

Clément Janequin, *Le Chant des Oiseaux*

The French composer Clément Janequin (c. 1485 – 1558) was one of the most famous composers of popular chansons of the entire Renaissance, achieving enormous popularity in his lifetime. It's worth noting that his widespread fame was made possible in part by the concurrent development of music printing. Janequin wrote little liturgical music -- some 250 secular chansons and more than 80 psalm settings and spiritual songs are his primary legacy.

The programmatic chansons for which Janequin is particularly famous were long, sectional pieces, and usually cleverly imitated natural or man-made sounds. His *La chasse* imitates the sounds of a hunt: hunting horns, baying hounds, etc.; and *La bataille*, written to celebrate the French victory over the Swiss at the Battle of Marignano in 1515, imitates battle noises, including trumpet calls, cannon fire and the cries of the wounded. Tonight we will hear his *Le Chant des Oiseaux*, a remarkable anthology of bird calls.

Nordic Voices write: "The old distinguished genre of the madrigal is by no means a stranger to humour and over-the-top vocalism. One of the absolute masters in this field is the 16th century Frenchman Clément Janequin, whose *Le Chant des Oiseaux* could be the ornithologist's wildest dream, where the singers mimic a whole catalogue of birdsongs, in the end reaching a jubilant cacophonous climax of the forest in spring. This stands in contrast to the more subtle erotic metaphors of his Italian colleague, Luca Marenzio's two madrigals, which for some represent the summit of this vocal art form."

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