
A Rhythmic realization for Raimbaut de Vaqueiras' *Kalenda Maya*

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Abstract: The musical production of the troubadours is transmitted to us through about forty manuscripts of which only four contain musical notation. Rhythmic information is not sufficiently provided because those manuscripts are all written in non-mensural notation. This paper proposes an alternative for the rhythmic interpretation of Raimbaut de Vaqueiras' estampida *Kalenda Maya* in light of the theories of rhythm for the music of the troubadours. In order to understand some of the criteria used to edit this kind of music, a brief survey of the rhythmic theories for the troubadours' repertoire, including some renditions of *Kalenda Maya* derived from those theories, is provided. **Keywords:** *Kalenda Maya*, troubadours, medieval rhythm, modal, isosyllabic, declamatory.

Uma realização rítmica de *Kalenda Maya* de Raimbaut de Vaqueiras

Resumo: A produção musical dos trovadores nos é transmitida através de aproximadamente quarenta manuscritos, dos quais somente quatro contêm notação musical. Informações relativas ao aspecto rítmico não estão disponíveis em virtude desses manuscritos serem escritos em notação não-mensurada. Este artigo propõe uma alternativa para a interpretação rítmica da estampida *Kalenda Maya* de Raimbaut de Vaqueiras com base nas teorias rítmicas aplicadas à música dos trovadores. Com o objetivo de melhor assimilar alguns dos critérios utilizados na edição deste tipo de música, adicionou-se um breve exame dessas teorias rítmicas, incluindo algumas realizações de *Kalenda Maya* derivadas das mesmas.

Palavras-chave: *Kalenda Maya*, trovadores, ritmo medieval, modal, isosilábica, declamatória.

The musical production of the troubadours is transmitted to us through about forty manuscripts of which only four contain musical notation. Those manuscripts, as pointed out by VAN DER WERF (1984, p.10-11), are all written in non-mensural notation and therefore do not provide enough information regarding rhythm. The purpose of this paper is to discuss and suggest an alternative for the rhythmic interpretation of Raimbaut de Vaqueiras' estampida "*Kalenda Maya*" in light of the theories of rhythm for the music of the troubadours.

The composer of "*Kalenda Maya*" was born in Vaqueiras (Provence) probably around 1150. He was a troubadour and companion-at-arms of Boniface I. According to Robert FALCK (2005), only seven of the 35 poems ascribed to him survived with music. The estampida "*Kalenda Maya*" is his best-known work. Raimbaut probably died in 1207, although some scholars believe that he died only in 1243.

The text of "*Kalenda Maya*" is found in several manuscripts, but only one preserves the melody.¹ According to MCPEEK (1973, p.142), there are six extant estampidas in the troubadour's repertoire,

but “*Kalenda Maya*” is the only one with music and text preserved. The fact that the *estampida* is, according to AUBREY (1996, p.x), a genre associated with dance might lead one to imagine that a regular rhythmic edition—using modern notation—would be the only possible solution to decode the piece and make it available for performance. In fact, almost all the recordings of this piece I have listened to since my first contact with early music (in 1984) present a regular rhythmic rendition or at least a hybrid rendition, in which a free interpretation is concomitantly applied (this is the case of the rendition recorded in 1997 by the *Syntagma* ensemble—a group in Northeast Brazil—of which I was a member at the time). However, in 1984, Hendrik van der Werf, who does not see any evidence that the *estampida* was a dancing song (VAN DER WERF, 1988, p.55), edited this piece using stemless notes, i.e., with no clear indication of rhythm (VANDER WERF, 1984, p.292-293). In order to understand some of the criteria used to edit this kind of music, I will provide in the following paragraphs a brief survey of the rhythmic theories for the troubadours’ repertoire including some renditions of “*Kalenda Maya*” derived from those theories.

There are several theories that study the musical rhythm of the troubadours (and of their French northern counterpart, the *trouvères*) but they all can be structured in three main groups: modal, isosyllabic, and declamatory. Text is of central importance for all those theories in view of the fact that its relationship with music, in terms of prosody for example, is sometimes the only possible key to decipher the rhythmic structure of the piece as a whole. A description of the most important branches of each theory is given below.

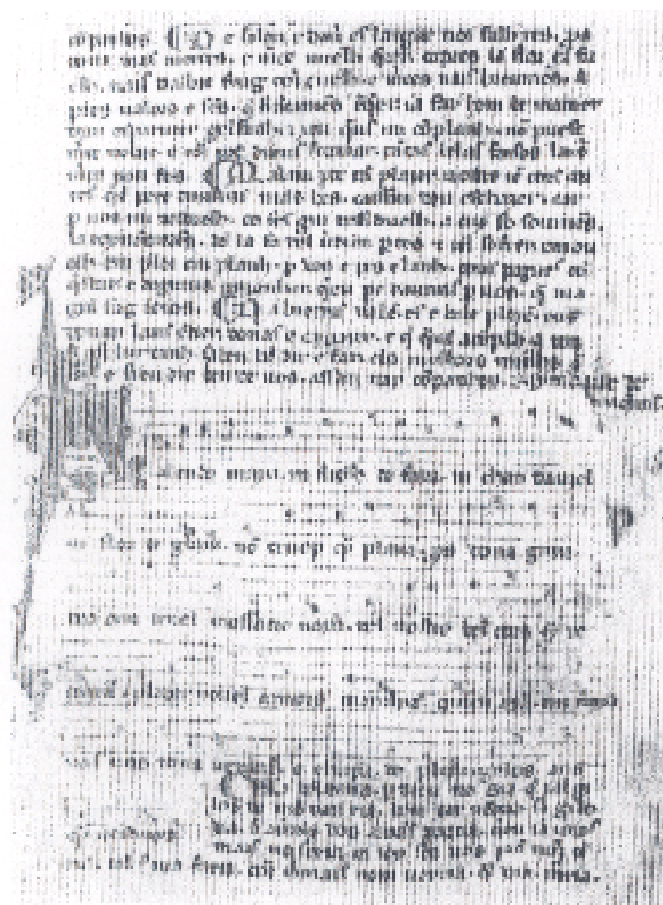
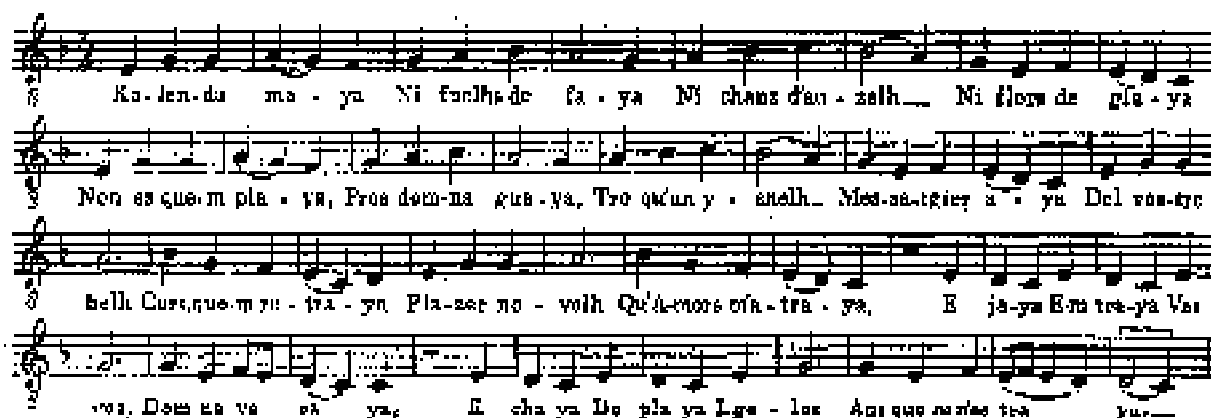


Fig.1 – A facsimile from Manuscript R showing “*Kalenda Maya*.” (Manuscript Paris, *Bibliothèque nationale*, f. fro 22543)

Chronologically the modal theory was the first one to be proposed. Both Pierre Aubry, in 1907, and Jean-Baptiste Beck, in 1908, claim to be the authors of this theory. They assert that the music of the trouvères used rhythmic modes based on observations of certain manuscripts, especially one containing Adam de la Halle's works, in which monophonic settings are written in non-mensural notation and polyphonic settings are written in mensural notation.² They deduce that if this repertoire can be expressed in both monophonic and polyphonic formats (in which a regular rhythmic interpretation would be mandatory for synchronization since it involves more than one part) then the melodies, when isolated from the polyphonic context, would keep the regular rhythmic shape even if notated with non-mensural signs. Those observations on the northern repertoire are also applied to the southern (troubadours') repertoire. One important edition of "*Kalenda Maya*" based on this theory was prepared by GENNRICHER (1960, p.16), which is shown in Example 1. TISCHLER (1989, p. 227), who strongly advocates a metric-rhythmic interpretation of this repertoire, even though it does not follow inflexibly the rhythmic modes, considers that the meter of medieval poetry was based on stress rather than on the length of syllables. Another point to be considered is that in this edition the same rhythmic shape is applied for all strophes.



Ex.1 – Gennrich's edition of "*Kalenda Maya*" (Gennrich, Friedrich. *Troubadours, Trouveres, Minne- and Meistersinger*. Koln: Arno Volk Verlag, 1960)

I will now present my own metrical-rhythmic rendition of "*Kalenda Maya*" based on certain rules proposed by the modal theorists and then compare it with Gennrich's rendition. BECK (1979, p.27) presents five general transcriptional rules for this repertoire, as follows: 1) tonic accents in words are associated with accent in music, 2) duration is increased if an accented syllable coincides with an unaccented beat and vice versa, 3) rhyme is always going to be placed on an accented beat, 4) rhythm defined for the first measure is regularly applied to an entire phrase or even for the whole song, and 5) only one syllable relates to each element in a mode.

Regarding "*Kalenda Maya*," all those above rules can be applied to generate a metric rendition with the exception of rule no.2, because the musical notation does not give any information about accented and unaccented beats. Therefore, I am also going to consider two other observations made by AUBREY (2000, p.130) on the songs with measured notation: 1) oxytone

² John Stevens defines rhythmic mode as "a recurrent metrical pattern of long and short notes." He says, "the standard system of six rhythmic modes was devised by the theorists of the thirteenth century for the notation and analysis of polyphony. The application of modal rhythm to monophony is a twentieth-century invention." (STEVENS, 1986, p.508)

rhyme syllables are long, usually preceded by a short note, 2) paroxytone rhymes are always given the rhythm long-long. If the text has the rhythm and if this rhythm depends on the syllabic stress, then the first step in the edition consists of determining the stressed syllable for each word of the first strophe (and the results would apply for the remaining strophes). This task would be easy if we knew how the stress was accomplished in Old Occitan. According to Dr. Akehurst³, the stressed syllable of a word can be expressed in terms of length, loudness, or intonation curve but there is no evidence about the way it was used in Old Occitan (AKEHURST, 2001). My choice is to use length to establish stress because this is the only way to cause direct implication on rhythm.⁴ Two other specialists in this field corroborate my own stress choice.⁵ I present below the first strophe of the poem with syllabic division and stress defined by Dr. Stephane Goyette. When necessary, the stress is indicated with an acute accent (´) over the syllable. Numbers within brackets indicate the quantity of syllables for each line.

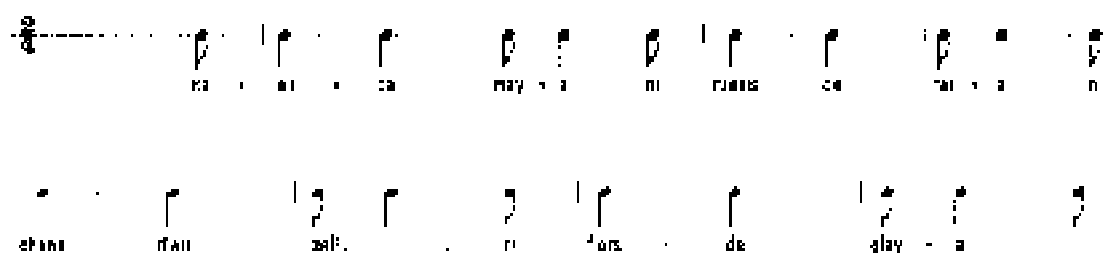
Ka-lén-da máy-a	[5]
Ni fueills de fá-i-a	[5]
Ni chans d'au-zéll	[4]
Ni flors de glái-a.	[5]
Non es qe.m plái-a	[5]
Pros dó-na gái-a	[5]
Tro q'un is-néll	[4]
mes-sa -giér ái-a	[5]
De vós-tre bell cors, qi•m re-trái-a	[9]
Pla-zér no-véll q' a-mórs m' a-trái-a	[9]
E jái-a	[3]
E•m trái-a	[3]
Vas vos dón-na ve-rái-a,	[7]
E chái-a	[3]
De plái-a	[3]
•L ge-lós, anz qe•m n'es-trái-a.	[8]

The second step in the editing process consists of notating the natural rhythm of the poem based on some of the rules mentioned above. Example 2 shows the result obtained for the first four lines with the application of two basic rules: 1) tonic accents in words are associated with accent in music and 2) paroxytone rhymes are always given the rhythm long-long (even the oxytone rhymes in the poem, such as “zéll” in the third line, have their value expanded by the two-note ligature and become pseudo-paroxytone – see Fig.1; this fact equalizes the number of syllables, i.e., the third line that has four syllables is artificially adjusted to five syllables).

3 Frank Akehurst is Professor of French and Italian languages at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and one of the editors of “A Handbook of Troubadours” published by the University of California Press in 1995.

4 Loudness would affect dynamics and intonation would affect pitch.

5 Dr. Gregory Stone, professor of French, Italian, and Comparative Literature at Louisiana State University and Dr. Stephane Goyette, visiting assistant professor at Louisiana State University and specialist in Historical, Romance, and Creole Linguistics.



Ex.2 – Tentative metrical-rhythmic rendition of “*Kalenda Maya*”

My edition disagrees with two aesthetic principles of the modalists expressed in Beck’s book, but not in the rules (BECK, 1979, p.28-29). First, they considered that this entire repertoire was expressed in ternary subdivision because until the beginning of the 14th century that was the only way the musicians knew how to express music. If we do this modification by shortening the figure of the second beat it results in mode 1 (long-short) embellished with *fractio* mode in some places. Second, an anacrusis can always be more elegantly accommodated in the following measure. Even with these two alterations, my edition would still be different from Gennrich’s because he gives ornamental figures (for example, a descendent *plica*—fourth figure in the manuscript shown in Fig.1, and a *ligature*—fourteenth figure) the same status of regular notes and this provokes desynchronization between accented syllables and accented beats. Therefore, the natural stressed syllable will never coincide with the accented beat, thus contradicting the very first rule of the modal theory (see 5th paragraph above). A third step in the editing process would consist of matching the suggested rhythm with the pitches in the manuscript. However, this step is beyond the scope of this paper, which is to analyze only the rhythmic aspect of the piece.

The exercise of trying to edit the rhythm of “*Kalenda Maya*” using the modal theory proves to be a confusing task because of the lack of objectivity of the rules, but this is, at the same time, good since it is more open to different interpretations. To conclude my observations on this theory, Example 3 shows another rhythmic rendition of “*Kalenda Maya*” by MCGEE (1989, p.49-50), who considers that the rhythm should be derived from the melody itself. This is yet more subjective than deriving the rhythm from the text. Let us now examine the second rhythmic theory.

The second theory—isosyllabic—was mainly proposed by the Italians Sesini, Paganuzzi, and Monterosso in 1942, 1955, and 1956, respectively, and later adopted and refined by John Stevens. According to STEVENS (1986, p.414, n.2), Ugo Sesini noticed that syllables in Romance languages had approximately the same duration and that in the notation of troubadour’s songs each syllable was associated with one *neume* (like in late medieval plainchant). Then, he proposed that all syllables should be interpreted with equal duration. Stevens also mentions (in the same passage) that for Sesini—and for Monterosso—the poetry had all the rhythmic information necessary to interpret the piece, and that Paganuzzi proposed a kind of performance with free rhythmic values similar to the Solesmes interpretation of Gregorian chant.

Stevens’ model establishes that, since medieval poetry is governed by syllable count and rhyme (and not by syllabic stress as proposed by the modalists) and medieval monophonic melodies are mostly notated having one neume to each syllable, then monophonic music should be interpreted in an isosyllabic manner, i.e., the syllables should have approximately equal temporal distribution. Stevens uses the same notation as declamatory theorists, as one can see later in this paper, i.e.,

1. Ka-len-da mai-a ni fueile de tel-a ni, chans d'au-zel ni liers de glai-a
 non es qe-mplai-a pros da-na gai-a tro d'un is-nai mas-a-gier ai-a

del vos-tre bel cors, q'm ne-trai-a
 pla-zer no-vel q'a-more m'a-trai-a

e jai-a em-trai-a vos vos, da-na ve-rai-a
 e chal-a de plai-a i ge-lai, ens q'ent mas-trai-a.

Ex.4 – McPeck’s edition of “Kalenda Maya” (McPeck, Gwynn. “Kalenda Maya: a Study in Form.” In *Medieval Studies in Honor of Robert White Linker*, ed. Brian Dutton, J. Woodrow Hassel, Jr. and John Keller, 141-154. Valencia (Spain): Editorial Castalia, 1973.

The declamatory theory was proposed by Hendrik van der Werf in 1967 and adopted by Christopher Page in 1986. Van der Werf believes that free rhythm was used to perform the chansons of the troubadours and trouvères and he employs the term *declamatory rhythm* to signify that the performer basically used to “declaim the poem without the music” in order to identify its rhythmic shape (VAN DER WERF, 1972, p.44). The sound produced in the recitation was then coordinated with the syntax and structure of the text in order to reveal the natural rhythm of the poem, which for van der Werf is neither in the melody nor in the text in isolation.

Moreover, the manuscript of the works of Adam de la Halle—the same one used as reference by the modalists to justify their hypothesis (see 4th paragraph)—is also used by van der Werf to show that the scribe used both mensural (for polyphonic genres) and non-mensural (for the majority of the monophonic songs) notations merely because many melodies were really unmeasurable and not because a mensural way of performance should be deduced for the entire repertory. However van der Werf says that precisely measured songs can be found in the manuscripts. Example 5 shows an excerpt from van der Werf’s edition of “Kalenda Maya” based on his declamatory theory.⁷ As one can perceive, the music score does not provide any rhythmic information.

⁷ Another declamatory rendition is found in Samuel Rosenberg, Margaret Switten, and Gerard Le Vot, eds., *Songs of the Troubadours and Trouveres: an Anthology of Poems and Melodies*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 157.

For the declamatory portion I would use Van der Werf's rendition (Ex.5). For the mensural interpretation I would use ternary subdivision—for the same reason pointed out above by Beck (see 8th paragraph)—and synchronize the accented beats with accented syllables (an anacrusis would be necessary at the beginning). Example 6 shows this suggested mensural rendition for the first sixteen lines.⁸ Perhaps the present rendition is not the way that *Kalenda Maya* was performed during Vaqueiras' time, but it is presented here as one possible and informed solution.

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⁸ The entire poem, as well as the complete works of Vaqueiras, can be found at http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/raimbaut_de_vaqueiras/raimbaut_de_vaqueiras_15.php

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