ADVENTURE PATH PLUG-IN

MAKE YOUR GAME LEGENDARY!

A rules supplement delving into the dark side of magical music, betwixt the macabre and madness. Penned by an impresario whose creative curiosity became his undoing, The Necrotic Verses is an ideal complement to a Gothic Adventure Path or any game where the tragedy of flawed genius and the corruption of artistic creation drives men and women to ruin.

Brittlet

Hook One: The Mecrotic Verses

BY JASON NELSON & CLARK PETERSON with the Legendary Games Design Team





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The Mecroxic Verses Hothic Grimoires; Rook One

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ABOUT LEGENDARY GAMES

Legendary Games is an all star team of authors and designers, founded by Clark Peterson of Necromancer Games, Inc. Legendary Games uses a cooperative, team-based approach to bring you, the Paizo fan, the best expansion material for your game. We are gamers and storytellers first, and we believe that passion shows in our products. So check us out, and Make Your Game Legendary!

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Welcome to Adventure Lath Plug-Ins!

This product is a part of our line of support materials for extended Adventure Path-style campaign play for use with Paizo's *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*. When you see the "Adventure Path Plug-In" logo at the top of a Legendary Games product, you can expect it is designed to fit directly with the themes of a particular Adventure Path campaign. The all-star team of designers here at Legendary Games is committed to bringing you—the busy GM or player—the absolute best third party support for your Pathfinder campaign. To deliver on that commitment, we've assembled the best of the best of current gaming authors, designers and layout experts so that you can feel comfortable that Legendary Games products will be the most creative, rules-legal and well-designed content you can find. Though Adventure Path Plug-Ins all share a theme with a specific Adventure Path campaign, they are designed to be easily incorporated into your home game regardless of what campaign you may be running.

What you Will Find Inside These Sothic Srimoires

This supplement is a departure from the larger products Legendary Games has produced for our Adventure Path Plug-Ins, a way to capture the creative energies (and logistical realities) of our team and provide you with a steadier stream of content for your Gothic Adventure Path campaigns or any game where horror, madness, or tragedy play a central theme. Each *Gothic Grimoire* is evocative and richly detailed, with history and character that makes them far more than a collection of dusty pages that deliver intriguing possibilities for introducing novel applications of the rules of your favorite role-playing game. These are *Tomes of Ancient Knowledge* and *Meditations of the Imperial Mystics*, dialed up to eleven.

Rather than gathering a number of different magical tomes, often with somewhat dissimilar themes, into a single compilation, the *Gothic Grimoires* product line takes each tome singly, expanding its lore and developing its mechanical and conceptual uniqueness more robustly. We think every one of these tomes is terrific and deserving of this expansive treatment and we hope you'll agree, but even if a given *Gothic Grimoire* is not your cup of tea, we hope you'll be looking forward to the next one! The Legendary Games tradition is to combine rich story and background, innovative layout, beautiful aesthetics, and excellence in design that is second to none. This product is the latest in that tradition, and we hope you enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed making it. Game on!





HEY, WHAT'S WITH THE NAMES?

You will see us use phrases such as "Gothic Campaign" instead of the title of <u>a recent Adventure Path</u>. Or you may see us use the names "Raven" for the town or "the temple" instead of the regular proper names of specific locations and characters from those adventures. There are legal reasons for this. While we can create compatible products under the Open Game License, we still have to be respectful of certain content that Paizo owns. Because we want to be very respectful of their content and work in partnership with them we use these "replacement phrases" for certain content. Plus, this helps the product have a more general appeal to those who may be running a home campaign that fits the same themes. In any event, we are 100% confident you know what we are talking about and will have no problem making the required connection. So enjoy *Gothic Grimoires* in your gothic Adventure Path, set in a small gothic town, helping the Professor's Daughter and cleansing the unquiet spirits in the ruins of the local prison. See, that wasn't so hard, now was it.

Special Electronic Features

We've hyperlinked this product externally with links to the Pathfinder Reference Document, the official online compendium of game rules (when not present there, we also used the d20PFSRD). If it is in the core rulebook, we generally didn't link to it unless the rule is an obscure one. The point is not to supersede the game books, but rather to help support you, the player, in accessing the rules, especially those from newer books or that you may not have memorized.

THE NECROTIC VERSES: BARDIC MYTHOS TOME

Penned decades ago by a young musical prodigy named Zane Enreich, *The Necrotic Verses* is an encyclopedic musical treatise collecting a great variety of eerie, bizarre, and even perverse performances of every variety. Enrich was a musical polymath, proficient in virtually every instrument known, and able to record in detailed notation forms and rhythms he had heard but once. His brilliantly avant-garde tastes earned him enemies amongst the musical establishment, but his virtuosity could not be denied, nor his ability to outdo the old masters at their own music as well as his own.

His meteoric rise, however, was staggered when he began to notice one young patron who never applauded, never seemed moved by his musical mastery. Performance after performance he would sit stony-faced, driving Zane to distraction. Did this man not know he was in the presence of genius? He finally confronted the callow youth, but browbeating and insulting the lad was no more successful in impressing him than Zane's performance. Introducing himself as Leopold Pelluer, he told Zane that he saw the spark of talent in him, but that he was not willing to go far enough, to take true risks, to really revolutionize the world of music. Outraged at his impertinence, Zane demanded Leopold show him just one single thing about music that he didn't already know. Dismissively, Leopold stepped to the organ and played a pair of simple five-note patterns, resolving them into a sublime but disturbing chord. "Begin there," he said, then turned and left, never to be seen again.

Appalled, Zane at first dismissed Leopold as an armchair critic, but the figure and the chord just would not leave his mind. It gnawed his dreams and sprouted wholly unorthodox tonality, melody, and harmony that he could not resist. As months passed, Zane's compositions grew progressively stranger, first in their discordant melodies and soon after in their subject matter. In conversation, Zane began to lose his hearing. At first, it was believed his hearing was simply dulled, but some began to suspect that somehow he had begun instead hearing something else, something other, which began to drown out rationality and creative genius with an obsession with radical disturbia. Audiences were aghast at what they witnessed pouring forth from his tormented spirit and performers in shock and horror in the wake of what Enrich demanded of them. In short order, even his most loyal patrons abandoned him and the fallen impresario was consigned to an asylum, where healers at a loss to treat his madness nonetheless dutifully recorded his rhythmic rhymes and ravings. Precisely 13 months after his imprisonment, the asylum and all within were obliterated by a burning star fallen to earth, brought down some say by the eldritch recitations of Zane Enreich as his final act of glory.

The healers' notes survived, however, in correspondence to visiting scholars who consulted on the curious case. Painstakingly assembled along with copies of Enreich's most salient works, both infamous and obscure, the text is a disturbing juxtaposition of art taken to its ultimate extreme and the tales of a mind stretched beyond its limits. Several have claimed authorship of *The Necrotic Verses*, but which is telling the truth is unknown. It may be all are, and that several identical copies of the work exist, each transcribed and compiled by a strange compulsion. *The Necrotic Verses* have been burned more than once, but the book always resurfaces after a time, either the original somehow repaired or another copy taking its place.

The Necrotic Verses is considered a mythos tome (see Tomes of Arcane Knowledge p. 6); for those without that product, assume that reading the book for the first time deals 1d4 points of Wisdom damage (DC 20 Will save negates). In addition, learning any of the spells or masterpieces contained within risks development of an obsessive interest in the undead and creatures that are insane. A DC 15 Will save negates this obsession, but the DC increases by 1 for each spell or masterpiece learned after the first. If the save is failed, as long as the curse persists the reader is at risk of developing a reckless infatuation with every undead creature or creature affected by confusion, feeblemind, insanity, or a similar effect he encounters. A Will save (DC as above) resists this infatuation, but a new save is required each time the accursed reader meets another such creature. If the save is failed, the reckless infatuation persists for 1d6 days and then turns into unadulterated loathing for an additional 1d6 days before fading. While the reckless infatuation or unadulterated loathing persists with one creature, the curse has no other effect, but once the cycle of infatuation and loathing ends, the reader may develop an infatuation with another creature he encounters.

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Learning the Music of the Spheres, Opus of the Golden King, or Pnakotic Fugue masterpieces causes the reader to become obsessed with creatures with the mythos descriptor (see *Tomes* of Arcane Knowledge p. 6) rather than undead. These creatures include the aboleth, cerebric fungus, denizen of Leng, gibbering mouther, gug, hound of Tindalos, intellect devourer, Leng spider, moon-beast, morlock, neothelid, phantom fungus, shantak,

Spells: This book contains the following spells not normally available to bards but which can be learnt by a bard when she gains a new spell slot of the appropriate level by spending 24 hours studying *The Necrotic Verses*. These spells are treated as bard spells of the same level as their cleric or sorcerer/wizard spell level: *death knell, feeblemind, hide from undead, symbol of fear, symbol of sleep, touch of idiocy.* A bard may also learn *insanity* or *symbol of insanity* as a 6th-level bard spell; however, learning or casting either Madness spell causes the reader to gain 2 points of Madness point on a failed Madness check and 1 point on a successful check, unless the check exceeds the DC by 5 or more. These spells are considered mythos spells for the purpose of making madness checks (see *Tomes of Arcane Knowledge* p. 5).

shoggoth, and yithian. Other similarly alien creatures could also

be given this descriptor.

(O) D D S S U O LO ME

Masterpieces: The Necrotic Verses contains 9 unique masterpiece performances.

Dance of the Empty Moons (Dance, String)

Your music evokes an elegant waltz of dancing dream-shades. **Prerequisite:** Perform (dance) or Perform (string) 11 ranks **Cost:** Feat or 6th-level bard spell known

Effect: This arrangement for strings, first entitled O Lunae Lacunae, calls out to the lingering memory of dazzling balls and the dreams of fanciful soirees that never were. The shades that inhabit these dreams genuflect and whirl hand in hand, sweeping back and forth in neat lines and intricate patterns, though with a certain frenetic edge and a desperate intensity, under elaborate floating chandeliers and careening candelabra. The rushing, twirling phantasmagoria of the spectral dancers, lights, and music dazzles all creatures within 30 feet automatically (blinded creatures are immune to this effect).

In addition, the swirling phantoms cling to creatures within the area and try to draw them into their dance. You may select a number of creatures equal to your Charisma bonus to be affected in this way. Each creature you target is slowed for as long as you maintain the performance (Will negates; DC 10 + 1/2 your bard level + Charisma modifier). In addition, after maintaining the performance for at least 3 rounds, you can spend 2 additional rounds of bardic performance to draw a creature that has been slowed by the phantom promenade wholly into a tiny pocket of the Dimension of Dreams, affecting the target as maze. Unlike the maze spell, however, a Will save (DC as above) is allowed to resist the effect, and escape from the pocket dimension without plane-traveling magic requires a Wisdom check rather than an Intelligence check. To all observers, a creature trapped in this way becomes transparent and intangible, joining in the dance with the other phantom shades and wholly unresponsive and unreachable until she escapes the pocket dimension.

Special: If you have learned this masterpiece, you can use Perform (dance) or Perform (string) for a distraction bardic performance.

Use: 1 round of bardic performance Action: 1 round

Dead Man's Frolic (Comedy, Percussion)

Your capering antics cause the dead to dance in time to your necrotic rhythms.

Prerequisite: Perform (comedy) or Perform (percussion) 5 ranks **Cost:** Feat or 2nd-level bard spell known

Effect: This creepily catchy performance is simultaneously madcap and macabre, combining tribal rhythms with cultic masks, eerily luminescent glowing face and body pigments and whirling paint, and all manner of bizarre dangling fetishes and talismans. With this performance, you can use your fascinate, *suggestion*, and *mass suggestion* performances against undead, though undead who were not humanoids in life gain a +4 bonus to saving throws against these performances. In addition, you cannot use these abilities simultaneously against living and undead targets, as these mock rites that fascinate the dead hold no appeal to the living.

In addition to the above, you can induce a frenzy of wild dancing into undead creatures that you have fascinated. Beginning this type of performance requires 1 round of bardic performance per creature you target, all of which must be within 30 feet of you, though maintaining the performance costs only 1 round per round it continues.

Targeted undead that fail a Will save against the same DC as your fascinate performance are effectively nauseated, able to take only a single move action each round. In addition, an affected undead creature that begins or ends its turn adjacent to another creature attempts to dance with it. If the adjacent creature is another undead affected by the dead man's frolic, both undead creatures gain the entangled condition. If an adjacent creature is not an affected undead, this attempt to dance with it should be resolved as a grapple combat maneuver (as a free action) that always provokes an attack of opportunity. This grapple maneuver is not an attack and deals no damage to the creature with whom the affected undead tries to dance. If multiple creatures are adjacent to an affected undead creature, it chooses other affected undead if possible, followed by humanoids, dancing with other creature types only if those of the first two types are unavailable. If multiple creatures of the same category are adjacent, choose randomly.

Special: Generally speaking, the cultic and fetishistic talismans of a dead man's frolic are figments created by the magic of the masterpiece; however, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to any associated Perform checks and increase the save DC against the performance by +1 if you use at least two different genuine cultic items. These should be treated as masterwork tools, costing 55 gp or more, but fakes are far more common (90% of such items available for purchase) than genuine tribal relics. A DC 20 Appraise or Knowledge (history) check can detect such counterfeits.

Use: 1 round of bardic performance to maintain, 1 round per target to begin performance

Action: 1 round

Masque Macabre (Acting, Comedy)

Your shifting appearance twists through inhuman guises to bring terror and horror in equal measure.

Prerequisite: Perform (acting) or Perform (comedy) 3 ranks Cost: Feat or 2nd-level bard spell known

Effect: When you create a glamer effect, you may use this masterpiece to twist it into a Masque Macabre, shifting its appearance in subtle and frightening ways as you choose, such as eyes that weep blood or lack pupils, sagging or melting skin and features, vermin crawling on or under the skin, or any kind of rot, tumor, or disfigurement. The effect is entirely illusory but horrifying in the extreme, granting a +2 circumstance bonus to Intimidate checks and a -2 penalty to Bluff and Diplomacy checks as long as the glamer persists. This modifier does not apply if the creature with whom you interact cannot see you. The glamer you create otherwise functions normally for a glamer of its type.

In addition, if you create a fear effect (including using Intimidate to demoralize an opponent) while you are shrouded in a glamer affected by a Masque Macabre, any target you affect becomes sickened with horror and revulsion for a number of rounds equal to the level of the effect (1 round for an Intimidate check to demoralize, regardless of how many rounds you demoralize your foe). If the target rolls a natural 1 on its saving throw against your fear effect, it is nauseated with horror rather than sickened.

Use: 1 round of bardic performance per creature you affect with the accompanying glamer, plus 1 round each time you create a fear effect (including using Intimidate to demoralize). Action: 1 swift action

Mordant Coda (Keyboard, Wind)

Your eerie melodies can thwart, scourge, or entice the lingering spirits of the damned and bind their suffering to your convenience. **Prerequisite:** Perform (keyboard) or Perform (wind) 5 ranks

Cost: Feat or 3rd-level bard spell known

Effect: When you encounter a haunt, you can attempt to counter its effects using a countersong performance, allowing you and your allies to use the result of your Perform check in place of any applicable saving throws against the haunt and its effects. Alternatively, you can use this performance to damage a single haunt within 30 feet, dealing 1d6 points of damage per two bard levels at the end of each full round of performance.

In addition, if you reduce a haunt to 0 hit points with your performance, you can attempt to capture the haunt and store it away within your instrument. This requires a Charisma check with a bonus equal to your bard level against a DC equal to 10 plus the haunt's CR. If the check succeeds, you must spend a number of rounds of performance equal to half the haunt's CR to capture it.

You may keep the haunt trapped within your instrument as long as you wish. As long as you do so, its haunting is suppressed in its original location. However, every night you must make a Will save (DC 10 + the haunt's CR) or be affected by a *nightmare*. At any time, you can release the trapped haunt as a full-round action costing 1 round of bardic performance, causing the haunt to manifest immediately manifests at your location, with full hit points and full normal effects. Alternatively, you can spend a number of rounds of performance equal to half the haunt's CR to perform a controlled release of the haunt, causing it to manifest at any point you designate within 10 feet times your bard level. You must have line of sight and line of effect to this location, and you may choose to have the haunt manifest immediately or to lie dormant, awaiting its normal triggering condition (with a delay of up to 1 minute before that triggering becomes active if you wish it).

Each time the haunt manifests in its new location, there is a 10% cumulative chance that it dissipates and returns to its original location.

Special: If you have learned this masterpiece, you can a countersong performance to protect against the effects of a haunt by substituting your Perform (keyboard) or Perform (sin) use Perform (percussion) or Perform (string) for a distraction bardic performance.

Use: 1 round of bardic performance (plus see text) Action: 1 round

Music of the Spheres (Percussion, String)

Your haunting and otherworldly melodies conjure visions of far distant planets and the endless wheeling sky.

Prerequisite: Perform (percussion) or Perform (string) 5 ranks Cost: Feat or 2nd-level bard spell known

Effect: This beyondist music slides from ethereal to eruptive is it evokes falling skies and twirling stars. You may choose to affect a single creature or if the nighttime sky is visible you may affect all creatures within 30 feet. If you choose the latter effect, all creatures within 30 feet are affected as enthrall with a save DC of 10 + your Charisma modifier + 1/2 your bard level. Rather than devoting their attention to you, however, affected creatures are swept up in a rapt contemplation of the heavens, keeping their eyes to the skies. The duration of the effect is not limited to 1 hour, however, but rather lasts as long as the nighttime sky remains visible. If their view is obstructed, enthralled creatures will stand up and move elsewhere in search of a better view, but each round they do not find a view of the night sky they may attempt a new saving throw to end the effect. Note that using this ability requires 1 round of bardic performance to initiate, but you need not spend additional rounds of bardic performance to continue the enthrall effect.

Alternatively, you can affect a single creature within 30 feet with this masterpiece at any time to implant a curse-compulsion within the target's mind. A Will save at the same DC described above to resist the effect. A failed save has no immediate effect if the nighttime sky is not visible, but any time the cursed creature can see the night sky she is constantly distracted with gazing up at the sky. She is automatically dazzled (no save) and additionally becomes enthralled as above. A Will save is allowed the first time he sees the night sky negates the enthralled effect for that night; however, she must save again on subsequent nights. This is a curse effect that is permanent and cannot be dispelled; however, it can be removed with *break enchantment, remove curse*, or any effect that cures insanity.

Special: If you have learned this masterpiece, you can use Perform (percussion) or Perform (string) for a distraction bardic performance.

Use: 1 round of bardic performance Action: 1 round

Opus of the Golden King (Acting, Sing)

You instigate unhinged revels that descend into insatiable debauchery in the midst of erratic mood swings from despair to exultation.

Prerequisite: Perform (percussion) or Perform (string) 5 ranks

Cost: Feat or 3rd-level bard spell known

Effect: Recitations, arias, and scenes from the scandalous and forbidden grand opera of the deranged Golden King, with its intimations of possession from beyond and feasting upon the unloosed emotions of his guests even as they descended into every carnal pleasure, drive your audience beyond the bounds of reason and control. You can target one creature per three bard levels that you have already fascinated. All targets must be within 20 feet of you, and each target is affected as mad hallucination. A Will save (DC 10 + your Charisma modifier + 1/2 your bard level) negates the effect, but those who fail see themselves transported in their mind's eye into the Palace of the Golden King, inflamed by the raw orgiastic fervor of this phantasmal court but also sensing that they are deeply enmeshed in the clandestine intrigues of the court or discovering some awful blasphemous truth about the doom engulfing all under the jaundiced alien eyes of their inhuman overlord.

Creatures that fail their saving throw against the mad hallucination can be driven to further heights of hysteria and depths of depravity by spending one or more additional rounds of bardic performance while maintaining the performance in subsequent rounds. This is a full-round action that forces all creatures within 20 feet that are already affected to make an additional Will save as above or be affected as one of the following listed spells of your choice, depending on how many rounds of performance you wish to spend: 1 round, delusional pride, unnatural lust; 2 rounds, oppressive boredom; 3 rounds, reckless infatuation, unadulterated loathing; 4 rounds, smug narcissism; 5 rounds, envious urge. You can have only one such secondary effect in place at a time; if you begin another, it replaces the previous secondary effect. A successful save against the secondary effect does not end the effect of the mad hallucination. Both the mad hallucination and the secondary effect end when the performance ends, with the exception that a reckless infatuation or unadulterated loathing remains in effect for 24 hours after the performance ends.

Use: 1 round of bardic performance to maintain, 1 round per target to begin performance

Action: 1 round

Pnakotic Fugue (Oratory, Wind)

Your song seems to unmask an alien presence among you, drawing the wrath of the deceived.

Prerequisite: Perform (oratory) or Perform (wind) 9 ranks **Cost:** Feat or 5th-level bard spell known

Effect: This ululating drone of otherworldly counter-harmony feels almost as if it tears the veil of inner thoughts of creatures within 30 feet. Those failing saving throws perceive the appearance of a single creature you designate within range to shift and shimmer, suddenly being revealed as an alien creature of a type you choose. This "alien" must be an aberration or outsider (of a type other than the target's own, if already an outsider), or a creature with the mythos subtype. Affected creatures become shaken and affected as *song of discord* for as long as the performance lasts, but rather than having a 50% chance of attacking

the nearest creature each round they have a 50% chance of attacking the designated "alien" creature you have supposedly revealed. This is a fear and compulsion effect. **Use:** 1 round of bardic performance

Action: 1 standard action

Scare Chord (String, Wind)

A sudden jagged shriek punctuates your performance at the precise moment to inspire maximum terror.

Prerequisite: Perform (string) or Perform (wind) 3 ranks **Cost:** Feat or 2nd-level bard spell known

Effect: A terrifying screech of unnerving sound shocks and creatures to the edge of fright and beyond. When you use a scare chord, the save DC of any fear effect you create until the end of your turn is increased by 2. If you use Intimidate to demoralize foes before the end of your turn, you gain a bonus to your skill check equal to half the level in the class which grants the bardic performance ability. In addition, any creature affected by a fear effect you create before the end of your turn takes a -2 penalty to saves vs. fear for the duration of that fear effect. This penalty does not stack if the target is affected by multiple fear effects.

Use: 1 round of bardic performance Action: 1 swift action

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