

### Differences in Performances

As one might expect, there are a number of instrumentation, rhythmic, and melodic differences between different recordings and manuscripts of both the songs *Kalenda Maia* and the Kyrie from the Christmas Mass. The piece *Kalenda Maia* will be examined first, then the Christmas Kyrie.

The first difference between sources arises in the story behind the composition of *Kalenda Maia*, though perhaps it is more surprising that so much of the story is the same. *Kalenda Maia* is an *estampie* that Rambaut de Vaqueiras wrote to a fiddle tune. The story is that he loved Lady Beatrice, and she loved him until people began spreading false rumors about Rambaut. She was convinced by them, and told Rambaut she would not love him anymore. One day two fiddlers were playing an *estampie* and the Marquis observed that Rambaut was not singing along or having a good time. The Marquis knew that he was so sullen because Beatrice no longer loved him. The Marquis asked Beatrice to convince Rambaut to write a new song, so she did. *Kalenda Maia* is the song he wrote to that tune the fiddlers were playing.<sup>12</sup> This story behind Rambaut's composition of *Kalenda Maia* is the same in the sources consulted except for one minor difference: Wishart's version of the tale claims Beatrice is the Marquis' daughter, while Aubry's says she is his daughter. Perhaps the stories came from the same manuscript and are so similar for that reason, but that manuscript does not make clear what the relation was between Beatrice and the Marquis.

1 Pierre Aubry, translated by Claude Aveling, *Trouveres and Troubadours – A Popular Treatise* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1969), pp. 41–45.

2 Stevie Wishart, Liner notes to *The Courts of Love: Music from the time of Eleanor of Aquitaine*. Hyperion compact disc CDA66367, released 1990, p.8.

Though the story of the composition of *Kalenda Maia* are very similar, there is a bit more disagreement regarding the word *estampie*, which is the type of piece Rambaut composed. Aubry explains that “the *estampie*, then, would be, primarily, a dance in which the accent was marked by a tap of the foot, this characteristic feature giving the name to the dance.”<sup>3</sup> He explains that the dance is usually done with three steps and then a halt on the fourth which usually equates to a four bar phrase in the music. Fallows, however, says “Nobody can be certain what is meant by the term *estampie*,” though it likely either means stamping as Aubry claims, or it means standing.<sup>4</sup> All sources seem to agree that an *estampie* is a dance.

The most noticeable difference between the sources is the rhythm of the piece. Rhythm was not notated back then, so perhaps it is more surprising that two of the sources have such similar rhythms. Both in Fallows' version of *Kalenda Maia* and in the instrumental version by Wishart each line of text corresponds to two measures of music, whereas in Aubry's version the length of the phrases corresponding to lines of text is not so regular. The vocal version by Wishart provides a third rhythmic interpretation of the piece where each note takes about the same amount of time (except for the ornamentation notes). The tempo speeds up and slows down a lot, naturally with the phrases, as this is a much more soloistic version of the piece.

Aubry's interpretation of the rhythm of *Kalenda Maia* leads to irregular phrase lengths which seem to contradict his explanation of an *estampie*. He sets the piece using modern notation in 3/4 time with each line of text (marked with a capital letter) beginning on the third beat of the measure.<sup>5</sup> Though his earlier description of an *estampie* suggests that each phrase should be four bars long, the first eight phrases of his version contain phrases of lengths other than four bars. This seems inconsistent.

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3 Aubry, *Trouveres and Troubadours*, p. 40.

4 David Fallows, Liner notes to *Estampies and Danses Royales*. Alia Vox compact disc AV 9857, released 2008, p.27.

5 Aubry, *Trouveres and Troubadours*, p. 43.

The rhythmic interpretation in both Fallows' version, and Wishart's instrumental version lends itself much more easily to dancing. Fallows explains that there is not way to know what sort of instruments were used for music at this time, but since *Kalenda Maia* is a dance there were likely percussion instruments.<sup>6</sup> Both of these versions make use of light percussion instruments to make the beat clear and one could easily imagine dancers dancing along to the beat of these pieces.

It is hard to imagine any dancers dancing to Wishart's vocal version of *Kalenda Maia* as the tempo speeds up and slows down so much. Perhaps such diverse versions of the piece were performed back then in different situations. This particular interpretation could have been performed in a situation where there was no room for dancing, or perhaps during a meal when the people were eating.

The other major difference between the four versions of *Kalenda Maia* examined here is the overall structure of the piece. Wishart's two versions, as well as Aubry's follow an AABCC structure for each verse while the structure in Fallows' version follows an ABABCC structure. Though Fallows says the instrumentalists likely did much embellishment and added to the written music through introductions and codas<sup>7</sup>, it seems a little unusual for him not to mention this apparent discrepancy in structure. Perhaps this restructuring of the piece is something musicians of the day might do, or perhaps Fallows consulted a different sources where there was a repeat sign in a different place.

Though there are some significant rhythmic and structural differences between the versions of *Kalenda Maia* considered here, the melodic content makes makes it clear that these are all different versions of the same song.

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6 Fallows, *Estampies*, pp.27-28.

7 *Ibid.*, p.29.

Rhythm is a striking difference in different versions of the Kyrie from the Mass for Christmas as well. Erbacher claims the “rhythmic presentation of the melodies is in accordance with the earliest and most authentic manuscripts”<sup>8</sup> and thus the rhythm of his version is quite different from the other versions examined here. In Erbacher's version each note is not given the same amount of time as they are in the Priknash Abbey recording.<sup>9</sup> Fuller does not notate any rhythm in her version.<sup>10</sup>

Another difference between these three versions is the number of times the text is sung. Fuller says each line (Kyrie eleison or Christe eleison) is to be sung three times before moving on to the next line, whereas in both the recordings by Erbacher and the Priknash Abbey each line is sung only twice before singing the next line. Nothing is said in the liner notes about this discrepancy.

Unlike *Kalenda Maia*, which had only small melodic differences primarily in the ornamentation, the Christmas Kyrie has some more noticeable differences in pitch. These differences are mostly near the end of the text, for instance, in the last Kyrie eleison on the “son” syllable Fuller notates the notes should be ABA, but both the singers in Erbacher's version and in the Priknash Abbey version sing only A on that syllable. Another difference is at the beginning of that same last Kyrie Eleison, Fuller notates “Ky” being sung on an A while the other two recordings start on the D below that A, then sing the A on the syllable “Ky.” These are just two examples of the minor differences between Fuller's version of the Christmas Kyrie and the versions by Erbacher and the Priknash Abbey (which are much more similar to each other).

Since the Kyrie is part of the Mass and therefore governed by the Catholic Church,

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8 Rhabanus Erbacher, Liner notes to *Liber Responsorialis In Nativitate Domini*. Archiv compact disc 437 071-2, released 1982, p.10.

9 Priknash and Stanbrook Abbeys, *Christmas Chant: Traditional Latin Plainsong*. Music Heritage Society compact disc 513997Z, released 1995.

10 Sarah Fuller, *The European Musical Heritage* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), p. 5.

perhaps it is not surprising that the differences between the various versions of it are much more detail oriented differences. It seems likely the pitch differences come from different interpretations of old manuscripts where it is difficult to see which pitch is intended, and the rhythmic differences come from different traditions of how chant is sung rather than the very speculative differences that exist in the versions of *Kalenda Maia*. Thus different versions of these two songs exist, which is not surprising given the ages of the music examined here.

### Bibliography

- Aubry, Pierre and Claude Aveling (translator), *Trouveres and Troubadours – A Popular Treatise*. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1969).
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