth syllable of a decasyllabic line of poetry and a melisma reserved principally for the penultimate syllable), Janequin often tends towards repetition of individual lines of short ideas, thus breaking the melodic line into several shorter motifs. What is more, while Claudin's or Certon's chansons are extremely regular in their disposition of cadential tones within a given musical mode, Janequin's chansons are notable for the ways in which they explore unusual or irregular points of melodic repose. Among works issued in Du Chemin's *Chansons nouvelles*, Janequin's melodic preferences can be measured by comparing his setting of "De céans jusques chez m'amy" (from the *Huitiesme livre* of 1550) with Pierre Certon's setting of the same poem (from the *Septiesme livre*).

De ceans jusques chez m'amy
Bien sçay combien y'a de pas
Cent fois les ay faictz en ma vie
Mais oncques jours je n'en fuz las.
Pleuve, vente il ne m'en chault pas
En tout remps la voye m'est belle
Et vole comme une arrondelle.

Both chansons set the opening two couplets of this unusual seven-line stanza to the same pair of musical phrases (in the case of Certon's piece, the music is written out only once, with the text for the second set of couplets set neatly beneath the first; in the case of Janequin's chanson, Du Chemin's typesetter had enough room simply to present the repeated phrases in full). Certon's melodic ideas for each pair of verses (see the superius) follow a balanced plan, with a syllabic opening and melismatic prolongation of the penultimate syllable. The two melodic phrases, moreover, have complementary shapes, with a gentle rise from *G* to *D* in the first mirrored by a corresponding fall from *D* to *G* in the second. Janequin's melody, in contrast, follows a far less symmetrical plan in which the second line of each couplet is itself repeated with a new melodic idea. Thus, there are three phrases of music for each pair of poetic lines. All three phrases, moreover, come to rest on the same cadential tone, *D*, and in any event they do not follow the complementary shapes heard in Certon's setting.

2 —

Pastoral and Farce in Janequin's Chansons

Janequin's contributions to Du Chemin's *Chansons nouvelles* series encompass a wide range of literary themes and musical styles. In "Ventz hardis et legiers," from the *Dixiesme livre* of 1552, for instance, Janequin has chosen a poem that calls upon the "winds" of various musical instruments (the *cornet*, the *trompe*) to carry a message of greeting to a distant beloved. Janequin's musical response to these verses, which dissolve at the conclusion of the poem into an insistent imitation of the "tron, tron" of the instruments just mentioned, reminds us very much of the animated musical language we encounter in his famous programmatic and narrative works, such as "La Chasse" and "La Bataille de Marignan." Janequin's musical manner follows a similar transformation, moving from flowing melodic lines and occasional cadences to a series of rhythmic intonations on single pitches. "Sur l'aubepin," which appeared in the *Sixiesme livre* of 1550, similarly invokes musical imagery in the context of a poem about love. The text begins with a narrative description of a natural landscape filled with "mille mottetz en musique," given by the voices of Philomela (a nightingale) and Procne (a lark), two emblems of impassioned song from classical literature. The poetic speaker, in contrast to this

happy scene, is mired in self-pity as his beloved is not nearby. Janequin responds to all of this with nuanced musical gestures, representing at first the singing of the birds with animated rhythms and patter song, and then the sorrowful poet with inflections of *E-flats* in the lower voices of the musical fabric (at “a tout *dueil* je m’applique”.³ Janequin’s “Quelqu’un me disoit l’autre jour,” from the *Septiesme livre*, also combines the conventions of the pastoral landscape with those of the *complainte*. In this case, it is the landscape itself that is distorted as a result of the departure of the beloved: the nightingale’s music falls silent, the flowers fail to appear, even the light of the sun is hidden: “Il semble, brief, que tout lamente.” As in “Sur l’aubepin,” Janequin uses unusual melodic and especially cadential motions to represent in tones the sad feelings that cloud the scene, with movement from *B-flat* to *A* in the bassus (at “musique” and “chaché”) and from *E-flat* to *D* in the superius (at “lamente”). In the context of Renaissance musical thought, these “soft” flats often connote lamentation or grief.

Sur l’aubepin que est en fleur
 Se degoise le Philomene
 D’aultre costé Progne sa soeur
 En son chant grand joye demene.
 Chascun pour l’amour de la sienne
 Dict mille mottetz en musique
 Mais moy à tout dueil je m’applique,
 Par ce qu’icy ne voy la mienne.

Clément Janequin’s setting of “Triste et marry” (*Tiers livre*) similarly mixes generic conventions in surprising ways. This piece, with its sedate rhythms and descending melodic gestures, at first glance seems to share the musical and poetic language of other *chansons de complainte*. Janequin’s treatment of the first five lines of the poem dwells exclusively in this sober idiom, culminating in the funereal black notes (that is, using coloration for its symbolic, visual connotations) of the last of these verses, “plaine de proces, plaine de calamité.” But all is not quite as serious as it seems in this poem, for as the ensuing eight lines of text reveal, this is a *complainte* of an abused husband, not a heart-sick lover (“Au demeurant à tort, et sans raison, Estre battu de femme en sa maison”). Beginning quite suddenly with the first of these eight verses (“Sans pain, sans vin, sans denier, and sans maille,”) Janequin thus sweeps aside the preceding idiom for precisely the frenetic rhythms, recitational melodies, and short points of imitations that were conventionally associated with settings of narrative verse. Clearly, the ironic tone of Janequin’s piece, with its close juxtaposition of utterly different musical and poetic types, depends heavily on the growing sensibility of Du Chemin’s musical readers for convincing effect.

Janequin’s preference for witty, ribald, and often anti-clerical poems is also well-represented among the *Chansons nouvelles* volumes. His setting of Clément Marot’s “Un gros prieur son petit filz” (from the *Second livre*) can serve as one example of this genre. In the *Septiesme livre*, Janequin’s setting of “Robin couché” takes this genre to rather Rabelasian extremes, presenting the story of two lovers who, in the course of their encounter, happen

3 · On the image of the nightingale and other birds in chanson verse of the sixteenth century, see Kate van Orden, “Sexual Discourse in the Parisian Chanson: A Libidinous Aviary,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 48 (Spring 1995), 1-41 and P.W. Christoffersen, “‘Or sus vous dormez trop’: The Singing of the Lark in French Chansons of the Early Sixteenth Century,” *Festschrift Henrik Glahn*, ed. M. Müller (Copenhagen, Dan Fog, 1979), pp. 35-67.

to converse in an esoteric language of medical and pharmacological terms--apparently with double meanings in this context--more suited to a scientific textbook than to everyday speech of peasants.

Robin couché à mesme terre
Dessus l'herbette pres s'ayme
Il crainct ce dict il le ca terre
A elle le souleil ennuye.
Mais sotte ne se monstra mye
Luy disant en face riante
Mectz toy sur moy je suis contente
De te servir pour matheras
Et tu seras en lieu de tente
Car umbre au souleil me feras.

This same strange vocabulary reappears in Jean Guyon's setting of "Malade si fut ma mignonne" (also from the *Septiesme livre*), a poem that Janequin himself had treated musically in Attaignant's *Trente et ungesme livre* of 1549 (a book devoted exclusively to Janequin's music). In Janequin's settings of these sorts of verses, the musical fabric does not evoke the feelings or images of the text, but instead follows the rhythms and inflections of speech and the rapid shifts of voice from narrator to quoted dialogue.

Janequin and his Parisian Colleagues

Elsewhere among Janequin's contributions to the *Chansons nouvelles* we discover his awareness of still other trends in mid-century chanson composition. In the *Sixiesme livre*, "Ce n'est point moy, mon oeil" and "En amour y a du plaisir" use a strictly homorhythmic texture throughout. Such coordinated part-writing appears in many of Janequin's chansons, of course, but normally as a temporary effect or at important phrases in a particular poem. Here, the approach is sustained throughout each composition, resulting in pieces such as these which resemble more closely a type of *chanson à danser* encountered in works such as Etienne Du Tertre's setting of "Petite damoyselle à amour" (from Du Chemin's *Septiesme livre*), in which all four polyphonic voices move in block-like harmonies through two very brief and syllabic phrases that are repeated according to the rhyme scheme of the poem. Janequin himself composed a similarly chordal setting of this same strophic text (it appeared not in one of Du Chemin's chansonniers, but instead in Attaignant's *Trente et ungesme livre* of 1549).

Janequin's central place in Du Chemin's *Chansons nouvelles* is also revealed by the surprisingly large number of literary concordances binding his chansons from this period to those appearing in other Parisian collections of French chansons from the middle years of the sixteenth century. No less than twenty of the twenty-nine chansons found in the *Septiesme livre*, for instance, also appear in independent settings, either in another of Du Chemin's *Chansons nouvelles* volumes or in one of the chansonniers issued by Pierre Attaignant in 1549 or 1550 (that is, within about a year of the time the *Septiesme livre* was prepared). Almost all of these rival settings are by the same small circle of composers: Etienne Du Tertre, Claude Gervaise, Pierre Certon, P. Symon, and, above all, Janequin. What is especially surprising about this group of rival settings is that there are no direct musical connections among them. They do not, for instance, draw upon a common repertory of monophonic melodies or dance tunes, nor are the polyphonic settings of the same texts based upon each other. Both such

practices were prevalent in the sixteenth century, but apparently not in this particular group of chansons. Thus, Janequin's music for the *Chansons nouvelles* shares literary fashions with the Attaignant chansonniers and with a number of composers (most notably, Du Tertre, Gervaise, and Certon) who worked closely with that printer.⁴ But Janequin's contributions to the *Chansons nouvelles* remain musically independent of the works found in the Attaignant chansonniers. We should recall, of course, that Du Chemin's official privilege for the *Chansons nouvelles* specifically enjoined him from reprinting music previously issued by French publishers like Attaignant.

The Enigma of Janequin's Career

The means by which Du Chemin and his musical editors, Nicolas Regnes and Claude Goudimel, acquired so much of Janequin's music remains a mystery. It has been suggested that there was some close connection between the composer and the firm during the period between 1549 (when Janequin moved to Paris) and his death early in 1558.⁵ Indeed, two of the four books of programmatic chansons by Janequin that Du Chemin issued in 1555 proudly announce that they were prepared under the editorial guidance of the composer himself ("nouvellement reveu, et corrigé par lui"). The claim seems quite plausible, for we also know that Janequin and Du Chemin's then current editor Goudimel were both enrolled at the Université de Paris during the years around 1550. And if we are correct in supposing that Janequin had some personal and direct connection with Du Chemin's press during this last decade of his life, then perhaps the thirty-eight chansons issued by Du Chemin for the first time in the *Chansons nouvelles* series represent some of the latest offerings of his pen.

Janequin's musical fame is nevertheless all the more remarkable for it having never earned him or depended upon a prominent position at a French cathedral or aristocratic court. In the 1520's our composer was in the service of Jean de Foix, Bishop of Bordeaux, thereafter working as a singer and teacher at the Cathedral of Auch (in 1531) and Angers (between 1534 and 1537). He acquired various ecclesiastical benefices during this period, but his formal obligations to these churches were not long-lasting by the standards of his contemporaries (such as Claudin de Sermisy or Pierre de Certon, each of whom served the royal court and its allied churches for decades). During the last years of his life, Janequin's chanson narrating the siege of Metz earned him the honorary title of *chapelain* to the leader of that campaign, François de Guise, and he eventually became *chantre* and then *compositeur ordinaire du roi* to Henri II, a position that only Pierre Sandrin had held before him. The post, however, seems to have carried little by way of regular obligations to the court.

For royal musicians like Sermisy and Certon, representation among the offerings of the royal music printer Pierre Attaignant (and, later, Du Chemin) signified a status and position that bound musicians, printers, and patrons in a tight circle of prestige. All composers benefited from the power of the printed book to spread musical texts with a speed and breadth

4 · In addition to having composed chansons, Du Tertre and Gervaise were active as arrangers of vocal and especially dance music in mid-century Paris. See Lawrence F. Bernstein, «Claude Gervaise as Chanson Composer,» *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 18 (1965), 371-81; and Caroline M. Cunningham, «Estienne du Tertre and the Mid-Sixteenth Century Parisian Chanson,» *Musica disciplina*, 25 (1971), 127-70.

5 · The story of Janequin's career and eventual move to Paris is presented in François Lesure, «Clément Janequin. Recherches sur sa vie et son oeuvre,» *Musica disciplina*, 5 (1951), 157-93. See also Richard Freedman, «Clément Janequin, Pierre Attaignant, and the Changing Image of French Music, ca. 1540,» *Charting Change in France around 1540*, ed. Marian Rothstein (Selinsgrove, PA: Sesquehanna University Press, 2006), pp. 63-96.

not possible in a culture dominated by manuscript. Janequin, however, was especially well-served by the musical press, for without the printed page his music would have been available to a very small audience indeed. His relationship to the press is in some ways the very opposite of a composer like Claude Le Jeune (active during the last quarter of the sixteenth century), much of whose music appeared in print only long after it had been composed. Le Jeune's *Le Printemps* (published posthumously in 1603), for instance, had remained during his lifetime a carefully guarded aesthetic secret of Jean-Antoine de Baïf's *Académie de poésie et de musique*, the rules of which specifically insisted that music composed for this elite body of musicians and listeners not circulate or even be performed outside that narrow social circle.⁶ For Janequin, in contrast, the press was a dynamic force that shaped his musical reputation and career, for it was largely through the efforts of merchants like Du Chemin, Attaignant, and Moderne that his music was made available to singers and instrumentalists in a wide range of places and social settings.

6 · Further on the history of Le Jeune's music in (and out of) print, see my "Claude Le Jeune, Adrian Willaert, and the Art of Musical Translation," *Early Music History*, 13 (1994), 123-48.