



## BARD

MUSIC IS THE FRUIT OF THE DIVINE TREE THAT VIBRATES with the Words of Creation. But the question I ask you is, can a bard go to the root of this tree? Can one tap into the source of that power? Ah, then what manner of music they would bring to this world!

—Fletcher Danairia, master bard

Bards bring levity during grave times; they impart wisdom to offset ignorance; and they make the ridiculous seem sublime. Bards are preservers of ancient history, their songs and tales perpetuating the memory of great events down through time—knowledge so important that it is memorized and passed along as oral history, to survive even when no written record remains.

It is also the bard's role to chronicle smaller and more contemporary events—the stories of today's heroes, including their feats of valor as well as their less than impressive failures.

Of course, the world has many people who can carry a tune or tell a good story, and there's much more to any adventuring bard than a glib tongue and a melodious voice. Yet what truly sets bards apart from others—and from one another—are the style and substance of their performances.

To grab and hold the attention of an audience, bards are typically flamboyant and outgoing when they perform. The most famous of them are essentially the D&D world's equivalent of pop stars. If you're playing a bard, consider using one of your favorite musicians as a role model for your character.

You can add some unique aspects to your bard character by considering the suggestions that follow.

### DEFINING WORK

Every successful bard is renowned for at least one piece of performance art, typically a song or a poem that is popular with everyone who hears it. These performances are spoken about for years by those who view them, and some spectators have had their lives forever changed because of the experience.

If your character is just starting out, your ultimate defining work is likely in the future. But in order to make any sort of living at your profession, chances are you already have a piece or two in your repertoire that have proven to be audience pleasers.

### DEFINING WORKS

#### d6 Defining Work

- 1 "The Three Flambinis," a ribald song concerning mistaken identities and unfettered desire
- 2 "Waltz of the Myconids," an upbeat tune that children in particular enjoy
- 3 "Asmodeus's Golden Arse," a dramatic poem you claim was inspired by your personal visit to Avernus
- 4 "The Pirates of Luskan," your firsthand account of being kidnapped by sea reavers as a child
- 5 "A Hoop, Two Pigeons, and a Hell Hound," a subtle parody of an incompetent noble
- 6 "A Fool in the Abyss," a comedic poem about a jester's travels among demons

### INSTRUMENT

In a bard's quest for the ultimate performance and the highest acclaim, one's instrument is at least as important as one's vocal ability. The instrument's quality of manufacture is a critical factor, of course; the best ones make the best music, and some bards are continually on the lookout for an improvement. Perhaps just as important, though, is the instrument's own entertainment value; those that are bizarrely constructed or made of exotic materials are likely to leave a lasting impression on an audience.

You might have an "off the rack" instrument, perhaps because it's all you can afford right now. Or, if your first instrument was gifted to you, it might be of a more elaborate sort. Are you satisfied with the instrument you have, or do you aspire to replace it with something truly distinctive?

#### INSTRUMENTS

##### d6 Instrument

- 1 A masterfully crafted halfling fiddle
- 2 A mithral horn made by elves
- 3 A zither made with drow spider silk
- 4 An orcish drum
- 5 A wooden bullywug croak box
- 6 A tinker's harp of gnomish design

### EMBARRASSMENT

Almost every bard has suffered at least one bad experience in front of an audience, and chances are you're no exception. No one becomes famous right away, after all; perhaps you had a few small difficulties early in your career, or maybe it took you a while to restore your reputation after one agonizing night when the fates conspired to bring about your theatrical ruin.

Music is stupid. Wait. I changed my mind. Music is fun. Play more music. No, I was right the first time. Music is stupid. But I won't maim you after all, in case I change my mind again.







LEFT TO RIGHT: BARDS OF THE COLLEGES OF GLAMOUR, SWORDS, AND WHISPERS

The ways that a performance can go wrong are as varied as the fish in the sea. No matter what sort of disaster might occur, however, a bard has the courage and the confidence to rebound from it—either pressing on with the show (if possible) or promising to come back tomorrow with a new performance that’s guaranteed to please.

## EMBARRASMENTS

### d6 Embarrassment

- 1 The time when your comedic song, “Big Tom’s Hijinks”—which, by the way, you thought was brilliant—did not go over well with Big Tom
- 2 The matinee performance when a circus’s owlbear got loose and terrorized the crowd
- 3 When your opening song was your enthusiastic but universally hated rendition of “Song of the Froghemoth”
- 4 The first and last public performance of “Mirt, Man about Town”
- 5 The time on stage when your wig caught fire and you threw it down—which set fire to the stage
- 6 When you sat on your lute by mistake during the final stanza of “Starlight Serenade”

## A BARD’S MUSE

Naturally, every bard has a repertoire of songs and stories. Some bards are generalists who can draw from a wide range of topics for each performance, and who take pride in their versatility. Others adopt a more personal approach to their art, driven by their attachment to

a muse—a particular concept that inspires much of what those bards do in front of an audience.

A bard who follows a muse generally does so to gain a deeper understanding of what that muse represents and how to best convey that understanding to others through performance.

If your bard character has a muse, it could be one of the three described here, or one of your own devising.

**Nature.** You feel a kinship with the natural world, and its beauty and mystery inspire you. For you, a tree is deeply symbolic, its roots delving into the dark unknown to draw forth the power of the earth, while its branches reach toward the sun to nourish their flowers and fruit. Nature is the ancient witness who has seen every kingdom rise and fall, even those whose names have been forgotten and wait to be rediscovered. The gods of nature share their secrets with druids and sages, opening their hearts and minds to new ways of seeing, and as with those individuals, you find that your creativity blossoms while you wander in an open field of waving grass or walk in silent reverence through a grove of ancient oaks.

**Love.** You are on a quest to identify the essence of true love. Though you do not disdain the superficial love of flesh and form, the deeper form of love that can inspire thousands or bring joy to one’s every moment is what you are interested in. Love of this sort takes on many forms, and you can see its presence everywhere—from the sparkling of a beautiful gem to the song of a simple fisher thanking the sea for its bounty. You are on the trail of love, that most precious and mysterious of emotions, and your search fills your stories and your songs with vitality and passion.



**Conflict.** Drama embodies conflict, and the best stories have conflict as a key element. From the morning-after tale of a tavern brawl to the saga of an epic battle, from a lover's spat to a rift between powerful dynasties, conflict is what inspires tale-tellers like you to create your best work. Conflict can bring out the best in some people, causing their heroic nature to shine forth and transform the world, but it can cause others to gravitate toward darkness and fall under the sway of evil. You strive to experience or witness all forms of conflict, great and small, so as to study this eternal aspect of life and immortalize it in your words and music.

## BARD COLLEGES

At 3rd level, a bard gains the Bard College feature. The following options are available to a bard, in addition to those offered in the *Player's Handbook*: the College of Glamour, the College of Swords, and the College of Whispers.

### COLLEGE OF GLAMOUR

The College of Glamour is the home of bards who mastered their craft in the vibrant realm of the Feywild or under the tutelage of someone who dwelled there. Tutored by satyrs, eladrin, and other fey, these bards learn to use their magic to delight and captivate others.

The bards of this college are regarded with a mixture of awe and fear. Their performances are the stuff of legend. These bards are so eloquent that a speech or song that one of them performs can cause captors to release the bard unharmed and can lull a furious dragon into complacency. The same magic that allows them to quell beasts can also bend minds. Villainous bards of this college can leech off a community for weeks, misusing their magic to turn their hosts into thralls. Heroic bards of this college instead use this power to gladden the downtrodden and undermine oppressors.

#### COLLEGE OF GLAMOUR FEATURES

Bard Level	Feature
3rd	Mantle of Inspiration, Enthralling Performance
6th	Mantle of Majesty
14th	Unbreakable Majesty

#### MANTLE OF INSPIRATION

When you join the College of Glamour at 3rd level, you gain the ability to weave a song of fey magic that imbues your allies with vigor and speed.

As a bonus action, you can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration to grant yourself a wondrous appearance. When you do so, choose a number of creatures you can see and that can see you within 60 feet of you, up to a number equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of one). Each of them gains 5 temporary hit points. When a creature gains these temporary hit points, it can immediately use its reaction to move up to its speed, without provoking opportunity attacks.

The number of temporary hit points increases when you reach certain levels in this class, increasing to 8 at 5th level, 11 at 10th level, and 14 at 15th level.

Illusions? How faint. Before I destroy you, make one that looks like a really big goldfish—like as big as me! Hum. That's too big. Goodbye!



#### ENTHRALLING PERFORMANCE

Starting at 3rd level, you can charge your performance with seductive, fey magic.

If you perform for at least 1 minute, you can attempt to inspire wonder in your audience by singing, reciting a poem, or dancing. At the end of the performance, choose a number of humanoids within 60 feet of you who watched and listened to all of it, up to a number equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of one). Each target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC or be charmed by you. While charmed in this way, the target idolizes you, it speaks glowingly of you to anyone who talks to it, and it hinders anyone who opposes you, although it avoids violence unless it was already inclined to fight on your behalf. This effect ends on a target after 1 hour, if it takes any damage, if you attack it, or if it witnesses you attacking or damaging any of its allies.

If a target succeeds on its saving throw, the target has no hint that you tried to charm it.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

#### MANTLE OF MAJESTY

At 6th level, you gain the ability to cloak yourself in a fey magic that makes others want to serve you. As a bonus action, you cast *command*, without expending a spell slot, and you take on an appearance of unearthly beauty for 1 minute or until your concentration ends (as if you were concentrating on a spell). During this time, you can cast *command* as a bonus action on each of your turns, without expending a spell slot.

Any creature charmed by you automatically fails its saving throw against the *command* you cast with this feature.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

#### UNBREAKABLE MAJESTY

At 14th level, your appearance permanently gains an otherworldly aspect that makes you look more lovely and fierce.

In addition, as a bonus action, you can assume a magically majestic presence for 1 minute or until you are incapacitated. For the duration, whenever any creature tries to attack you for the first time on a turn, the attacker must make a Charisma saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failed save, it can't attack you on this turn, and it must choose a new target for its attack or the attack is wasted. On a successful save, it can attack you



on this turn, but it has disadvantage on any saving throw it makes against your spells on your next turn.

Once you assume this majestic presence, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

## COLLEGE OF SWORDS

Bards of the College of Swords are called blades, and they entertain through daring feats of weapon prowess. Blades perform stunts such as sword swallowing, knife throwing and juggling, and mock combats. Though they use their weapons to entertain, they are also highly trained and skilled warriors in their own right.

Their talent with weapons inspires many blades to lead double lives. One blade might use a circus troupe as cover for nefarious deeds such as assassination, robbery, and blackmail. Other blades strike at the wicked, bringing justice to bear against the cruel and powerful. Most troupes are happy to accept a blade's talent for the excitement it adds to a performance, but few entertainers fully trust a blade in their ranks.

Blades who abandon their lives as entertainers have often run into trouble that makes maintaining their secret activities impossible. A blade caught stealing or engaging in vigilante justice is too great a liability for most troupes. With their weapon skills and magic, these blades either take up work as enforcers for thieves' guilds or strike out on their own as adventurers.

### COLLEGE OF SWORDS FEATURES

Bard Level	Feature
3rd	Bonus Proficiencies, Fighting Style, Blade Flourish
6th	Extra Attack
14th	Master's Flourish

#### BONUS PROFICIENCIES

When you join the College of Swords at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with medium armor and the scimitar.

If you're proficient with a simple or martial melee weapon, you can use it as a spellcasting focus for your bard spells.

#### FIGHTING STYLE

At 3rd level, you adopt a style of fighting as your specialty. Choose one of the following options. You can't take a Fighting Style option more than once, even if something in the game lets you choose again.

**Dueling.** When you are wielding a melee weapon in one hand and no other weapons, you gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls with that weapon.

**Two-Weapon Fighting.** When you engage in two-weapon fighting, you can add your ability modifier to the damage of the second attack.

#### BLADE FLOURISH

At 3rd level, you learn to perform impressive displays of martial prowess and speed.

Whenever you take the Attack action on your turn, your walking speed increases by 10 feet until the end of the turn, and if a weapon attack that you make as part of this action hits a creature, you can use one of the follow-



ing Blade Flourish options of your choice. You can use only one Blade Flourish option per turn.

**Defensive Flourish.** You can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration to cause the weapon to deal extra damage to the target you hit. The damage equals the number you roll on the Bardic Inspiration die. You also add the number rolled to your AC until the start of your next turn.

**Slashing Flourish.** You can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration to cause the weapon to deal extra damage to the target you hit and to any other creature of your choice that you can see within 5 feet of you. The damage equals the number you roll on the Bardic Inspiration die.

**Mobile Flourish.** You can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration to cause the weapon to deal extra damage to the target you hit. The damage equals the number you roll on the Bardic Inspiration die. You can also push the target up to 5 feet away from you, plus a number of feet equal to the number you roll on that die. You can then immediately use your reaction to move up to your walking speed to an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the target.

#### EXTRA ATTACK

Starting at 6th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn.





### MASTER'S FLOURISH

Starting at 14th level, whenever you use a Blade Flourish option, you can roll a d6 and use it instead of expending a Bardic Inspiration die.

## COLLEGE OF WHISPERS

Most folk are happy to welcome a bard into their midst. Bards of the College of Whispers use this to their advantage. They appear to be like other bards, sharing news, singing songs, and telling tales to the audiences they gather. In truth, the College of Whispers teaches its students that they are wolves among sheep. These bards use their knowledge and magic to uncover secrets and turn them against others through extortion and threats.

Many other bards hate the College of Whispers, viewing it as a parasite that uses a bard's reputation to acquire wealth and power. For this reason, members of this college rarely reveal their true nature. They typically claim to follow some other college, or they keep their actual calling secret in order to infiltrate and exploit royal courts and other settings of power.

### COLLEGE OF WHISPERS FEATURES

Bard Level	Feature
3rd	Psychic Blades, Words of Terror
6th	Mantle of Whispers
14th	Shadow Lore

#### PSYCHIC BLADES

When you join the College of Whispers at 3rd level, you gain the ability to make your weapon attacks magically toxic to a creature's mind.

When you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration to deal an extra 2d6 psychic damage to that target. You can do so only once per round on your turn.

The psychic damage increases when you reach certain levels in this class, increasing to 3d6 at 5th level, 5d6 at 10th level, and 8d6 at 15th level.

#### WORDS OF TERROR

At 3rd level, you learn to infuse innocent-seeming words with an insidious magic that can inspire terror.

If you speak to a humanoid alone for at least 1 minute, you can attempt to seed paranoia in its mind. At the end of the conversation, the target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC or be frightened of you or another creature of your choice. The target is frightened in this way for 1 hour, until it is attacked or damaged, or until it witnesses its allies being attacked or damaged.

If the target succeeds on its saving throw, the target has no hint that you tried to frighten it.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

#### MANTLE OF WHISPERS

At 6th level, you gain the ability to adopt a humanoid's persona. When a humanoid dies within 30 feet of you, you can magically capture its shadow using your reaction. You retain this shadow until you use it or you finish a long rest.

You can use the shadow as an action. When you do so, it vanishes, magically transforming into a disguise that appears on you. You now look like the dead person, but healthy and alive. This disguise lasts for 1 hour or until you end it as a bonus action.

While you're in the disguise, you gain access to all information that the humanoid would freely share with a casual acquaintance. Such information includes general details on its background and personal life, but doesn't include secrets. The information is enough that you can pass yourself off as the person by drawing on its memories.

Another creature can see through this disguise by succeeding on a Wisdom (Insight) check contested by your Charisma (Deception) check. You gain a +5 bonus to your check.

Once you capture a shadow with this feature, you can't capture another one with it until you finish a short or long rest.

#### SHADOW LORE

At 14th level, you gain the ability to weave dark magic into your words and tap into a creature's deepest fears.

As an action, you magically whisper a phrase that only one creature of your choice within 30 feet of you can hear. The target must make a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC. It automatically succeeds if it doesn't share a language with you or if it can't hear you. On a successful saving throw, your whisper sounds like unintelligible mumbling and has no effect.

On a failed saving throw, the target is charmed by you for the next 8 hours or until you or your allies attack it, damage it, or force it to make a saving throw. It interprets the whispers as a description of its most mortifying secret. You gain no knowledge of this secret, but the target is convinced you know it.

The charmed creature obeys your commands for fear that you will reveal its secret. It won't risk its life for you or fight for you, unless it was already inclined to do so. It grants you favors and gifts it would offer to a close friend.

When the effect ends, the creature has no understanding of why it held you in such fear.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

Speak up! It's really hard to hear you over the screaming.  
Nope. It's no use. I'll have to stop the screaming.  
Disintegrations all around, then.

