



ULTIMATE OPTIONS

BARDIC MASTERPIECES



By Owen K.C. Stephens

PATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

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ULTIMATE OPTIONS: BARDIC MASTERPIECES

By Owen K.C. Stephens

Masterpieces are special performances for bards that represent the abilities of a grand master in a given bardic talent, and were first introduced in *Ultimate Magic*. Generally taken in place of a feat or spell known, masterpieces serve two useful functions for bard players. First, they give bards some flavor that makes them different than just “banjo-playing sorcerers with a lot of skill points,” and second, they increase a bard’s overall flexibility. GMs can gain similar benefits from adding masterpieces to a campaign or creating brand new masterpieces. Perhaps only the Choirsters of the Church of the Celestial Music have access to The Lullaby of Ember the Ancient, or the minotaur-dancers of Tarse are famed for their defensive cape dance the GM creates as a cultural option.

Of course, the ability to use a new option either for increased flexibility or as a background-appropriate flavor element is limited by how many examples of that option exist. Since *Ultimate Magic* had to cover all the spellcasting classes, it had only limited space to explore the idea of bardic masterpieces. It did give guidelines for GMs to create their own but that often takes time a GM may not have, and with only a few examples a GM might not be sure what kinds of things make good masterpieces.

To help expand the options available to bard players and GMs, *Ultimate Options: Bardic Masterpieces* presents a selection of new masterpiece options. At least a few options are given that will work for each of the Perform skills, and a few are listed that can be used by a bard focused on any type of Perform. In addition to typical performance masterpieces, there are several masterpieces for social skills included below – things learned as the pinnacle of a bard’s ability to understand, communicate with, and manipulate people. Although these masterpieces are often extraordinary abilities rather than supernatural (and carefully state this when it is the case) and represent a different kind of advanced bardic skill, they otherwise follow the normal rules for masterpieces.

ELEMENTS OF A MASTERPIECE

Masterpieces have their own presentation format, which is similar to (but not exactly the same as) how feats are presented. Below is a brief description of the elements of a masterpiece.

Prerequisites: Only bards may ever take masterpieces, but many also have other prerequisites a bard must meet in order to learn them.

Cost: Each masterpiece has an associated cost to learn it – typically spending a feat or giving up a bard spell known (a bard can spend a bard spell known of a level higher than the listed level to learn a masterpiece).

Effect: This brief description summarizes what occurs when a bard performs the



masterpiece. Unless otherwise stated, a masterpiece's effects are supernatural. If a masterpiece allows a saving throw, this is detailed in this section. Masterpieces that duplicate spells use the bard's caster level for the spell's caster level.

Use: This line specifies what is required for a bard to activate the masterpiece. Many masterpieces use one or more rounds of bardic performance, while others require the expenditure of a spell, and yet others represent a grand master level of skill at some social or scholarly pursuit and have no activation cost (in which case this entry is omitted). For masterpieces fueled by rounds of bardic performance, the bard expends the listed number of bardic performance rounds when he starts performing the masterpiece; if he is interrupted, the attempt fails and the spent performance rounds are lost.

Action: This line indicates the type of action performing (and if possible maintaining) the masterpiece requires. Unless otherwise stated, effects or feats that extend the duration of bardic performance (such as the Lingering Performance feat in the *Advanced Player's Guide*) do not apply to masterpieces.

NEW MASTERPIECES

Below are some new masterpieces.

CALL OF THE CROSSROADS (ANY)

In the center of the road sat a young man, his face covered in fresh scars. A simple reed flute was at his lips, and from it came the sounds of hell. Swift, sharp music emulated the screams of the

tormented, the cackle of devils at play, and the longing of those doomed for eternity. When the music ended, the young man wasn't alone anymore. "I liked it." The woman who had appeared was no woman, as her horns, tail, and wings attested. But though she could turn to bloody violence at any moment, the young man remained calm. "It was pretty." She continued. "But you aren't. Not anymore. It hurts my eyes to look at you. Here."

She handed the young man a mask, simple but brightly painted with a face laughing on one side and crying on the other.

"What do you want?" she asked. "And what should I call you?"

The young man put on the mask, feeling its cool leather burn his scarred face. When he spoke, his voice was cracked from the ravages of inhaled smoke and ash.

"I need... revenge. And you can call me... the Harlequin."

The not-woman smiled. "Revenge can be had, young Harlequin. But everything has a cost..."

You can create an art performance so compelling, so otherworldly, you summon an outsider willing to discuss making a deal with you.

Prerequisite: Perform (any) 8 ranks

Cost: Feat or 3rd level spell known.

Effect: When you are at a crossroads (anyplace where two paths or trails cross, including river forks, street intersections, crossing wilderness trails, and even major nautical routes if they pass each other), you can create a performance over 10 minutes that summons an outsider. Drawn by your art, the outsider may be of any alignment of your choice, and is willing to discuss doing a task for you in return for some kind



of payment. This functions as *lesser planar ally*, except as noted in this description. The magic power used to attract the outsider requires you to expend a spell slot of the highest-level bard spell slot available to a bard of your level. (If the spell slot is 5th level, this ability works as *planar ally*. If it is 6th level, it works as *greater planar ally*.) If you and the outsider do not make a deal, you regain the spell slot when you next refresh your spells per day. If you do make a deal, you do not get the spell slot back until 30 days after the task the outsider performs for you is completed.



Alternatively, outsiders summoned by the call of the crossroads are always willing to accept a sliver of your artistic talent as payment. If you choose this option, you suffer a permanent -1 penalty to the bonus of the Perform skill you have the most ranks in at the time the deal is made. Nothing, not even a *wish*, *miracle*, or the direct intervention of a deity, can remove this penalty. A small fraction of your artistic talent is given away forever and the power of such a crossroads bargain is sacrosanct throughout the

multiverse. If you select this option, you do not lose use of a spell slot.

Use: Highest-level bard spell slot available to a bard of your level. The spell slot does not become available again until 30 days after the negotiated task is completed. Alternatively, -1 to your highest Perform skill. (See text.)

Action: 10 minutes (100 uninterrupted full-round actions)

DRUMS OF WAR (DANCE, PERCUSSION)

The yeomen shifted nervously, though Sir Penrose tried to keep them calm. Ogres were shuffling out of the woods in ever-increasing numbers, slowly advancing towards the town's last line of ragtag defenders.

Sir Penrose turned to his advisor. "This is going to get bloody, and fast. Our best bet against foes like this is a series of coordinated charges, but the troops are too green. We can't keep them organized and focused well enough to pull that off."

Slowly, Goodfellow Birch stomped his right foot against the ground, the sound echoing through the troops. The yeoman began to nod in time to the beat, then stamp; their spears on the ground. Even Sir Penrose's steed began to paw at the earth in the same rhythm.

Goodfellow smiled at the knight. "Now, we can." You create a rhythm that allows a martial force to work together without words or signals.

Prerequisites: Perform (dance or percussion) 5 ranks, Intimidate 5 ranks.

Cost: Feat or 2nd-level bard spell known.

Effect: You can use your body or a percussion instrument to create a rhythm that speaks of battle, warfare, and the glorious

march of armies to defend their homes and strike down their foes. For each level of the spell you use to fuel this ability, select one teamwork feat known by an ally within 60 feet who is able to hear you. All your allies within 60 feet who are able to hear you are treated as having the teamwork feat for as long as you maintain a bardic performance.

Use: Bard spell slot of 1st level or higher

Action: Standard action to begin, maintained with any bardic performance.

DIVINE GLORIFICATION (DANCE, KEYBOARD, PERCUSSION, SING, STRING, WIND)

All eyes watched, breathlessly, as Amara lay before the altar. As the bells that should have rung in the first rays of dawn rang through the temple, she drew forth crimson silks from her black garb. She rolled her shoulders, and flicked her wrists. More crimson shot from her sleeves, like sunbeams through clouds. As the priestesses watched, she began to move in quick lunges across the floor. At each step black silk fell away, revealing a costume of gold, red, and white. She stood higher and higher, rolling from prone to a crouch, and from that to a leaping dance.

Though storm clouds and black skies made the windows dark, her dance of dawn brought the memory of bright sunrise and warm light into the hearts of all present. Her movements suggested sunbeams, parting darkness, and warming skies. When the bell rang full dawn an hour later, the first full day of the temple's new status, none questioned their Sun Lady was satisfied with their substitute ritual of dawn. For as Amara slid in happy exhaustion to the steps by the altar, they all

saw what she could not. A halo of true sunlight settled, all too briefly, around the dancer's head.

You have created a performance piece for the glorification of your god that is so extraordinary and perfect that your god has rewarded your accomplishment with access to divine power.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (religion) 9 ranks, Perform (dance, keyboard, percussion, string, sing, or wind) 9 ranks, alignment matches your patron deity.

Cost: Feat and 1st level bard spell per day.

Effect: Select one domain granted by your patron deity. Add the 1st-6th level spells from that domain to your class list. You may select these spells as spells known, but doing so counts against your normal maximum spells known at each level.

GALLIARD OF BLADES (DANCE)

Young Mad Hattie strode into the Merry Mermaid as though she had no idea her clean suede boots and ostrich-feather hat set her apart from the dirty, scarred, smelly clientele that now stared at her. She stepped lightly onto a chair's seat, and from it neatly onto a table, picking her way around chipped mugs and platters of moldy bread.

"I need a captain and crew, to take me into the Fiery Sea."

A general grumble ran through the dingy room. Hattie drew out a purse, pouring its golden contents into one gloved hand, and then neatly back into the purse.

"I can, of course, pay well."

An ugly man with corded muscles stood, and other patrons took a step back from him.



"This is no dance hall, girl. You best drop your gold and walk away, while we let you."

Hattie smiled, and fluidly drew the short rapier no one had realized was hanging from her belt.

"It certainly looks like a dance hall to me, and that would make you the painted lady. So if you want my gold, I'll have to demand a spin with you first."

Silence reigned for a moment, then the ugly man rushed Hattie's table. As he swung a curved knife at her, Hattie flipped herself quickly over him. By the time he turned, she had slashed his weapon free of his hand and brought the point of her weapon in line with his throat. Her assailant froze. Hattie smiled.

"I suppose I should have warned you. My usual dance partner is Death."

You can dance a regimented, swift dance with a sword as your partner... and anyone near you had best watch their step.

Prerequisites: Acrobatics 14 ranks, Perform (dance) 14 ranks.

Cost: Feat and 5th level spell known.

Effect: You can burst into a deadly martial dance, wheeling and spinning through a battlefield and weaving a blade into deadly arcs of attack. You must expend 7 rounds of bardic performance as a swift action to begin a galliard of blades, and then 1 round of bardic performance as a swift action for each round you wish to maintain it. You gain a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution, a +4 dodge bonus to AC, a +5 competence bonus on Reflex saves, and a bonus to damage with light weapons (and any other melee weapon with which you are allowed to add your Dexterity bonus to

attack rolls) equal to your Dex bonus. Your base attack bonus equals your character level (which may give you multiple attacks). While using this ability you lose your spellcasting ability, including your ability to use spell activation or spell completion magic items, just as if the spells were no longer on your class list.

Cost: 7 rounds of bardic performance to initiate, 1 per round to maintain.

Action: 1 swift action per round

GENRE GENESIS (ANY)

Captain Renwell sat across from his problem, and took a long swig of wine from a golden goblet.

"I would invite you to join me, but I imagine the manacles would make that difficult."

Young Mad Hattie shrugged. "It matters little to me what damage you do to your own honor."

The captain winced. "Tales of your sharp tongue do not do you justice, young woman. I read your... tract. I'm amazed none of the royals you so thinly lampooned have had you arrested."

Hattie smiled. "I learned a great deal while writing that volume. I learned about the vast powers given to the captain of an Imperial Juggernaut, for example. And how little they're paid. And as you can see by my presence here, I have learned how to thumb my nose at the establishment and not pay the price. My book is legal because while every character is recognizable, none of them can be proven to be based on any specific lord."

Renwell raised an eyebrow. "Interesting, but hardly relevant to the matter at hand."

"Of course it's relevant, captain. I'm not arrested because officially I didn't write the book everyone thinks they are reading. And you arrested me because

you think I want you to take your Juggernaut into the Fiery Sea for our mutual profit, which would be illegal. But I don't. Not officially. Officially, I want you to hunt down a dangerous and wanted criminal you think is a threat to the empire. If we both happen to profit in the process, no one can blame us."

The captain sat back, and took another long drink from his cup.

"Your way of looking at things is... intriguing. What else did you learn writing your book?"

Hattie swung her arms out in front of her, tossing the captain's open manacles onto his table.

"There's a way out of everything."

You have created a whole new kind of performance. You may have invented a new style of music, written a novel using a structure no one has thought of before, created the latest noble dance, developed a kind of comedy previously unheard-of, or even invented a new musical instrument. The fame makes you well known among performers who are trained in such performances, and the insight you gained creating a whole new art form has allowed you to master other, more practical, talents.

Prerequisite: Perform (any one, see below) 6 ranks.

Cost: Feat or 1st level bard spell known.

Effect: Select any one Perform skill for which you have 6 or more ranks. You gain a +4 bonus on all Charisma-based skill and ability checks with anyone who has at least 1 rank in that Perform skill. Additionally, you may use your bonus in that skill in place of your bonus in one of the following associated skills: Appraise, Climb, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Heal, Knowledge (any one), Linguistics, Perception,

Ride, Sleight of Hand, Spellcraft, Stealth, or Use Magic Device. Once this skill is selected, it cannot be changed. When substituting a skill bonus in this way, you use your total Perform skill bonus (including class skill bonus), in place of its associated skill's bonus, in the same way as with the versatile performance class feature.



Special: You may select this masterpiece more than once, but you must gain at least 6 bard levels between each selection. Its effects do not stack. Each time it is taken, you select a new associated skill you may replace with the bonus from a Perform skill of your choice.



HEARTBEAT OF THE WILD (PERCUSSION, SING, STRING, WIND)

The wolf cub whimpered, trying to squirm under its dam's dead body. Goodfellow reached a hand out, toward the cub but palm down. He slapped it lightly against the moss. Thump-thump. Thump-thump. The cub stopped whimpering. Thump-thump. Thump-thump.

The cub's father leapt from the underbrush and rushed at Goodfellow, its fangs bared and slavering. Goodfellow brought out his other hand, waving it through the tall grass. Whisk-rush-swish. Whisk-rush-swish. The sound of wind through the woods, of freedom, and of good hunting.

The great grey wolf stopped baring its fangs, and tilted its head. Goodfellow crouched, and let the sounds of his hands quicken and mingle. Thump-swish-thump-rush. A description of paws thundering in unison, and wind ruffling fur. An offer. A new life and a new pack. And then, suddenly, Goodfellow was silent. The wolf sat, and pondered for a moment. Then it turned, and lifted its cub by the scruff of its neck. It carried the cub to Goodfellow, and sat again, eyes wide. Goodfellow Birch smiled. "We will, of course, find someone to take care of your family. Then, you and I have poachers to find."

You've learned the music of nature, and can use it to bind one wild creature to you.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (nature) 5 ranks and Perform (percussion, sing, string, or wind) 5 ranks.

Cost: Feat and 1st level bard spell known.

Effect: You gain an animal companion. Treat your bard level as your druid level for determining the level and abilities of this companion.

INHUMAN HARMONY (KEYBOARD, SING, STRING, WIND)

Yzzid the Efreeti raged, swelling to twice his height and swinging a massive scimitar at the last of the defenders of the Temple of Dawn. A young woman rushed from the building, clad in silks the color of fire, and began casting a charm. Yzzid snorted, and ignored her. No lord of flames was vulnerable to a human charm. Once he killed his prey...

But then she spoke, and the charm was no human magic. It burst from her throat with the roar of a conflagration, and the crack and pop of embers. Her magic hit him like a coastal wave, and spoke directly to his soul. Her voice was flame as much as his heart was, and he knew he could risk nothing to anger her.

Which was annoying, because she had now stepped between him and the last priestess.

"You must move, little flametongue." Yzzid tried to step around her, but she moved to intercept. "You are between me and my prey." "But why do you seek such prey, mighty flame king? Do your people not wage greater wars than this?"

Yzzid paused to consider her words.

"A temple in the mortal world is meager, but my choices are few. The great Doa-Khan of the sea have driven me from my home, and I must pick new targets to survive."

She stepped closer, and placed a hand on his red flesh.

"I am Amara, the Dawnbringer. The Dao-Khan are not friends of this place. Would it not be better for us to all turn our efforts to defeating them, and restoring you to your home?"

You can affect creatures of a specific type with spells not normally designed for them.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (see text) 7 ranks, Perform (keyboard, sing, string, or wind) 7 ranks.

Cost: Feat or 1st-level bard spell known.

Effect: Select one creature type. You must have 7 ranks in the Knowledge skill appropriate for determining lore about creatures of this type. As a swift action you can use a harmony symbolizing the selected creature type to modify a bard spell you cast that normally only targets creatures of a different type so that it affects creatures of the type selected. If the spell is mind-affecting, it can now affect creatures of a type normally immune to mind-affecting spells. Targets of the spell still receive any normal saving throw.

Special: You may select this masterpiece more than once. Each time it applies to creatures of a different type.

Use: 1 round of bardic performance.

Action: 1 swift round

IRRESISTIBLE DIRGE (WIND)

The entire group looked nervous, feet shuffling and eyes cast aside, as the harlequin brought the flute to his lips. As he blew the first long, haunting notes, the seven skulls gathered around him in a circle in the center of the graveyard all rattled. As he poured every ounce of sadness and longing he could into the notes that flowed from the silver flute, wispy blue shapes emerged from the skulls.

Vague phantoms of their former selves, the spirits hung their heads in a sadness shared by the music. The Harlequin nodded urgently at Lady Blackchapel, who stepped up and addressed the nearest spirit.

"Are you the architects who built the Tomb of Skulls?" The nearest spirit twisted its head up, reluctantly, to face the lady. Its voice was hollow, like a child heard from the bottom of a well.

"Twenty and three those plans did see, and six of those before you."

Lady Blackchapel's lip curled in annoyance, and the Harlequin felt a bead of sweat roll between his face and his brightly-painted mask. He hoped the lady got on with it... he couldn't keep this up forever.



You can play a haunting melody in honor of the dead that even the spirits of the fallen cannot ignore.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (religion) 8 ranks, Perform (wind) 8 ranks

Cost: Feat or 2nd level spell known

Effect: When you play an irresistible dirge, spirits arrive from those creatures who died within a radius of 10 feet per rank of Perform (wind) you possess, or whose bodies (including at least the head) are currently within that radius. Questions may be asked of any of these creatures who died within 10 years per rank you have in Perform (wind).

Anyone you indicate may ask these questions, but only one question may be asked per round (you may not ask questions). Each round you maintain this ability after the first takes one more round of bardic performance than the round before it -- two rounds get used on the second round, three rounds on the third round and so on, so maintaining this ability for 4 rounds would take (1+2+3+4) 10 rounds of bardic performance. Once you have used this ability in a specific place or to ask questions of a specific creature, you may not do so again until you have gained a bard level.

Except as noted above, this ability works as *Speak with Dead*.



Use: Rounds of bardic performance (see text).

Action: 1 standard action to initiate, 1 move action to maintain.

LEXICON OF EXPRESSIONS (ACT, COMEDY, ORATORY)

Flamebeard the Pirate spoke proudly to his crew.

"Today we have sunk a Royal Juggernaut, plundered her holds, and set a course to..."

"Mmmmmfff!"

Young Mad Hattie managed to make the noise heard around her gag, interrupting the ifrit captain. He glanced at her in annoyance, and she gave him her best "we need to talk" look. He tried to ignore her.

"...set a course to fame and fortune!"

And as soon as we introduce these unwanted guests to the shark god..."

"MMMNNMMFF!!"

This time Hattie went with a "you're making a mistake" expression, combined with a "bored and unimpressed" posture.

Flamebeard chewed soundlessly for a moment, smoke rising off his fiery face whiskers. Finally, he stomped over to where Hattie and her friends were tied up and angrily ripped off her gag while yelling in her face.

"What?!"

You can make yourself understood even when you can't speak, using extremely precise movements of your body to send subtle clues of expression and posture. In extreme cases, you can even convince others to do what you want them to without saying a word.

Prerequisite: Sleight of Hand 3 ranks, Linguistics 3 ranks, Perform (act, comedy, or oratory) 6 ranks, versatile performance (for the Bluff skill).

Cost: Feat or 1st-level bard spell known.

Effect: This extraordinary ability allows you to send a message using the Bluff skill with no need for a skill check, and no chance of the message being intercepted by others.

It also allows you to make a Bluff check against a target that can see you, even if it cannot hear you, to convince the target that it should take one specific action. The action must be something the creature can perform in no more than one full round (though you could break up a more complex action into a series of steps), and must be an action that has no obvious harmful consequences for the target. When determining the DC, the GM should treat this as a Bluff check to convince the target that the statement "You should (take the desired action)" is true, and modify the DC for believability as normal.

Each use of Lexicon of Expressions after the first to convince a creature to take an action in the same 24 hour period has its DC increased by +2 (+4 for the third attempt, +6 for the fourth, and so on).

Use: 1 round of bardic performance.

Action: 1 standard round

LAMENT'S FURIOUS REFRAIN (KEYBOARD, SING, STRING, WIND)

The thing that had once been the Green Duke staggered from the curtains, and moaned as it hurled itself down the dais steps. Lord Penrose and his men froze, the sight and sound

of a walking corpse wearing the heraldry of legends and fairytales turning their guts to ice. Goodfellow Birch felt the massive despair press down on him as well, nearly driving him to the floor. He began stamping his foot in the war-beat of the lowlanders, but it was not enough. Not with such blackness surrounding his mind like a thick fog of hopelessness.

His fingers twitched, then tremored, as he pulled a lute from his haversack. His fingers found the tune of despair, the sounds of a hero lost to his own pride. The lute rang out, in time with his stamping, and gave voice to the anguish. And as he repeated the tune, Goodfellow twisted it as well. Sadness was there, but he added anger as well. This was the Green Duke? They had come so far, had faced so much, to liberate the Green Hall from this?!

The men stirred. Lord Penrose choked back tears. And then, as one, they roared in fury and rushed the desiccated horror.

You can add a repeating section of your music that calls to grief and rage, allowing your allies to choose to be moved by the emotions of your music rather than other influences.

Prerequisite: Perform (keyboard, sing, string, or wind) 6 ranks, at least one bard spell known with the emotion descriptor.

Effect: When you are using a bardic performance, you may add lament's furious refrain (increasing the cost of the performance to two rounds of the ability per round it is used). Anyone who gains bonuses from your performance may also choose to be moved by the emotions of the refrain. Characters that do this are in a carefully balanced state of anger and sadness, causing them to be unable to use any Charisma-, Dexterity-, or

Intelligence-based skills (except Acrobatics, Fly, Intimidate, and Ride) or any ability that requires patience or concentration. They also gain a bonus to saves against all fear, despair, and emotion effects equal to half your bard level. If a creature is under the effect of such an effect when it accepts the emotional impact of your lament's furious refrain, it receives one new save against the effect (with your bonus), ending the effect on a successful save.

Use: +1 round of bardic performance to begin, +1 round to maintain for 1 round.

Action: None (can only be added to other bardic performances)

MAESTRO OF CULTURES (ACT, COMEDY, ORATORY)

Young Mad Hattie smiled her best smile as Flamebeard the Pirate ripped her gag free. "What?!" The ifrit captain bellowed. "What in the name of all that's valuable could be so important for you to say before we dump your corpses to the shark god?"

Hattie let sugar flow into her voice as she spoke a single word.

"Parlay."

You know the rules, laws, traditions and loopholes of cultures worldwide, and can use them to bargain your way out of nearly any situation... at least briefly.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (local) 6 ranks, Perform (act, comedy, or oratory) 6 ranks, versatile performance (for the Diplomacy skill).

Cost: Feat or 1st-level bard spell known.

Effect: This extraordinary ability is a bard's knack of knowing exactly what to say, and when to say it, allowing her to negotiate with



groups that should be beyond mediation. This ability depends on knowing which rules and customs a group will honor (at least at first), and which are mostly ignoring.

As a full-round action you may make a Diplomacy check against a group or individual, even if they have a hostile attitude. Any direct offensive action taken by you or your allies ruins your efforts and ends this effect. The DC for the check is 15 + the CR of your target, or 10 + your target's Sense Motive bonus, whichever is higher. (If you use this ability on a group, the DC is +1

for a group of 2, and increases by +1 for every doubling of the group's size).

On a successful check, you use some rule or technicality to convince the group to act as if its attitude was one step more helpful than its true attitude – hostile groups act as if merely unfriendly, unfriendly groups act as if neutral, and so on.

You may also use Diplomacy to make a request of a group you have influenced with this ability, even if their attitude is unfriendly or hostile. Requests of unfriendly and hostile groups are largely limited to not harming you and your allies or proposing bargains that strongly favor the unfriendly or hostile group. Like most Diplomacy checks, the effects of Maestro of Cultures normally last 1d4 hours. You may continue to use this ability to extend the effect of any deal made, but the DC to do so increases by +2 each time, and a hostile or indifferent group must be given some new compensation each time the deal's duration is extended.

Use: 1 round of bardic performance.

Action: 1 full round

MAESTRO OF FACES (ACT, COMEDY, ORATORY)

"It won't work, you know."

Lady Blackchapel stared in surprise at her near-constant companion.

"What won't work?"

The Harlequin smiled, though he knew she couldn't see it, his mask still hiding his face from the world.

"Selling me out to the Templars of Purity, so they capture me from an anonymous tip. It won't work. They had me once, already. That's what started all this. And if they get their hands on me again, I'll escape again. But this time, my vengeance will include one more. You have seen what happens to those who cross me?"

Lady Blackchapel was nearly motionless, but the Harlequin saw the single bead of sweat form on her brow.

"I had no intention of..."

"Of course you did," he interrupted her. "And now you don't. And that's fine. You can have your Midnight Guard, take over your order, rule the Black Wardens. I don't care, as long as the Templars die. But cross me..."

He left the threat unsaid and in her armor, Lady Blackchapel shuddered.

You know how to read people like books, learning their basic drives, current thoughts, motivations, and fears through subtle clues. While this ability may seem magical to others, it is simply an advanced form of reading expressions and combining them with extremely subtle clues such as perspiration, dilated pupils, and body ticks.

Prerequisite: Heal 4 ranks, Perform (act, comedy, or oratory) 4 ranks, versatile performance (for the Sense Motive skill).

Cost: Feat or 2nd-level bard spell known.

Effect: This extraordinary ability allows you to gain details about a subject through pure observation. You must be able to see and hear the target. You must make a Sense Motive check with a DC equal to 10+ the target's Bluff bonus, or the target's CR +15, whichever is higher. This check should be made in secret



by the GM. On a successful check you may determine one of the following things:

*The subject's alignment on the chaos/neutral/lawful axis.

*The subject's alignment on the evil/neutral/good axis.

*The subject's starting attitude toward one other creature present.

If you succeed, you may maintain this ability and make another check on the next round. Anytime your check fails, the subject becomes immune to your Maestro of Faces until you gain a level. If you maintain the ability for three rounds, on the fourth round you may force the subject to make a Will save (DC 10 + ½ bard level + your Wisdom modifier) to determine the subject's surface thoughts. This functions as the *detect thoughts* spell but begins with the information gained in the third round of using that spell. It requires a Sense Motive check every round to maintain, and is an extraordinary ability.

Use: 1 round of bardic performance per round of information gained.

Action: 1 full round

SATIRE OF UNRELENTING TRUTHS (ACT, COMEDY)

"But I love you!"

Young Mad Hattie laughed in Flamebeard's face, and his gathered crew caught their breath.

"You don't love me, you buffoon. You only love yourself, and what's worse you don't even know it. You only think you love me because you love the idea of adding me to your legend. You are short-

sighted, cowardly, and so stupid you can't even make allowances for your own greedy nature. I should just give up on you, but since you were so helpful for that few seconds when both our lives were in danger, I'm going to make one last effort to explain to you how broken and pathetic you are. I have, in fact, composed a poem about some fairly obvious shortcoming in your life's goals. It's called "The Fire That Surrounded Itself with the Ocean." Would you like to hear it?"

You can create a work of parody that ruthlessly satirizes one creature, forcing it to face the worst aspects of its true nature.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (local) 11 ranks, Perform (act or comedy) 11 ranks.

Cost: Feat or 3rd-level bard spell known.

Effect: You can force a creature able to see and hear you to face its worst nature. Performing the satire takes only 3 rounds, but crafting it requires 1 day per level or hit die of the subject, and you must either meet the subject in person, or successfully learn at least 1 special power or vulnerability of the subject with an appropriate Knowledge check before you can begin crafting the satire. This is a mind-affecting, language-dependent effect.

If the subject is exposed to your performance of the satire for 3 full rounds, it is affected as by an *atonement* spell. Whether or not the *atonement* has any effect on the subject it must also make a Will save (DC 10 + ½ bard level + your charisma modifier) or be staggered for 1d4 rounds as it wrestles with the faults and flaws your performance reveals.

Use: 6 rounds of bardic performance.

Action: 3 full rounds



UNDULATION OF ENTICEMENTS (ACT, DANCE)

Yzzid growled as Amara Dawnbringer entered the tent.

"I have had enough of your lies and charms, hag! We have sought the weakness of the Doa-Khan and been stymied at every turn. When I am befuddled by your words you leave me to my own thoughts, and when I rebel I am sure you use that damned flametongue of yours to charm me. Well, it is over. I am going back to your temple, and finishing what I started!"

As Yzzid stood, Amara traced her toes across the tent's carpet, rolling her foot back and forth, making a pattern in the thick fabric.

"I'm not looking! I don't care, whatever it is. I have no interest in..."

Despite himself, Yzzid's eyes traced along Amara's leg, to see the outline of a sword traced by her foot.

"Is that... is that the Falchion of Khans? How do you know what that looks like?"

Amara smiled. *"I've seen it. I know where it is." Her foot smoothed the rug, erasing the outline.*

"Would you like to know where it is, oh mighty Yzzid? Because I can tell you... if you'll finish what we started."

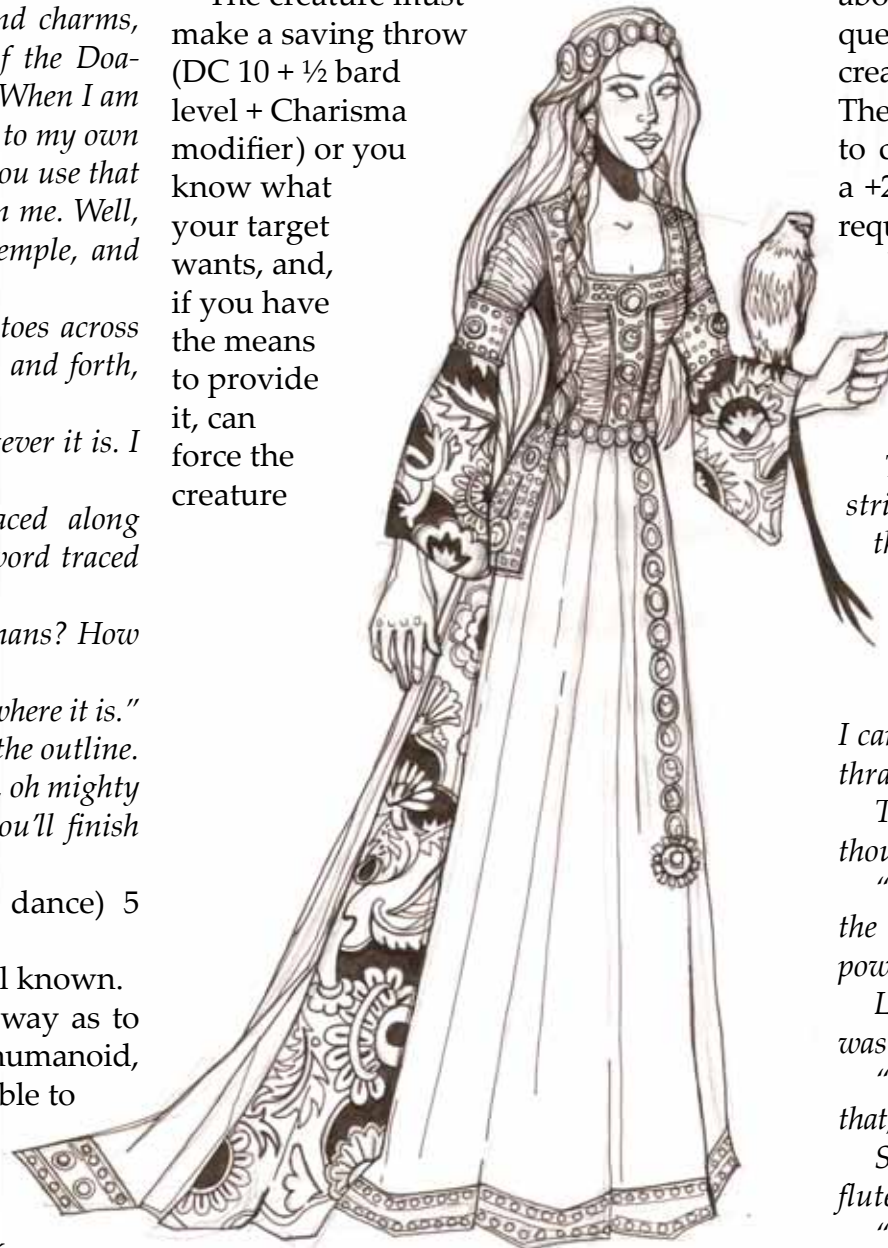
Prerequisites: Perform (act or dance) 5 ranks, Sense Motive 5 ranks.

Cost: Feat or 2nd-level bard spell known.

Effect: You can move in such a way as to inspire an aberration, dragon, humanoid, monstrous humanoid, or outsider able to see you to imagine you fulfilling its wishes (whatever they may be), allowing you to draw upon the powers of seduction to forge a link

between yourself and the subject. You must be free to move about for the entire 3 rounds it takes to use this ability, and the subject must be able to see you for the entire time.

The creature must make a saving throw (DC 10 + ½ bard level + Charisma modifier) or you know what your target wants, and, if you have the means to provide it, can force the creature



to accept the fulfillment of that desire in exchange for a specific service. Creatures never agree if you offer services that are physically impossible or obviously suicidal, if you lie about having the means to fulfill the desire in question, or if the service of fulfillment of the creature's desire would violate its alignment. The service can never take more than a day to complete, and the affected creature gains a +2 bonus on its saving throw if the service requires more than an hour to complete.

Use: 3 bardic performance rounds.

Action: 3 full rounds.

UNEARTHLY ARIA (KEYBOARD, SING, STRING, WIND)

The Templars of Purity surged forward, striking down the Black Wardens and gaining the top step of the fortress's great stair. Lady Blackchapel turned to the Harlequin, still sitting in his seat, and snarled.

"We are undone, for all your promises of power and glory! My Midnight Guard and I can slow them, but even we cannot kill so many thralls of the light!"

The Harlequin's voice was even and calm, though still ragged and ugly from his old wounds.

"Once, the abbot of your order was known as the Slayer, and his touch was death. With that power, you could turn the tide."

Lady Blackchapel laughed once, though there was no humor in the sound.

"Mighty I have become, and aye you have aided in that, but not that mighty. That power is not mine."

Slowly, the Harlequin pulled his long, black flute from its case.

"Not yet, Lady. But soon, it will be."

You can create a perfect, more-than-mortal piece of music that inspires all who know you to do better than their best.

Prerequisite: Perform (keyboard, sing, string, or wind) 12 ranks.

Cost: Feat or 4th-level bard spell known.

Effect: You can inspire all allies within 60 feet able to hear you to exceed their own limitations. Each ally may either gain access to a class feature one level higher than their level in a base or core class they have levels in (not including spells known or spells per day), or may increase their effective class level (including caster level, if any) by +4 for determining the effectiveness of class features and spells.

Use: 6 rounds of bardic performance to begin, 2 rounds of bardic performance to maintain each round.

Action: 1 standard action, swift action to maintain.

WRIT OF BARDIC IMMUNITY (ORATORY)

The great hall quieted as Goodfellow Birch strode through its open doors, walking with purpose, his great grey wolf at his side. Guards nervously fidgeted with their spears, but none blocked his passage. Lord Penrose glared at his once-advisor, his fists tightening on the leather-clad arms of his throne. Goodfellow did not stop at the bottom step of the dais, nor did he kneel. He marched up the carpeted aisle and stood a yard from the newly-crowned duke.

"You, Penrose of Oxcliff, have allowed greed and pride to rot your morals. Your people are hungry. The woods are once again overrun with giants and

brigands. And rather than rally troops, you charge towns for protection you owe them as their liege. Yours has become a dark rule, and I will not stand idly by. If you will not see reason, I shall carry word to the king and give him my witness."

"Your witness!?" Penrose leapt to his feet. "And who the hells do you think you are? You are a commoner's son, and a minstrel. You have done me well in the past, but you cannot talk to me this way."

Goodfellow Birch eyed his childhood companion in the eye, and the Lord of Oxcliff sat, and turned his face away.

"As a matter of fact," Goodfellow said slowly, "I can." He turned, and walked away as steadfastly as he had entered. And again, no guard thought to detain him.

You have earned the respect of even your enemies and detractors, and been granted a form of political immunity for everything you say – though not other actions you might take.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (nobility) 9 ranks, Perform (oratory) 9 ranks, alignment that includes a neutral element.

Cost: Feat or 1st-level bard spell known.

Effect: This extraordinary ability represents a general agreement among the kingdoms of the land, including those not allied with you, that you are worthy of sufficient respect and consideration to be allowed to go into the common areas of all settlements and speak your opinion openly, without suffering legal repercussions. For any government where the primary spoken language is one in which you are fluent, you are not arrested for being in public areas (though this gives you no power to go into private citizens' homes or secured areas such as prisons) or for any speech you make (as long as it does not call for the immediate commission of a crime, including treason, by those listening).

A player and GM should discuss the limits of bardic immunity prior to this masterpiece being added to a campaign – it won't be appropriate for all campaign styles.

LUMINOUS BARDS

GMs wishing to create new masterpieces should consider that many of the abilities granted to a luminary (from *Anachronistic Adventurer: The Luminary*) would also work well as bardic masterpieces (especially for bards focused on the act, comedy, and oratory Perform skills), representing the same kind of "masterpiece social skills" as Maestro of Cultures and Maestro of Faces. Each use of the luminary's influence class feature (harass, spur to action, steadfast support, and unsettle) can be made into its own masterpiece, with a fairly low set of prerequisites and a cost of 1 round of bardic performance per round of influence (replacing the influence ability's normal duration). Some luminary talents (such as aura of calm, beguiling, catharsis, flourish, hearten, jeer, and laugh it off) are also likely sources for inspiration and game rules to base new masterpieces off of.

WE ERR ON THE SIDE OF AWESOME!

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