

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Iluzry's Guide to the Pathfinder 1e Bard



Introduction

Heyo Internet, my name is Iluzry or Polypan if you've seen me around! I am not what one would call a veteran, I don't think, but I've been playing this game for a longer time! This guide, and the ones following it are all a part of my overall goal to give people more up to date content for pathfinder players to use, because I love the game and I want to help everyone become the ungodly kaiju monster of their DM's dreams/nightmares.

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Rating System

All Guides use the Color Rating System and honestly? It's a good Idea.

- **Game Breaking (6/5)**: This feature or option is so powerful, so useful, so unapologetically ridiculous that it very well make snap the game in half. DM's reading this guide are welcome to ban these options, or are warned to somehow work around them. Players? Use these powers carefully.
- **☆TAKE ME NOW☆ (5.9/5)**: If 5/5 is the best options, we don't really care when you take them, you should just be taking them. Stars means that this option will be useful from when you pick it up to level 20, and thus, you should be taking it IMMEDIATELY and as SOON AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE. Really its a case of urgency.
- **Take Me Please! (5/5)**: Class defining. Taking them changes the game, or adds so much power it's insane not to.
- **Fantastic (4/5)**: Incredibly solid, Not class breaking, but something that can add a fair bit of power and versatility to the character.
- **Fine, I Guess (3/5)**: Pretty good. They'll be helpful and have some use, but aren't likely to make things incredibly amazing.
- **Maybe Don't (2/5)**: Unhelpful. It probably doesn't...do much for you to pick these. Either they make your life slightly harder, or the bonuses just aren't very relevant to what you do.
- **Actively Bad (1/5)**: God why. These options are the least helpful. They either are pointless, replaceable or completely

outdated. These are abilities that will likely never be used and make you ask why they are there in the first place.

- **Unrated:** This is rare but some options are unratable. Likely a class feature that is powered on DM fiat, in which case...ask the DM, something that is campaign dependent or something that literally does nothing.

Class Overview

Usually when I make these class guides, I make them to teach the world something about a class or give my view on them. It's been a while since I made a class guide simply because...well I wanted one to exist. While many of these guides are a labor of love for the community, expressing my views on a class, there are few that simply exist to explore my love of a class in general.

I love Bards. I love them. I love horny bards. Lawyer Bards. Librarian Bards. Tomb Raider Bards. Bards who hate bardic performance. Bards who don't cast spells. Bards who play like fighters. Bards who play like wizards. I love love love love love the bard class in pathfinder, and honestly? You should too! The class is incredibly unique, has access to a wealth of force multiplier abilities, and options and make any party comp better for having them.

Honestly I can't talk enough about how cool I think the bard class is, and so that is why I am working on this guide. I'll still do my best to be informative, but ultimately, this is a love letter to one of my favorite classes in all of PF1e.

So let's get to simping!

♪ Time to Teach You How To Bard ♪

The Chassis

- **(3.5/5) Hit Die - D8:** Middle of the pack and the class average. Not enough to have you tanking (without a little bit of effort) but enough that you can take a few hits and not have to worry about immediately falling over.
- **(4/5) BAB - 3/4:** AYE enough to let you mix it up in combat without having to worry too much but not enough to let you outfight the fighter...on its own. Remember, you have a LOT of tools at your disposal, so you can get a lot more worth out of this than some classes can, especially with the free accuracy boosts of your class features.
- **(5/5) Skills - 6 + Int:** You are a SKILL MONSTER. 6 + Int is already an amazing start, but once you start considering versatile performance, and bardic knowledge you can REALLY start pushing your skills to the limit. Not to mention a myriad of

performances...yeah no this is fucking great for you and the bard is the original skill monkey class. Your only competition is the investigator or rogue and it shows.

- **Class Skills Worth Paying attention to:**
 - **Acrobatics (Dex):** For those who want to avoid AoO's and do cool tricks, its a must!
 - **Bluff (Cha):** You have the charisma to pull it off, and the skills to make it work. Is it necessary? No but its always nice to be able to be the face.
 - **Diplomacy (Cha):** Look its not necessary, but this is a roleplaying game. There WILL be a time when you have to talk to someone to convince them, and you WILL wish you had put the points into this to make it easy...so just do it now.
 - **Disguise (Cha):** Look normally I don't bring this up but if used in combination with bluff, you can get away with a lot. Moreover, mundane disguises can't be pierced with a simple divination spells, so in a way, they are even harder to catch once you've got it down!
 - **Intimidate (Cha):** Do you want to hit people with save penalties and show people what you are made of? Hit that power cord and inform them just how much shit they've got themselves into.
 - **Know. All (Int):** KNOWING THINGS IS USEFUL AND YOU ARE PARTICULARLY GOOD AT KNOWING THINGS. If you are wondering WHICH things you should know, ask your DM but I'd say at bare minimum put 1 point in every knowledge and max rank in knowledges needed for monster lore (*i.e. Arcana/Dungeoneering/Nature/Planes/Religion*).
 - **Perception (Wis):** Most rolled skill in the game, seeing things continues to be useful.
 - **Perform (Cha):** Well obviously but WHY we choose it is more interesting. Our namesake class feature, bardic performance, actually does not require this skill. Versatile performance and Bardic Masterpieces however, do, and it behooves you to invest in at least 1 form of performance to get the masterpieces and extra skills that you like.
 - **Sense Motive (Wis):** Knowing what other people are about is useful.
 - **Spellcraft (Int):** Knowing what spells you are going up against is incredibly useful, and will save you at least once.
 - **Stealth (Dex):** Being able to sneak into places is helpful, and really it just sucks to be the least sneaky one in the party!
 - **Use Magic Device (Cha):** INCREDIBLY useful skill for making magic items work for you even if they don't want to and again, you have the charisma to make it work!!!
- **Non Class Skills Worth Paying Attention To:**
 - **Heal (Wis)*:** ONLY reason this gets a mention is because skill unlocks are busted and healing is amazing!
- **(4/5) Saves - Good Reflex and Will:** Well its not the best but its still really helpful. We have to be careful of Fort saves, as those will usually be the ones to end us, but putting a few extra points in Con never hurts anyway!!

- **(3.5/5) Weapon And Armor Proficiencies:** So getting access to simple weapons and light armor isn't much but luckily bards get access to a few things that put them ahead. Namely, access to the rapier, longsword, shortsword, and shortbow, allowing you to engage in melee using dex, strength, TWF, or ranged. None of the options are the best in class, mind you, but they let us participate with ease and we generally only need 1 good weapon. Also, shields! More AC is more AC!

Class Features

- **(5/5) Spellcasting [0-6, Spontaneous, Arcane]:** I don't think bard spells get NEARLY enough appreciation. Sure, we love bardic performance, but the spells are something that make the bard truly a class onto its own. Like the paladin, they were blessed with a myriad of unique spells made to integrate with their main class features, and are incredibly powerful, and can't be found anywhere else! Really, you should not consider spells as a separate ability, but each spell as a class feature with a shared resource that gives the already very versatile class even more crazy options.
 - **Things To Keep in Mind**
 - **Enchantment/Mind-Affecting Based:** You have A LOT of enchantment spells, from charming to compulsion to illusion, all of which are ignored by undead, constructs, and the mindless. Make sure to be versatile.
 - **Lower DCs:** Your DC is based around your spell level and you have a lot of save or lose spells...but even your heavy hitters will be weaker than other casters just because you have lower spell levels.
 - **Spontaneous Caster:** Remember, this means we have limited spells known. Every spell we choose has to be MAJORLY impactful. We can't afford to have any duplicates or spells that don't benefit us.
 - **Bardic Masterpieces:** You can trade spells known for certain masterpieces for spells known. Is this worth it? Maybe!
- **(4/5) Bardic Knowledge:** Half-level to ALL knowledge and you can roll it even if you don't have the points? Hell fucking yes. Knowing things is ALWAYS USEFUL.
- **(5/5) Bardic Performance:** Here it is, our namesake skill! Bardic Performance! This is one of the most unique and powerful abilities in the game and we get to bask in its glory from LEVEL ONE. This ability is absolutely wild. It has debuffs, buffs, utility, and can open up so much more of so many kinds. There is a reason that when archetypes try to copy the bard, this is the first thing that they steal. Moreover, simply HAVING bardic performance opens up a world of options to you. It's beautiful. I will review this later, but for now, just believe me its great.
- **(5/5) Versatile Performance:** Hey remember all of those neat skills we wanted to get? What if we could get three for the price of one! YEP. At level 2 and every four levels after, we can basically choose one of our performance skills to count as TWO OTHER SKILLS. That's right, you can substitute performance checks for other skills, even if you have no ranks in them, meaning you can artificially inflate the amount of skill ranks you have massively! Hell the fuck yes!

- **Best Combinations:** Either of these will give you the most number of useful skills with the least amount of overlap. I prefer option A, mainly because it doesn't require any instruments and most of the skills seem like they can be done pretty easily
 - **Dance** (*Acrobatics, Fly*), **Comedy** (*Bluff, Intimidate*), **Oratory** (*Diplomacy, Sense Motive*)
 - **Dance** (*Acrobatics, Fly*), **Keyboard Instruments** (*Diplomacy, Intimidate*), **Sing** (*Bluff, Sense Motive*)
- **Advanced Versatile Performance:** Don't want to pick a new performance? That's fine! From level 6 onward, you may choose an Advanced versatile performance instead, giving you even more crazy options. Honestly after level 10, there is no reason not to take one of these instead, as you'll have gotten the most out of the base versatile performance anyhow.
 - **(4/5) Expanded Versatility:** Choose one of the versatile performances you already have and add a skill to it. If you are especially tight on skill ranks, or want to be able to cheese Use Magic Device or Disguise, this is a good pick up! Once you get your main 3, this is a fine pick up if you are on the skill monkey route, but until then, its usually better to just take normal versatile performance.
 - **(4/5) Martial Performance:** More weapon proficiencies! For the more battle focused, this is actually a god-send as it can net you a proficiency in a martial weapon you normal wouldn't have and has your bard levels count as half fighter levels for feats. You only get proficiency with one weapon from one of the two groups associated with whichever vers. Performance you chose before, but its still really helpful!
 - Act (close, double), **Comedy** (flails, thrown), Dance (monk, spears), Keyboard Instruments (hammers, siege engines), **Oratory** (heavy blades, light blades), **Percussion** (close, hammers), Sing (close, natural), **String** (axes, bows), and Wind (monk, thrown)
 - **(5/5) Bardic Masterpiece:** Okay THIS is more like it. Usually you have to spend a feat or one of your FEW SPELLS KNOWN to pick up a bardic masterpiece, so being handed one as soon as level 6 is fucking outstanding. Bardic masterpieces range from, sort of meh, to outlandishly powerful and guess what? We don't need to take them all, just the ones we care about. If you don't HAVE to choose one of the other options, and you have already taken versatile performance at least twice, you should absolutely choose this, every time.
- **(4/5) Divine Fighting Technique (Way of The Shooting Star):** Anime as it sounds, this is yet another optional gain that you can trade an instance of versatile performance for. The benefit? At base you can use your charisma for attack and damage while using starknives (a weapon you do not start with proficiency in.) The advanced benefit isn't the greatest, but for people trying to stay charisma focused, this can be an easy way to lean into your main stat.

- **(2/5) Well-Versed:** Not going to come up very often, as sonic abilities are rare, and you don't often fight other bards, but hey when it happens you'll probably like this? Otherwise, uh...don't really think about it too much.
- **(5/5) Lore Master:** Take ten on knowledge whenever and take 20 once per day as a STANDARD ACTION when you've just gotta know something. Honestly, if you are investing in knowledge, which you should be, this just means you will consistently be able to know whatever you need to about WHOEVER you need to and thats fucking great.
- **(3/5) Jack of All Trades:** So it doesn't hurt anything butttt it also isn't great either. At level 10 you can use any skill untrained or not...but the main skill we'd want to use untrained is knowledge. Ya know which we can already use. At level 16 everything becomes a class skill which is fine...but most of the skills we care about are already class skills. At level 19 we can take 10 on any skill which is great...but at that level you probably shouldn't be failing skill checks anyway!!!
- **Capstone:**
 - **(4/5) Adoring Fan:** Full round action, will save or be dominated. So the reason this is so important is that it is able to bypass a major pitfalls of the normal spell dominate monster, being spell resistance (which it lacks as a supernatural ability). It's reusable and doesn't actually take many resources, so it can be a great way to get what you want, but it also doesn't last forever. Helpful pied piper trick, but no replacement for the real deal.
 - **(4/5) Deep Magics:** More magic is very helpful! Sure it isn't too complicated, but everyone wants a few more spells under their belt and this gives you 7 for free!
 - **(5/5) With This Sword (Ex):** You gain a ~~Noble Phantasm~~ minor artifact!!! This is not only powerful, but also really really cool. Love that. Even cooler because you probably have a super holy avenger/unholy avenger by now.
 - **(4/5) Won't Stay Dead (Ex):** Once per week, when you should lose, you don't.
 - **(5/5) Perfect Body, Flawless Mind (Ex):** Get 8 points that can be added to any ability score in any way. 5 to one, 3 to another. This is always helpful and people love free stats. Incredibly powerful option.
 - **(5/5) The Boss (Ex):** Get super leadership! Luckily everything else is so busted at this level, so this is fine.

Roles and Ability Scores

Now, it's sort of hard to talk about what ability scores you need without talking about what roles the Bard can take. So first, let's cover the roles that they can take, and we'll choose abilities based on that. *Try to have a 16 in your main stat and a 14 in your secondary stat.* **All of the following reviews are for the Base Class, without any archetypes, multiclasses, or Prestige Classes which would augment their ability.**

So as far as roles go...Bards can do a lot. Like a lot a lot. Melee, ranged, support, skill Monkey, healer, face...they can do all of that AND THEN SOME. So instead of choosing a subset of things and telling you where they can specialize, I'm just going to tell you what ability scores you'll probably want in general and why they are good.

- **Strength* (16+ or dump)**: Are you doing archery or basic melee? Then you'll probably want a bit of strength. Bards also tend to have a lot of items, so try not to skimp on this TOO much, but if it isn't your attack stack, you don't really need to invest into it much.
- **Dexterity (16+ or 14+)**: So even if you aren't using dexterity as your main attack stack you WANT some ac. You want initiative to get your performances up early. Really I can't imagine you ever truly dumping this stat. Basically, if its your attack stack, start at a 16 and keep it rising, if it is not, then start with a 14...and still keep it rising, at least until whatever armor cap you have.
- **Constitution (12+)**: Hey remember how your bad save is Fort and you also don't have a super huge amount of HP? This fixes both of those things! Try to start with at least a 14 to keep you in a good area, and add more when needed.
- **Intelligence (14)**: You don't need a lot of INT to function, but having 14 gives you enough to pick up versatile spontaneity, and gets you a few extra skill points and boosts to your knowledge checks. You don't need it to be crazy, and really, any more above 14 is unnecessary, but 14 should be the goal as early as possible. Obviously, pump this up more if you are trying to be the god of skills.
- **Wisdom (10)**: Doesn't REALLY need to go higher, just make sure it DOESN'T go lower than this. Wisdom is not a dump stat, and we still don't like failing will saves or being blind when we roll perception.
- **Charisma (16+)**: I've read other guides that say you can skimp on this. I PASSIONATELY disagree. You need this for your spells, saves, your early performance rounds, SO MANY SKILLS and frankly, it just looks good on you. At absolutely MINIMUM you NEED 16 charisma, but honestly starting at 18 is better, and as you get to higher levels, this should be the first thing you boost.

Races

(6/5) Races

- **Drow Noble (+4 DEX, +2 INT/WIS/CHA, -2 CON):** Somehow, it is the best race possible. Drow nobles take a hit to Con, which isn't ideal but in exchange get a bonus to Dex, Charisma, a bunch of SLA's that we love (because remember, we don't get many spells and very few of high level), and BALLER spell resistance.
 - **Abilities Scores:** You get a penalty to CON which sucks but in exchange get a huge boost to Dex, and a boost to all of your mental stats.
 - **Spell Resistance:** 11+ Character Level is A LOT and there are going to be a fair amount of spells that just fizzle out on you if your DM isn't careful.
 - **So Many Spell Like Abilities:** I'm going to list them below but just know that you get so many, your caster level is your character level, and they are all based off of your charisma which is going to be super high anyway. This gets wilder if for some reason you DM allows you to change some of these spells. And remember, for every spell that you have here, that's another spell you DON'T have to take.
 - **Constant:** **Detect Magic** (0th)
 - **At-Will:** **Dancing Lights** (0th), **Deeper Darkness** (3rd), **faerie fire** (1st), **featherfall** (1st), **Levitate** (2nd)
 - **1/day:** **Divine Favor** (1st), **Dispel Magic** (3rd), **Suggestion** (2nd)
- **Munavri (+4 Dex, +2 CON/INT/WIS/CHA, -2 STR):** Munavri is a dumb race that gets a bonus to all stats, except strength, get's us free spell resistance that isn't bad, telepathy, and once per day can use spell trigger items for classes she shouldn't be able to so...yeah no great stuff.

(5/5) Races

- **Merfolk (+2 DEX/CON/CHA) [Secret Magic / Seasinger]:** So perfect stats with no downsides is already an amazing start, but what really pushes them over is their racial traits that give you a flat +1 to DC for enchantment spells or language dependent spells...meaning a spell that is both enchantment AND language dependent gets a +2 racial bonus to DC!!! For a bard that is MASSIVE, and it stacks with spell focus!!! As a bard, you don't actually need to move that often, and for when you do, you get the fin to feet spell as an SLA, which lasts hours per level, and i'm sure your team can be creative from there.
- **Human (+2 ANY):** FCB gives you access to more spells known, which on its own is amazing. We only have a set number of spells known, and getting more is always great. **This becomes EVEN MORE POTENT when you realise that you can trade spells known for BARDIC MASTERPIECES** meaning that if you choose wisely, you can potentially trade these extra spells for A LOT of masterpieces. Also skilled is great and bonus feats are amazing! Bards LOVE feats and the more we can get the better!
- **Half-Elf (+2 ANY):** Human FCB, Skill Focus can be used to boost perform, perception bonuses, and you can trade skill focus for WEAPON PROFICIENCIES WOOOOO

- **Half-Orc (+2 ANY) [Sacred Tattoo / Skilled]:** With sacred tattoo and the fate's favored trait, you can enjoy +2 to all saves, and again, skilled is amazing. Add on human FCB which gets us MORE SPELLS? We are off to the races.
- **Gemsoul Oread (+2 STR/CHA, -WIS) [Mostly Human / Oread Gem Magic]:** Human FCB, charisma bonus, you don't lose anything from our go to stats AND gem magic is a cool little buff to your normal spells. Luckily most stone spells are different enough and generally helpful enough that this isn't a total waste.
- **Kitsune (+2 Dex/Cha, -2 Str) [Human Guise]:** Perfect stat spread, the ability to shapeshift, gain more skills via Skilled or Gain a fox shape for infiltration, or even Realistic Likeness for near perfect mimicry, and human FCB! Being able to choose what you invest in make it a great option. Also, let's be real...[Magical Tail](#) is SUPER cool. More mind warpy spells is more mind warpy spells.
- **Stormsoul Sylph (+2 DEX/CHA, -WIS) [Mostly Human]:** Human FCB, Bonus to charisma, and also you can get wings of air for a supernatural flight speed! Nice!
- **Ifrit [Mostly Human / Wildfire Heart]:** Human FCB, and free bonus to initiative with nearly perfect stats and some cute SLA's. Later you can even take feats like firesight to give you PERFECT vision. Definitely super worth it.
 - **Base (+2 Dex/Cha, -2 Wis)**
 - **Sunsoul (+2 Str/Cha, -2 Wis)**
- **Variant Aasimar [Scion Of Humanity]:** Human FCB, great stats, free skills, and a cool SLA (which if allowed, can be traded out for more charisma on the variant table. Option 90 for aasimars)
 - **Agathion-Blooded (+2 Con/Cha)**
 - **Azata-Blooded (+2 Dex/Cha)**
 - **Angel-Blooded (+2 Str/Cha)**
 - **Peri-Blooded (+2 Int/Cha)**
- **Variant Tiefling [Pass For Human / Prehensile Tail]:** See Aasimar's, BUT option 9 for the extra charisma and we have fun tails that we can use for...very normal activities. Yes.
 - **Div-Spawn (+2 DEX/CHA, -2 INT)**
 - **Demon-Spawn (+2 STR/CHA, -2 INT)**
 - **Kyton-Spawn (+2 CON/CHA, -2 WIS)**
 - **Rakshasa-Spawn (+2 DEX/CHA, -2 WIS)**
- **Gathlain (+2 CON/CHA) [Treeborn]:** Fly speed! Adding DRUID SPELLS to your bard spell list gives you a range of fun battlefield control abilities, and can be traded out. ANNNDDDDDD no penalties!
- **Gnome (+2 CON/CHA, -2 STR) [Genial Magic / Effortless Trickery]:** Perfect stat array, bonus to enchantment spell DC's, free useful SLA's and basically the best illusion focused feat in the game. They have finally found their home.

(4/5) Races

- Bonus to Cha and Attack Stat (Dex or Str), No penalty to Con.
- Bonus to Cha and Con, No penalty to Int or Dex

(3/5) Races

- Bonus to Attack Stat (Dex or Str), No penalty to Cha

(2/5) Races

- Bonus to Attack Stat (Dex or Str), No penalty to Cha

(1/5) Races

- Penalty to Cha

Bardic Performances

For a number of rounds per day equal to $4 + \text{Cha} + 2 * \text{Lvl}$, you can perform any one of the performances that you know at that level (yes you get all of them.) You can only have one active at a time, and switching from one to another means stopping one to start the other, but any performance can be maintained as a free action each turn.

At first level, you start it with a standard action, 7th a move action, 13th, swift action, and if it has an audible component, they have to be able to hear you, if it has visible components, they have to be able to see you.

You get access to ALL performances at the appropriate level, so really this will be more of a review of what you can get out of them individually.

- **(2/5) [Lv1] Countersong (Su):** So if for some reason you are targeted by a NON SPELL (now this includes spell like abilities...) sound based attack, i.e. using music, speech, or otherwise, you can roll performance once each round, and anyone targeted may use your performance check for their save. Generally, your skills scale harder than your saves, and you should have at least ONE performance through the roof. Will you use this a lot? No. Will you love it when you need it? Absolutely.
- **(2/5) [Lv1] Distraction (Su):** Like countersong but for patterns and figment illusions. Will you need it often? Likely not. Will it be very helpful when you do? Probably yes.
- **(3/5) [Lv1] Fascinate (Su):** So let's get the hurdles out of the way. This is an audio-visual enchantment compulsion mind-affecting ability that automatically breaks in combat, or if the affected target sees any obvious hostile action...including simply casting a spell. Not even a bad one. That still has a will save and if they pass it they can't be affected for 24 hours. That's...a lot to get past but not impossible. The best times to use it are as a distraction, enthralling groups of people for an ambush, OR as a means to set something else up. At its core, that's what it feels like it's meant to be: a set up ability/utility ability. Meaning when you CAN capitalize on it, it'll work wonders.
- **(5/5) [Lv1] Inspire Courage (Su):** HERE'S WHAT YOU'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR! Inspire courage, the world renown buff with...not great scaling. Seriously +4 at level 17 is kinda sad. That said, what it lacks in raw power, it makes up for in application. You see, EVERYONE who can either see or hear you (depending on which components you use) gets this bonus to attack, damage, and saves against charm and fear effects. Everyone. Meaning that the more people you have, the more useful this becomes, as everyone becomes a LITTLE bit more accurate. Investing in this ability gives back dividends and it's no wonder that it became the bards staple! Just...don't be disappointed if it doesn't look amazing at first.
- **(4/5) [Lv3] Inspire Competence (Su):** ♪MMMMM DONT SUCK YEAH DONT-BE-BAD AT-THINGS... YOU CAN DO BETTER! DONT SUCK! ♪.
Ahem that besides, it provides a pretty good scaling bonus and sometimes you need want your friend to pass a skill check real bad. Beats using Aid Another.
- **(3/5) [Lv6] Suggestion (Sp):** So this isn't really its own performance but more an extension of fascinate. WHEN you have someone under the effects of Fascinate, you

can then spend a standard action to give them a suggestion as per the spell (Will Save). This only effects one creature at a time but you can use it more than once and I don't think it actually burns extra rounds, but you can talk to your DM about that. Remember that the effect of suggestion lasts an hour per level so...fascinate someone cute, get them to do your laundry and make out like a bandit.

- **(4/5) [Lv8] Dirge of Doom (Su):** Alright anyone you don't like within 30ft of you that can see and hear you is shaken. No save. No question. Just shaken so long as you continue the performance and they can be shaken. It's a nice little penalty to saves, and its wide reaching, but isn't that potent on its own. Let's call it "Inspire Fear."
- **(3/5) [Lv9] Inspire Greatness (Su):** so give a select few people...wow this this going to be a doozy, +2 bonus HIT DICE (as D10s), temp HP to go with the hit dice (so roll HP as 2*(d10+Con)), a +2 to attack AND +1 to fort saves. Moreover, those HD count for HD dependent spells...which obviously can get silly if used appropriately. Very fun to use on clerics or against pattern masters. Also don't be afraid to er...bard cycle to keep getting that fresh temp hp. Also scales hilariously well with investment, making it a great candidate for Master Performer and Grandmaster Performer which brings this up from *okay* to *fantastic*
- **(4/5) [Lv12] Soothing Performance (Su):** Spend 4 rounds of performance for [mass cure serious wounds](#) wounds. One less spell we have to take, and rad out of combat healing is rad.
- **(4/5) [Lv14] Frightening Tune (Sp):** Hilariously enough, not labeled as a mind affecting ability. Every enemy within 30 feet of your makes a will save, or they are frightened and have to run away...which basically ends fights before they start if it works. Sure, if they succeed, they are immune but really you can use this to just...keep people away so long as they can hear your HAUNTING MELODY. That said, remember...this is an SP ability...meaning that spell resistance CAN stop it. Which is annoying but...well this is the price for sick power.
- **(3/5) [Lv15] Inspire Heroics (Su):** So the biggest issue is that this targets effectively 1 person (yes i know it scales but we are at level 15 and it doesnt scale until 18). Now, usually this would kill it, especially since its bonuses are good but not mind bending. *Goes down a rating if its the only performance you are using that round.* That said, at level 15, you should be dual wielding performances using [Shadow Bard](#) or [Virtuoso Performance](#), meaning this isn't the worst thing you could use as a follow up.
- **(3/5) [Lv18] Mass Suggestion (Sp):** Like suggestion, but mass! That said, at level 18, things are very different. Even the weakest enemies we will fight tend to have okay to really good will saves, and you have to fail two saves just to get this to work! It's not impossible, but it'll be much more difficult to take advantage of at this level.
- **(4/5) [Lv20] Deadly Performance (Su):** Continuous will save or die. Every round you can basically target a creature with a mind-effecting will save, so long as they can see and hear you until the beginning of your next turn and you don't get stopped. If they fail their save, they die. If they succeed, they are staggered. Really no good way to do this...and again...you should be dual wielding performances by now. Have fun making your team super heroes while dropping rifts so nasty it sends people to hell.

Bardic Masterpieces

A rare and not so spoken about ability in bards, bardic masterpieces are unique abilities that use your bardic performance rounds to perform new and crazy effects. Think about them as optional performances! To get a bardic masterpiece, you have to pay its cost and you can only do so if you have meet the pre-reqs.

Q: "Are Bardic Masterpieces Bardic Performances Mechanically?"

A: So probably???? It says they are strange applications, and a lot of the masterpieces wouldn't make sense without the context (How do you maintain a masterpieces? Is it a free action? No action?). I'm willing to rule that they count, which means that you can use your duplication spells to begin masterpieces, but also means you can't stack masterpieces and performances natively.

Note that unless otherwise noted, anything that extends the duration of a bardic performance dont work on a bardic masterpiece, and if it takes a standard action to activate normally, and you can start your bardic performance more quickly, you may use the faster activation time.

Cost: You may exchange a feat or a spell known to get access to a performance. The spell must be at least as high as what is listed in the performance, and you can exchange higher level spells known for masterpieces with lower costs. You can only pay the cost if you meet the prerequisites.

Perform Prerequisite: These are the minimum skill ranks in a particular performance skill that are required to be able to gain access to a particular bardic masterpiece. There are occasionally other prerequisites, such as languages, or races

So for brevity's sake I'll be shortening a lot of what is need. Since you can purchase any bardic performance with a feat, ill skip listing that and instead write down the level of spell that you'd need to exchange and it's skill pre-reqs

Key: Name [Minimum Spell Level Cost] (# of ranks - Prerequisite perform skill, Other)

Example: Doot Doot Murder Flute [3rd] (7 - Wind)

- **(2/5) [Ancients' Flight](#) [5th] (13 - Oratory, Speak Draconic):** So you learn the dragon's national anthem! It takes a full round action to activate, and then the dragons get a will save. IF they fail they HAVE to patriotically sing the dragon national anthem, meaning no spells, no fire breath, biting or otherwise. If you are fighting dragons all the time, this can be super powerful...but chances are you aren't fighting dragons every day.
- **(3/5) [Anthem of Pageantry](#) [3rd] (7 - String or Wind):** Make a room extra sexy. It takes 1 minute to activate and only costs 1 round per 10 minutes but this is...vastly just used for style points.
- **(5/5) ☆[Arrowsong's Lament](#)☆ [1st*] (3 - Oratory):** So this is...hilariously good. Has nothing to do with arrows, but really good. Basically you get a free slot of whichever level

spell you traded. Using 3 rounds of performance per level and 1 hour, you can basically prep a single spell from a spellbook/meditation book, scroll, or other arcane writing. If its on the bard spell list, great, it just has to be equal to the spell level you sacrificed or lower. If its on the wizard list???? Its two levels of power. Now...that doesn't come up often..but this expands your versatility GREATLY. It also means that you can trade out lower level slots for the ability to prep higher level ones, because you are only limited by the spells you CAN cast, and the total spell levels you've spent on the masterpiece. This is versatile spontaneity but better. You should be taking this whenever you can, if not, make sure to pick it up late!

- **(4/5) [At the Heart of It All](#) [3rd] (7 - String or Wind):** Basically when you need to make sure your dominate person lands, or when you want to make sure that you can be extra persuasive with a person, will save to boost your skills. The bonus lasts all day, so it's useful in the long run, but not at all combat viable. Best used to set up other abilities by increasing their DC's.
- **(2/5) [Ballad of the Homesick Wanderer](#) [2nd] (5 - Oratory or Sing, Speak Planar Language):** So IF someone has something summoned AND it fails its willsave you...half the duration. Not even send it back. If the creature is called (which only really comes from planar binding) then it just...gets basically shaken??? This ain't...ain't great.
- **(3/5) [Ballad of the Warding Princess](#) [4th] (10 - Oratory or Sing):** So effectively its a pre-buff which forces you to spend a minute singing and then halves your base speed in exchange for +4 AC from soft cover (which basically stacks with everything) for 10 minutes. Having more AC is great but halving your speed isn't ideal. Cast a haste-like to get you back up to speed.
- **(4/5) [Banshee's Requiem](#) [6th] (17 - Sing):** Fort save or take two negative levels every turn. Yes its expensive. Yes fort saves are the most easily resisted. Yes this WILL snowball people who don't have the saves to keep up, and by the time you get it, that's a death sentence. *Gets much better if you abuse a tuned bowstring.*
- **(5/5) [Battle Song of the People's Revolt](#) [2nd] (4 - Wind or Percussion):** Bet you weren't expecting Tactician huh? Neither was I. Gives you a free teamwork feat for choosing it, and only costs one round of performance per round to give it to all of your allies within 30 feet. If used wisely, this can be JUST as potent as inspire courage, if not more so. If used creatively...it becomes a force to be reckoned with. Looking at you [Army Across Time](#). ALSO AFFECTED BY DURATION BOOSTERS
- **(5/5) ☆[Blazing Rondo](#)☆ [3rd] (7 - Oratory or Percussion):** This is HASTE one of if not the best buff spells in the game...but better, because the attack, ac, and reflex bonuses SCALE. AND NOT EVEN TERRIBLY???? This is objectively 100% better than inspire courage, and you should be picking this up as soon as possible to use this instead so that you can cast other spells. This is dumb. Why is this allowed? Sure this is fatigued after but WHO CARES??? BETTER HASTE???
- **(3/5) [Clamor Of the Heavens](#) [5th] (10 - Percussion or Sing):** So the effect is good. Stunning, blinding and deafening are all very fucked up things you can do...BUT if they are blinded and deafened, most of your new performances/masterpeices wont work. More importantly it takes THREE WHOLE ROUNDS to get it started, which by then...probably could have just killed it.

- **(3/5) Dance of Captivating Desire [2nd] (5 - Dance):** Make a thirst post irl and attempt to turn one creature within 30ft into a SIMP. Every round they have to make a will save to avoid simping harder, with every failure making it easier to convince them of anything and damaging their will saves against other enchantment effects. **On its own its not so impressive** but it makes a GREAT combination effect with another enchantment based performance.
- **(2/5) Death of Heroes [3rd] (7 - Oratory or Sing):** So this one is more funny than I find it useful. Basically if they fail their save, they think that all of their friends got sent to hell. No cap, just...straight up go to hell. Mechanically this just means they treat all of their friends as invisible and silent, and they are shaken...that said this is absolutely hilarious.
- **(5/5) Dirge of the Torn Sail [2nd] (7 - String or Sing):** So EVERYONE within 30 ft of your has to make a will save or fucking leave...which is like frightening performance but better because it is technically not a mind effecting or compulsion effect...it just like works like one. That said, it is...everyone. So either you win the fight because everyone runs away...or you lose the fight because your team runs away. Bring earplugs/5. Also effected by duration boosters!!
- **(1/5) Endless Waltz of the Eldest [2nd] (4 - Dance or String):** So we have other healing options that are probably better...and this is using one of our performances...which could be used on a bunch of things...like better haste. Or better dirge.
- **(1/5) Exhilarating Prayer of Grace [2nd] (4 - Dance):** Takes a while to set up, not a huge bonus. Skip!
- **(1/5) Fafnheir and the First King [2nd] (6 - String or Wind):** Does nothing that a good diplomacy check wouldn't have done and probably easier.
- **(1/5) Findalalara's Refuge [4th] (10 - Oratory or Dance):** Create Igloo. Yep. Maybe just bring a tent???
- **(4/5) Fugue de Rue d'Auseil [6th] (15 - String):** No save anti-horror sphere. Roll performance and your sphere can be that big but ya know it keeps people off you. That's really dope and can be used to be a bastard. Great against hordes.
- **(5/5) Hymn of Restorative Harmonics [3rd] (6 - String or Wind):** YAY STATUS CLEAR!!! We love status-clear abilities. This will save everyone's life at least once!
- **(5/5)* Hymn of Sacred Lands [5th] (16 - Oratory or Sing):** So this doesn't seem like its for players???. Okay so it has to be a place you've lived for a month...which is already a tall order. But assuming you can do that, its basically 30 minutes for an entire week of guards and wards...so great for when you have a base to defend. **Otherwise? Skip.**
- **(1/5) Illusion's Decree (Comedy, Oratory) [2nd] (5 - Comedy or Oratory):** Just use distraction forehead. No seriously, it's probably a better idea in most cases.
- **(1/5) Kaminari Drums (Percussion) [4th] (10 - Percussion):** 5 full rounds...for a SINGLE flame strike. For a fourth level spell...at level 10...GET THAT SHIT OUTTA HERE.
- **(?/5) Legato Piece on the Infernal Bargain [4th] (11 - String):** So...i can't really rate this because while planar ally has the POTENTIAL to be an amazing spell..it's completely out of your hand. If you don't know the name of the creature you are calling

its basically just a slot machine, and 100% up to your DM. As such...uh...hope you have a good DM.

- (4/5) **Life Budding In Salted Earth** [3rd] (4 - Sing, String, or Wind): Fast Healing the performance, with the ability to scale by spending more bardic performance. Costs a lot of performance but it heals everyone within thirty feet and that's nice! **Goes up to hilarious levels of chaos** if used with a Tuned Bowstring as it COMPLETELY covers each round to maintain meaning that you can spend your 5 rounds at the beginning and never worry about it again so long as you daka.
- (?/5) **Lingering Leitmotif (Oratory, Sing)** [2nd] (4 - Sing or Oratory): So I'd love to rate this for the life of me I have no idea what inspire confidence. Doesn't show up anywhere, isn't any of our base performances and isn't a feat or anything so...eh????????????????????
- (1/5) **Melody of Frightful Death (String)** [3rd] (7 - String): 1d6 damage every round is...really bad. Like REALLY bad. Horrible really. 1d6 every round WITH A SAVE???????????????????? Hell no.
- (2/5) **Melody of Surrender** [2nd] (4 - Sing or Wind): Strictly inferior to Dirge of Doom which has no save, and we get for free except for when fighting things that are immune to mind affecting.
- (?/5) **Minuet of the Midnight Ivy (Dance)** [2nd] (4 - Dance): Fun wall walking shenanigans and some terrain movement!
- (6/5) ☆ **Music Beyond The Spheres** ☆ [5th] (13 - Dance, Sing, or String): Warlock wish! I don't know what else I need to tell you. This is one of the most infamous and powerful abilities bards get access to, and if you have a way of healing ability damage, you can basically have unlimited limited wishes without cost...which is REAL nice. You should pick this up as soon as you are able, as it allows you to basically cast outside of your league!
- (1/5) **Night Queen's Fury** [3rd] (7 - Oratory or Act): Hey we don't actually like planning around getting hurt...we aren't a tank. Better to just curse them outright.
- (5/5) ☆ **Pageant of the Peacock** ☆ [2nd] (4 - Act or Dance): Ah yes the OTHER infamous ability. You wanna suddenly know everything? This is how you know everything. Between this and bardic knowledge, you should be able to pass EVERY SINGLE knowledge check.
- (3/5) **Pallavi of Nirvana's Blossoming** [4th] (11 - Dance): Unleash the power of the Sun! But seriously, it isn't often you find an ability that can produce true sunlight without the sun, and it lasts for a long while (1 minute per bard level) without maintenance! Even gives you plant growth. Still, while all of those things are neat, they aren't things that we absolutely need.
- (2/5) **Ragadahn's Raqs Beledi** [2nd] (5 - Dance): You can get through small spaces...IDK what this would be super important, I'm not sure how many GM's even KNOW that there are squeezing rules.
- (1/5) **Ragadahn's Spiraling Ascent** [3rd] (7 - Act or Dance): Twister levitation. This is...a neat trick but once fly starts going around that is objectively better. Nooooot really worth a 3rd level bard spell in my opinion.

- (2/5) **Rat Quadrille** [2nd] (4 - Percussion, or Sing): So its basically like dirge of doom but with a will save and being targeted. Luckily it lasts 10 minutes or even 1 minute if they fail. Unluckily, dirge of doom hits basically the same people with no save.
- (2/5) **Relentless Reprise** [2nd] (4 - Keyboard, Sing, String, or Wind): Earworm the performance. Just get whatever radio bop you want stuck in their heads. Now...again...this isn't something you are really going to be doing often. Like this lasts days and usually most people you use your performance on aren't going to live that long, or will be able to be a problem far before this, or can ignore it by...sleeping a bit more.
- (3/5) **Rondeau of Heavenly Order** [2nd] (4 - Sing): Will save or become a rook. This can be good for being able to control your enemies movement, and turning everything into a chess game, but I really don't think its the best use of your performance.
- (4/5) **Song of Extinction** [6th] (15 - Sing, String or Wind): So this one was on AON and you can only learn from a music box called, the song of extinction. Basically its an earthquake that also sends you to hell. It uses ALL of your bardic performance, but those who fail basically suffocate to death and for every person who does, you don't age a year. Yeah this is kinda evil..but still good though. Wish the save was higher, but you could always just use it on some commoners...
- (5/5) ☆**Song of Sarkoris**☆ (Oratory, Sing) [4th] (10 - Oratory or Sing): So this one is actually kinda terrifying. You see, we don't actually have a lot of hit die. At the lowest level allowed, we'd have 10. If an enemy deals more than TEN DAMAGE my ally gets an AoO. And not just any AoO. An AoO that can be done against ANYONE in their reach, and DOES NOT count against your maximum number. You don't even need combat reflexes to make this hilariously good. ALSO it resolves before the attack, but you still have to take the damage. If you have a team full of martials, GO THE FUCK OFF!!!!
- (1/5) **Song of the Stonebearers** [3rd] (7 - Percussion or Sing): Ignore a level of encumbrance...or just use mulepack cords.
- (5/5) **Spirit of the Horse*** [3rd] (7 - Strings): Mass greater magic fang. Honestly, even though it counts 1 round per creature affected, this is still amazing if you have a few mounts within your team and no druid to spam this on them. Don't have a pet? Then you can safely skip this.
- (1/5) **Stirring Discourse of the Mind** [2nd] (4 - Oratory): Bonus to research and identifying items. Prrrobably not worth it. If you wanted to be good at knowledge and spellcraft, just take Pageant of the Peacock instead. Gives you the same bonuses, lasts longer, and is more generally applicable.
- (2/5) **Stone Face** [3rd] (7 - Comedy or Oratory): It's stone to flesh! How often do you need to (or want to) turn stone to flesh? Not often enough to need this as a performance I hope.
- (5/5) **Symphony of the Ascent** [3rd] (7 - Percussion or Wind): Gain immunity to some really killer conditions. They may not come up much, but when someone throws out a hold person, it'll feel REARLLY GOOD to be able to say "hard pass" and just keep it moving. Can also being used for some weird spell shit but we will deal with that later.
- (5/5) **Symphony of the Dark Prince** [5th] (15 - Sing): So the ability doesn't really specify who the target is? Like it doesn't say one creature, all creatures, an item...so I'm just going to rate this as if you just cast reverse gravity. In that case, reverse gravity is

good, no save, fairly large area of gravitational nonsense. Can be very good at turning someone who can't inherently fly into a floating duck.

- (5/5) ☆[Symphony of the Elysian Heart](#)☆ [3rd] (7 - Keyboard or Wind): Freedom of movement as a performance is still freedom of movement which is really good. It effects you and one ally per bard level...which is a lot of allies and it doesn't even cost extra for that. This is amazing, yes you should probably have it.
- (3/5) [Tales of Twisting Steel](#) (Act or Oratory): Is this a neat spell? Yes. Is it on our spell list? No. Do we want this? Not really! We aren't a tank and we do not want to be damage sponging with the tank.
- (4/5) [The Bear's Jig](#) [4th] (11 - String or Wind): So its just the awaken spell um so i think you have to make a will save to get sir bearington. That said, pied piping some awakened animals can be super useful. Get a literal fly on the wall to help you out. Get the rats to dig up some dirt. Convince the tiger to fight its oppressors. Lots of fun that can be had here. The best part? Once you no longer need the informants, they literally go back to being dumb! It's the perfect crime! Also affected by lingering performance if you care.
- (4/5) [The Canticle of Joy](#) [3rd] (7 - Sing): Will save bestow curse at range is a very scary debuff. That really should be all I need to say.
- (1/5) [The Cat-Step](#) [2nd] (5 - Dance): Or Hear me out... just cast featherfall. Featherfall just seems like a better idea than this. Don't have it? Don't worry there are several ways to get it.
- (2/5) [The Dance of 23 Steps](#) [2nd] (4 - Dance): Dance of please do not hit me! It can be activated as a free action which is dope, and it only uses one round but it IS affected by performance duration extenders. So if you are making ranged attacks, and not so much casting spells, this can be a great way to get a good amount of dodge, especially if combined with combat expertise, but honestly, I'm not a huge fan when we could be getting ac from...Haste but better.
- (3/5) [The Dance of Kindled Desires](#) [2nd] (5 - Dance): Devil's deal. So this is basically Geas, taking advantage of their deepest desires. Now you can make them do something suicidal, and they get a will save (with a +2 if it takes more than an hour) but its a very fun version of suggestion if you can pull it off.
- (3/5) [The Depths of the Mountain](#) [5th] (15 - Percussion or Wind): Earthquake part 2, the shaking. Does er a lot of earthquake things with some extra boons. Basically only useful if you want to doom a town or make a fight hell and a handbasket, but this also doesn't distinguish between friend or foe.
- (1/5) [The Dumbshow of Gorroc](#) [2nd] (5 - Comedy or Act): So its a 10d6 reflex save...against plants or oozes. 5d6 against anything else. Nah.
- (3/5) [The House of the Imaginary Walls](#) [4th] (10 - Act): Mime wall! Will save or you fall for the oldest trick in the book, and you have a protective wall that even works on ghosts! Plus, so long as you use a 10 by 10 foot square, you can just...put it anywhere! Make a bridge! Make some steps IDK. It's a fun little mind puzzle that also can prevent people from getting to you but DOES not work on objects. Questionable on if it works on spells. Can be extended by lingering and others.

- (3/5) **The Lullaby of Ember the Ancient** [3rd] (7 - Sing): Okay for this one I think they DO get a save and its basically just deep slumber, but supernatural which is good but not amazing because of the HD limits
- (1/5) **The Quickening Pulse** [3rd] (7 - Percussion or Wind): 1d6 damage per turn is bad even without a save.
- (2/5) **The Requiem of the Fallen Priest-King** [3rd] (10 - Oratory or Sing): So you have to spend 1 minute and 5 performance rounds to be able to take 1 standard or move action as a swift action once with 10 minutes...or we could just wait and cast borrowed time. Not really worth it as a prebuff, even if its effect does seem cool.
- (5/5) ☆**The Rheumy Refrain**☆ [2nd] (5 - Sing): So this is a will save or lose against non-casters. Why? Because concentration checks are a d20+caster level+bonus spell casting stat...which non casters do not have. So they basically have to roll a d20 vs 10+ your charisma modifier...which should be a lot. AND THAT'S TO DO ANYTHING besides make a SINGLE MELEE ATTACK or move up to their movement speed and NOT BOTH. This isn't mind effecting, this isn't an illusion, its just a will save. That is a hilarious amount of lock down, and its pretty cheap. Consider this your slumber I guess, because if you don't get them turn one...well then just start the performance again and make them roll another save!!!!!! THIS IS DUMB.
- (3/5) **The Sea Is Now My Sky** [3rd] (10 - Sing or String): Gain a swim speed and bonus to swim checks. Uh...I mean when you need a swim speed this is great for you and your entire team but how often do you and your entire team need a swim speed?????
- (4/5) **The Tragedy of False Hope** [2nd] (4 - Oratory or Sing): Will save or become flat footed. This one happens to be mind effecting but that again just means you need to choose your targets well. Flat footed can be a REALLY strong ac debuff and also gets your friendly rogues and roguelikes sneak attack. Sandman bards, looking at you.
- (5/5) ☆**The Waning Bolero**☆ [4th] (10 - Dance): SLOW BUT BETTER. Slow is one of the best debuffs in the game, everyone who can see you within 60 feet takes the hit and EVERY ROUND they have to roll aNOTHER will save or it gets WORSE. Moreover, once they fail a save, things can't get better, only prevented from not getting worse for that one round. This is a hilariously powerful performance and god it probably shouldn't exist.
- (4/5) **The Winds of the Five Heavens** [4th] (10 - Act or Oratory): Spend 3 full round actions to get...well control winds. You basically have to long cast control winds...on the bright side...ITS CONTROL WINDS which is a TERRIFYING spell that can basically destroy a town if you let it. Not the best use in combat, but if you want it to be, its one HELL of an opener.
- (2/5) **Toccata and Fugue of the Danse Macabre** [2nd] (4 - Keyboard or Wind): Hide from undead! How often do you need to hide from undead? If often, i guess this is good, but if that's the case, you probably don't want to be playing a bard.
- (4/5) **Triple Time** [1st] (3 - Percussion, String, or Wind): Longstrider, but a performance! It lasts an hour which should be plenty of time to take advantage of, and when you need it again, its pretty darn cheap.

- (3/5) **Vindictive Soliloquy** [4th] (10 - Act, Oratory, or Sing): Another set up ability. Its a supernatural call lightning storm that uses sonic damage and you dont have to be outside to get the most out of it which is...actually fantastic. I'd love to rate it higher but that 5 round charge up is really holding it back.
- (3/5) **Wildsoul Aria** [4th] (7 - Sing or Wind): Again, baleful polymorph? Great and fun spell. Beast shape? Also pretty good even if we are getting it a bit late. Still costs way too many rounds to start up, making it much harder to use in combat or even out of combat sometimes.
- (4/5) **Wise King's Saga** [5th] (15 - Oratory or Sing): Gives you commune, nothing really complicated about that but this is pretty late in the game...and I can't help but remember that most improved familiars could also do this.

Spells & Spellcasting

Look Bards don't get a lot of spells but they get enough that they matter. Moreover, as I've said many times, bards have a particularly curated list that vibes with their class features in a way that I don't feel like a lot of spellcasters do...and they are spontaneous casters so...I'm going to review Bard Spells like I did with the Sorcerer.

☰ Aria of The Arcane: Iluzry's Guide To Bard Spellcasting



“Just came up with this one this morning. I call it...Topsy Turny Twist and Whirly! No? Well I thought it was clever.” ~ Brayne Argripp

Archetypes

Okay you all know me by now. I am not going to review every single bard archetype. I'm really not...but there are a LOT of bard archetypes. Even a LOT OF GOOD ONES. A lot of very very interesting ones. So if you find that this goes on for a long time...well...I said this was going to be a love letter.

Also time for Iluzry's Hot Take for this guide: You can live without most if not all of the base bardic performances. Why? Because Bardic Masterpieces are just as good if not better, readily available, and use the same resources which means we can always get back what we lost as far as options are concerned. YES EVEN INSPIRE COURAGE CAN BE REPLACED. Because of that, I am not going to rate the loss of bardic performances as a huge problem...hell i might just stop rating them all together so long as you have access to bardic masterpieces, and some bard performance rounds.

All Bard Archetype Review: [☰ Bard](#)

(3/5) Arcane Duelist [Ro Ro Fight Da Powa]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Arcane Strike: Hey free battle feat!● Rallying Cry: Outfear your opponents. Probably not going to happen often but when it does you'll love it.● Bladethirst: Okay enhancement performance! We can work with this!!!! Buff yourself at the speed of magic weapons! Also stacks with our current bonuses, which is FUEGO● Mass Bloodthirst: This is very late game and hard to do, but again, is mass and stacks with current upgrades. Plus at this level, it comes out very fast.● Bonus Feats: All anticaster but...well they aren't the ones I'd really be going for, the good ones really don't come until level 14. Definitely would prefer Verstaile Performance● Arcane Bond: HEY this is actually pretty cool! It lets you upgrade the weapon as if you had all the necessary crafting feats and you cna use it for somatic components! WOOO!!!! MORE FIGHT!!!!● Arcane Armor: Oh hey getting better armor and getting to cast in armor is really fun. Takes a bit too long for my	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bardic Knowledge: Yotch. Look we dont NEED this but it definitely help rounded out that skill that we have.● Countersong: Take it! We probably weren't gonna use it much.● Suggestion: Don't worry, we can just pick up the spell.● Mass Suggestion: Ditto.● Versatile Performance: AHHHH this one actually does hurt because its a hit to our versatility AND our power via bardic masterpieces. This is less than ideal.● Well Versed: TAKE IT.● Jack of All Trades: Eh we'll live. We lost all of our other skill things so it only makes sense.

liking but we love this!	
<p>Overview: Contrary to its name, you don't actually have to have a duelist for this archetype. It doesn't make you a monster but long story short, you trade your hyper skills for more combat efficiency! I wish this gave us more weapon proficiencies, but overall, if you want to be a mighty bard? Here is a solid mighty bard option that doesn't lose you anything major.</p>	

(3.5/5) **Archaeologist** [Indiana Fucking Jones]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Archaeologist's Luck: Extraordinary luck bonus! It starts as a swift action, applies to basically everything you care about and technically counts as a bardic performance. Only shame is that its rounds per day don't scale, so you NEED Lingering performance to function. ● Clever Explorer: Aye bonus to perception checks and Disable device!! Woo! ● Uncanny Dodge: Can't be flanked. Not bad but not amazing. ● Trap Sense: I find this meh but if you have lots of traps, this is good. ● Rogue Talent: A lot of useful options if you are willing to look, and since we get the class feature, we can even pick up extra! ● Evasion: YAY DODGING ● Advanced Talent: Like rogue talents, but advanced! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bardic Performance: So don't slaughter me on this but i think this is...okay. We only need one or two good group performances and because bardic masterpieces exist (specifically Blazing Rondo) I don't really see it as a huge loss. Plenty of ways to make up for duration too, since our luck rounds COUNT as performance rounds. ● Versatile Performance: AHHHH this one actually does hurt because its a hit to our versatility AND our power via bardic masterpieces. This is less than ideal. ● Well Versed: TAKE IT.
<p>Overview: Do you want to have the benefits of a bard's cleverness and wit with none of the silly instruments and singing? This is the bard for you. It basically trades your bardic performances for rogue talents...which would be awful...if we didn't have access to bardic masterpieces which are amazing. No scaling rounds? That's fine, just take lingering performance and extra performance. Really the only major loss is versatile performance..and as much i hate that it isnt enough to really keep us down. And rogue talents can really help with that! Ki Pool -> Ninja Trick -> Forgotten Trick/Vanish anyone?</p>	

(4/5) **Brazen Deceiver** [Pants On Fire]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Deceptive Tale: Makes you EVEN BETTER at lying. Normally I wouldn't rate this highly but...well you will be expected to lie very often.● Shameless Scoundrel: Be a better charlatan! Makes you a better problem.● Blatant Subtly: Oh hey this is a free feat that we like and is useful! Woo!● Invoke the Blood: Yay more spells! Yay actually really good spells! Goddess of shadow bless us!● Devil's Tongue: HEY TAKING TEN ON BLUFF IS ACTUALLY REALLY NICE! Also getting a once a day nat 20 to fuck with people is GODLY.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Countersong: Probably not too much of a loss● Distraction: Wasn't really going to use it much anyway.● Bardic Knowledge: You aren't a nerd, you are a liar so this is...well what it needs to be.● Well Versed: TAKE IT.● Versatile Performance: So this is actually one of the few times I am actually okay with losing versatile performance because you trade it for...useful spells. Like really good spells!● Loremaster: Again, we aren't a knowing person so we will live and honestly, bluff needs consistency more than knowledge does.
<p>Overview: Hey you think being a nerd is lame and you wanna be a FUCKING LIAR? A DARN DIRTY CHARLATAN? A DREADFUL SCOUNDREL? Well this is how you become a god of lies and honestly its really good. You don't really lose anything that you'd need and you get everything you need to be the king of lies. Not to mention you get access to some REALLY powerful spells in the shadow conjuration and evocation lines that expand you versatility massively.</p>	

(4/5) **Chelish Diva** [I'ma-I'ma Diva]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Famous: Same issue as I have with favored terrain. Bonus are fine but entirely not in your control.● Prima Donna: Hey, spend extra rounds to boost the DC on your scary abilities! Most of these are save or lose, so getting them closer to lose is great:● Costume Proficiency: So this is actually amazing! Getting medium armor proficiency at 5 and HEAVY armor proficiency at 11 for bard spells is wild and will see you being...a surprisingly tanky combatant?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bardic Knowledge: This one hurts because you don't really get something good to replace it and it's a really good thing to have.● Well Versed: TAKE IT.● Loremaster: We already lost bardic knowledge and guess what? We get ARMOR proficiencies that we can cast in. That's pretty damn good.● Inspire Competence: Er this trade isn't so great. I'd prefer the skill bonus.● Dirge of Doom: So it basically gets replaced by a more powerful and direct

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Devastating Aria: Doesn't really help much but hey doesn't hurt to have a blast. Pretty awful damage tho. ● Scathing Tirade: YIKES! No save frighten is REALLY powerful and so long as someone CAN be feared, this basically lets you temporarily remove people from fights. 	<p>version of it so I think this is honestly fine.</p>
<p>Overview: Petition to get this renamed "Warlord" because wowiee momma does not do it justice. Armor proficiencies? No save frighten that lasts AFTER you stop using it? DC boosts? Moreover you only really lose your knowledge skills and inspire competence! Which we can live without!!!! This is another great bard alternative if you don't want to be a nerd, but instead just want more rounded adventuring abilities in general.</p>	

(4.5/5) **Court Bard** [Vicious Mockery]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Satire (Su): No confidence! Seriously though having a wide range, no save penalty to attack damage and saves Debuff is really good. This can make you a MONSTER enchanter, warping the mind with bad jokes. ● Mockery (Su): Inspire incompetence! Make people worse at talking. Don't think that's very worth it. ● Glorious Epic (Su): Will save or flat footed!!! This can set up all your fighters, and rip up your enemies defenses. Shame that its mind effecting and language dependent. ● Scandal (Su): THIS IS DANGEROUS. Song of Discord is really scary because if someone gets affected and rolls bad, they HAVE to use the most VICIOUS option at their disposal to fuck up their own guys. ● Heraldic Expertise (Ex): Getting to reroll abilities is amazing, and definitely helpful for roasting ● Wide Audience (Su): Better control of your performance AOE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bardic Performance: So we lose inspire courage which isn't the most fun but you get something definitely worth in its place! Same with dirge of doom really. I think its a more or less even trade out. ● Bardic Knowledge: You aren't a nerd, you are a politician so this is...well what it needs to be. ● Loresmaster: We already traded away our other nerd powers and getting better control of your performances is dope ● Jack of All Trades: Again, weee will live.
<p>Overview: Debuff bard is good at debuff! Sure you may lose a few things but they can be replaced and they are still pretty pretty great at what they do. DEFINITELY take the Ancient</p>	

[Draconic](#) feat to get past the language dependent restriction.

(5/5) [Dawnflower Dervish](#) [DANCE FUCKER DANCE-]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Weapon Proficiencies: Trade Rapier and Whip for Scimitar. Honestly for this class? Easiest trade of your life.● Battle Dance: You get inspire courage, inspire Heroics, and Inspire greatness as battle dances, which means the bonuses are DOUBLED but you can no longer share them. You also can't use lingering performance with them but that is fine! Really, this can get TERRIFYINGLY POWERFUL and really have you rip people to shreds if you build for it. Moreover, all your other performances work th*e same as normal! No loss!!● Dervish Dance: Get dervish dance as a bonus feat. Yeah just that easy. The feat that goes with our scimitar comes for free. Woo!● Spinning Spellcaster: Get a bonus to casting defensively. I mean...this is good I think when you are trying to avoid losing a spell, and you have some really good buffs.● Meditative Whirl: Dance Dance Quicken spell! Using a move action and a swift you can cast a quicken spel. Now this is good if you are trying to spell combo someone to death, no so much for ful attack buffing. That said...its quickened spell. It's good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● No Buffs For Team: I mean technically you can still get bardic masterpieces to buff your team if you need and you get double bonuses for yourself so...eh?● Lore Master: They really don't want us to be good at this stuff.● Dirge of Doom: WE WILL LIVE.
<p>Overview: So this is honestly one of the best selfish melee bard archetypes because you lose very little for some VERY potent boosts to your numbers. Sure you don't have as many attacks as others, but you have plenty of spells to make up for that, and this archetype can have you putting out insane damage, and gives you a free dex to damage feat for your troubles!!!! You don't even lose that much! You wanna be a fight bard? Here is how you can be a fight bard!!!</p>	

(4/5) [Dervish Dancer](#) [Dance 2 Electric Boogaloo]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Weapon Proficiencies: Trade rapier and whip for kukri and scimitar. Seems like a fair trade to me!● Battle Dance: Hey wait didn't we already see this? Well sorta. This one is different in a few ways. One, it doesnt double your bonuses. Two, it doesn't replace or alter bardic performance, instead being a separate feature you gain...meaning that you keep any performances that aren't explicitly replaced.● Rain of Blows: Oh its haste but better but only on yourself. OH and since its a battle dance, all of those buffs? Yeah can be affected by Master performer. And grandmaster performer...WHAT THE FUCK. THIS IS AMAZING. For anyone!● Razors Kiss: Hey if you dont have a keen weapon, this is your KEEN DANCE.● Leaf on The Wind: Basically fighting super defensively. You get a huge bonus to ac and reflex saves, on top of a fairly impressive heal considering it just costs you a round of battle dance, but its not something you wanna keep up indefinitely.● Fleet: PASSIVE MOVEMENT BUFF!! WOOO WE LOVE GOING FASTER. Sure its an enhancement bonus so it doesn't stack with rain of blows, but that's honestly okay.● Versatile Dance: Bonus to perform dance and it can be used for acrobatics.● Dance of Fury: OH HEY. POUNCE but with dancing!! Sure it may provoke a lot of AoO's but by now we should be able to get around those easily!● Battle Fury: I think this is just Greater Bladed dash but ya know it has its uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bardic Knowledge and Loremaster: This is a fight archetype not a nerd archetype so this is whatever.● Versatile Performance: OUCH god damnit stop trading this away for things! WE LIKE THIS! AGH! Anyway i guess we'll live...but we won't be happy!● All of our Offensive Performances: Not..ideal but its okay? We can take masterpieces for most of these. Still...we liked those debuffs.● Soothing Performance: Pretty fair trade all things considered.
<p>Overview: So without having the double bonuses, the selfish playstyle isn't nearly as appealing. That said...you don't really HAVE to play like that. If you want to play selfish you</p>	

can play selfish and if you want to party buff you can party buff. I won't say its the strongest archetype but what it does give you is pretty good.

(5/5) **Dirge Bard** [Danse Macabre]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dance of the Dead: So long as you play, your little horde animates. IT cost no components and you can do it whenever, but can only animate each body once. Still its a dope image and great for the necrodancers in all of us. Can't wait to hit abuela with the suavemente and see her get back to groovin. ● Haunted Eyes: +4 saves against fear, energy drain, death effects, and necromantic effects. Actually uh...we will use these! Huh! Great! ● Secrets of the Grave: Okay bonus to knowledge religion to identify undead, THE ABILITY TO USE OUR MANY MIND AFFECTING SPELLS AGAINST UNDEAD, and necromancy spells from ANY arcane caster list...(including some fun archetypes. Yeah this is fucking nice. ● Haunting Refrain: Oh hey an automatic penalty to all fear based saves and you can use perform instead of intimidate. Very fun. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jack of All Trades: We'll live. ● Well Versed: Easiest trade of our life. ● Versatile Performance: This still smarts but you trade it for the ability to affect undead with mind affecting spells AND extra necromancy spells...which is actually really really really good as a trade. ● Loremaster: We'll live.

Overview: So you're telling me i lose 0 performances, gain a really cool one, get a better well versed, get the ability to affect undead with our mind affecting spells which is a MAJOR issue for bards considering how common undead can be and how many of our best spells are mind affecting, and give people a natural penalty to saves...effectively just for jack of all trades and versatile performance. So we can still be an amazing base bard and then get all of this? AND WE GET EXTRA SPELLS? One of the best archetypes, no question.

(?/5) Dragon Herald (Kobold Ony) [Diplomacy]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dragon Patron: Basically you get a special place to worship your pactmate and a dragon and element associated based on...oh the draconic bloodlines? You mean the ones with expanded bloodlines that are crazy? OKAY WHATEVER YOU SAY BOSS. ● Coat of Arms: Energy resistance equal to class level again patron energy. It's nothing amazing but it can help in a pinch. ● Dragon Voice: Bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidate. Considering what we will be doing, we need this. ● Diplomatic Immunity: Scaling Sanctuary is actually a really fun ability if you are willing to abuse it, because so long as you dont use any attack spells...OH WOULDNT YOU KNOW IT? THE BARD HAS BUNCHES OF NOT ATTACK SPELLS. ● Diplomatic Protection: Can I say that I'm loving these names? Anyway you give an ally double your level in energy resistance AND half your level as a BONUS to your natural armor, like barkskin. Not bad at all. Best if you choose your element correctly. ● Rebuke Foes: Reflex Save Half just flat twice your damage do a small number of enemies. If you picked your damage type right, this can be potent, especially given how consistent it is but I wouldn't rely on it. ● Retreat to Lair: Get a nice return ability. Since its a full round action, it can be used in combat which is nice but by now SOMEONE should have greater teleport. ● Master of Persuasion: Taking 10 on diplomacy and intimidate is a very good ability and getting to change someone's attitude as a full round action means that if you roll well enough, you might just end combat full stop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weapon Proficiencies: So we didn't have a lot to begin with, so losing these isn't what we like. ● Bardic Knowledge: Ya know we didn't need this but we still liked it, especially since knowing things is good for negotiations ● Lore Master: Eh we get a good replacement ● Jack of All Trades: Again we get a helpful replacement ● Bardic Performances: Most of the performances we lose actually aren't that important and could probably be ignored in the long run.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extol Glory: OHHH this is actually really really good as it lets you bypass language dependent abilities. 	
<p>Overview: So this one is a bit controversial for me because of the nature of the skill diplomacy. You see, this is all well and good for a diplomancer build but diplomacy in general is only as good as your DM allows it to be. So this can range from being pretty meh because your DM doesn't think you can convince anyone to put down their weapons once they've started fighting, or busted as you talk-no-jutsu the BBEG out of genocide.</p>	

(5/5) **Dwarven Scholar** [Team Fight Tactics]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weapon Proficiencies: WOO more weapons we love them. Only the Dwarven ones but its okay. ● Studied Insight: Wisdom casting and performances! Yeah wild I know but this does in fact give you wisdom based arcane spells!!! ● Dwarven Combat: Trade your versatile performance for combat feats. This is actually incredibly helpful for people doing more feat intensive builds, like ranged players. ● War Chant: So all allies gain one of the combat feats you know! Why is it important that it just says combat feats? Well there are actually a lot of pretty good combat teamwork feats, that wouldn't be useful before, that are now super mega useful, and you get bonus feats to make up for it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bardic Performances: Okay let's shoot the elephant in the room. You lose inspire courage. Tragic I know, its a huge buff and we all love it...but you can use teamwork feats to provide similar bonuses. Or perhaps, just pick up a bardic masterpiece that also provides a powerful wide range buff, like blazing rondo. What I'm trying to say is...we'll live. ● Versatile Performance: This one also hurts a lot but at least we are getting feats as replacements.
<p>Overview: Important note...you don't have to be a dwarf to play this. And honestly you should play it if you plan on being a combat focused bard! Sure, you still don't get medium armor, but you also don't lose that much. Yes I know you lose versatile performance and inspire courage, but you can replace the latter, and the former gets replaced with feats which is good so...honestly I think this is a great archetype for anyone who wants to do a more feat intensive build and also wants to play around with teamwork.</p>	

(5/5) [Duettist](#) [MY HARPS IN STEREO]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Familiar: So the core of this ENTIRE archetype is around your familiar, and familiars are STRONG. Like really strong...and your familiar is about to be a beast.● Versatile Familiar: Your familiar gets all of your skills and also gets to benefit from your versatile performance!!!! Based on the wording, it also can get access to masterpieces since it gets the whole class feature...but I'll leave that alone. At the very least, your skill monkey will become even MORE skilled.● Performing Familiar: So at first this doesn't look great but this can be an action economy boost...plus your familiar can probably fly around. Hell if you consider masterpieces performances, this can single handedly improve a lot of them just by giving you better action economy. Yeah great ability.● Harmonizing Familiar: So this is expensive BUT greater performance is super dope● Symphonic Familiar: EVEN MORE PERFORMANCES SO MANY PERFORMANCES LOOK AT ALL OF THESE PERFORMANCES WOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Well Versed: Take it!● Bardic Knowledge: You are no longer going to be the best at knowledges● Jack of All Trades: You are no longer going to be the best at knowledges● Loremaster: You are no longer going to be the best at knowledges● Bardic Performances: So we loose dirge of doom and frightening tune but we trade that for greater performance and doubled performance. With all of the ways bards have to get out of paying their performance cost? Easy.
<p>Overview: Look, getting a familiar with no limitations on its own is very silly, getting a familiar with versatile performance and eventually its own performances along with yours? Ridiculous. IF you wanna know how busted familiars are, here you go, I wrote you a guide for it.</p> <p>Point is, this archetype is way stronger than it looks. Familiars have a lot of tricks, the things you give up are well worth it, and this gets you better performances, double performances, and other people to handle bad action economy for you...all of which we love. So yeah. Take it.</p>	

(4/5) [Filidh](#) [Song of Seasons]

What you gain	What you lose
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- **Natural Magic:** You are now a divine caster! Woo, that's huge! You now no longer take arcane spell penalties for wearing armor (meaning we can get a lot crazier) and can use instruments as a divine focus! This is all around really cool.
- **Echoes of Nature's Song:** Reflex and AC bonus. This is helpful, though we prefer offense.
- **Divinatory Song:** Knowing things is useful!!! Knowing things early is even more useful!
- **Voices of Life:** Everyone gets to speak with animals and plants. Unless your game happens in a barren wasteland, you can probably find a use for this, because again, knowing things is useful...and the trees are always listening.
- **Unity of Life:** Shield other allies! This can be useful to give the squishies more tank by linking them to well...the tank, but its also pretty late and we probably have other performances to do.
- **Song of the Cycle:** Still no idea how this spells is meant to work. Can either be broken or lame depending on whether or not your DM gives you the spidey sense.

- **Armor Proficiencies:** You can only use non-metal armor and wooden shields! This isn't like the best but it doesn't change much especially since we can get away with heavier armor now. Thanks divine casting.
- **Bardic Performances:** Alright we lose inspire courage, suggestion, dirge of doom, inspire heroics, and Deadly performance. Of them, mainly inspire heroics, courage, and dirge of doom will be missed. Still, again we can replace them.

Overview: Divine casting bard! Very naturely based concept. Now we lose a lot of performances...but nothing really else, which is important because we get to keep our knowledge, and versatile performance, which can help us make up for what we've lost! Remember, you can trade out versatile performance for bardic masterpieces at level 6 and beyond!!! And divine casting means that even if we aren't proficient, we can get away with wearing much heavier armor, increasing our defenses substantially.

(3.5/5) **First World Minstrel** [Touch of the Wylds]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wild Empathy: Eeehh this is sorta like...meh? Its always meh. Sure you have great diplomacy but I dunno how often do you wanna use this? ● Echoes of the First World: Holy fuck its been a while since we've seen an insanely good ability. Getting to choose between giving a target SR, Energy resistance, and Teleportation is amazing on its own, and even if the amount of people is limited, it can be a SERIOUS boost from level 1. No joke, this is a wild ability. ● Gremlin's Luck: So this would be an amazing ability...if it lasted for more than one round or didnt get your target auto immunity on a save. Now its barely usable, but when it works its horrifying...when it works. ● Resist Nature's Lure: EEEH this is just aas bad as well versed really. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Summon Monster: Get's replaced with summon nature's ally which is not...abysmal but it is worst. ● Bardic Performances: Honestly inspire courage got traded out for what I feel is a way cooler ability, but i am hurt about losing dirge of doom. ● Bardic Knowledge: I'd take bardic knowledge over wild empathy any day. ● Well Versed: usually trading this out for anything is amazing but honestly what we get is just about as bad so..its whatever?
<p>Overview: Make no mistake...if you are taking this archetype you are taking it for echoes of the First world. Everything else is basically a nerf or equivalent. That said, you don't lose versatile performance, and Echoes of the First World is so good that it just barely pulls this archetype out of mediocre by sheer force of will.</p>	

(3/5) **Flame Dancer** [Firefighter Calendar]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fire Dance: Aint heat performance. Thats about it! Are you being affected by a fire effect? New save! ● Song of Fiery Gaze: HEY Seeing through fog and smoke is REALLY GOOD because now you can cast cloud spells all day long and your team will be fine while your enemies will be lost as fuck! Shame you don't get obscuring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bardic Performances: We lose mainly a much of bardic performances we dont care about until we get to dirge of doom, but we trade that for fireball.

<p>mists at base...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Firebreak: Give everyone fire resistance! Considering its a very common damage type, and this is very wide, this is actually pretty dope. ● Fan The Flames: Oh yay extra spells. Extra spells that are actually pretty good! 	
<p>Overview: Do you want to be the Firefighter Bard? Here's how you do it! I'd rate it higher if you got more mist spells, because being able to take advantage of the Song of Fiery Gaze. That said, if you are in a fire heavy campaign, this will put out ALL of the fires. If you don't find yourself around much fighter or smoke? Err less good. You don't lose too many things but I dunno, it doesn't seem too crazy either.</p>	

(3/5) **Juggler** [Clowning Around]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weapon Proficiencies: Ayye getting all martial thrown weapons is a nice pick up! ● Fast Reactions: Well getting a non action once per round no to a ranged attack is pretty nice! ● Combat Juggling: Aye combat juggling is wild. So long you are juggling less than three objects, you have a free hand for somatic components! Do you want to be a dual wielding spell caster? This is a fun way of doing it. ● Evasion: We love evasion always. Improved evasion is even better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Versatile Performance: AGH stop taking this form us already! ● Bardic Knowledge and Loremaster: Well I guess we trade our smarts for juggling skill. ● Well Versed: Probably can live without this. ● Soothing Performance: Sort of a loss but for improved evasion, its even better.
<p>Overview: Probably better as a dip than anything. Not to say its a bad archetype. You only really lose versatile performance and bardic knowledge as far as sad losses go, but it also doesn't really get us something that I think many bards NEED which matters. That said, other people can get a lot more use out of this, like gunslingers who want to reload weird or crazy magus strats.</p>	

(5/5) **Mute Musician** [Sound of Silence]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Eschew Materials: Not really that important, especially if you have a component pouch.● Symphony of Silence: Greater Well Versed. Still not great or super common.● Maddening Harmonics: Will save or confusion for the duration of the performance! That is supernatural and technically not mind effecting!!! Against anyone YOU CHOOSE within 30ft. AMAZING.● Ceaseless Performance: The show must go on! It is IMPOSSIBLE to stop a performance once it has started. Damn this is almost a capstone!!!! Even if you die, the song continues!● Song of the Conjunction: Get intraplanar Gate teleportation. That's...really cool! Sure its not the full might of Gate, but its still a great teleportation gimmick.● Insights From The Beyond: YOOOO sorcerer spells? Look even if they are just some conjuration and abjuration spells, that opens up A LOT of great spell options for us!● Dulled Horror: Bonus on saves against fear, insanity, confusion or anything from an aberration. Better than well versed!● Eldritch Caesura: You can now use sonic spells and bardic performance in places were sound doesnt exist, and even hit creatures that are on other planes! Silence means nothing to your jams!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● You are Mute: You cannot speak and any language dependent abilities need you to get telepathy or some other way around it. You can still do your bardic performances and spells with your instruments tho!● Bardic Knowledge: Would take this over eschew materials any day.● Versatile Performance: We trade it for good spells from the sorcerer wizard list. For once, its a really good trade.● Bardic Performances: We can live without inspire competence, frightening tune basicall gets an upgrade, Inspire heroics DEFINITELY gets a trade up and so does mass suggestion.
<p>Overview: Look the extra spells would have been enough to make this great, but so long as you have a good instrument, and maybe a way to get telepathy easier, this archetype RULES! Bonus spells! Hardcore confusion! UNENDING PERFORMANCE! Ignoring silence! You might be mute but nothing can end your infinite jams! Wins all around!</p>	

(3.5/5) **Ringleader (UI)** [All Apart of Keikaku]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Improved Inspire Competence: Can affect two skills instead of just one and then three. Later on you can even take 10 on the skills. Works best with Inspired Mentor and Omnipresent mentor feats.● Inspired Plan: You can basically set up your performances in advance. Basically you spend rounds of performance on a person to basically set a performance on them for later, which they can activate with a standard action. It doesn't affect anyone else and has no displays once they activate it, and has doubled duration if it would have affected others. Best for well...when coming up with crazy non-combat plans that cant have you just playing your guitar in front of everyone.● Hidden Plans: +4 against saves to tell the truth or read minds. Not actually that common so...still sorta meh.● Prepared: Alright here is a wild one. Once per day, you can attempt a knowledge check appropriate to the situation, and purchase an item with a cost equal to or below that check. Why is this important? Because there are a lot of fairly cheap items that can have some fun uses and remember, it's ONLY limitation is the cost. Sure its not a lot of money, but you'd surprise how far 25 gp can get you if you are clever enough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bardic Performances: Well we lose dirge of doom and frightening tune which is kinda sad.● Versatile Performance: Seriously stop taking this why do you keep taking this!● Well Versed: usually trading this out for anything is amazing but honestly what we get is just about as bad so..its whatever?● Loremaster: Eh I think what you get in exchange is way cooler.
<p>Overview: So this archetype requires a creative mind to take full advantage of. It's great for blades-in-the-dark-esque heist scenarios where everyone has their own task and mission and also pretty cool for intrigue for that reason! Not a bad pick up by any means but nothing about it really strikes me as amazing besides the fun prepared ability.</p>	

(3/5) Sandman Bard [Spellswiper no Swiping!]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Spell Steal: So standard action touch attack will save OR you steal a spell that you know they have and add it to your spells known, or steal a random one! As the game goes further and further, more creatures will have spells, but often as spell-like abilities. That said, this isn't limited by list and its a good way of tormenting the wizard if you can.● Slumber Song: Actually better than suggestion because it basically stops fights before they happen! Fascinate a person to catch them unawares and then lullaby them out of action! With no HD limit!!!!● Dramatic Subtext: You could do all this...or just take spellsong and do it better and faster!● Greater Spellsteal: So this is really late but getting the ability to look into someone's spell list and take their best options is always really funny.● Mass Slumbersong: Hey taking out multiple people is just faster. Still no HD limit so that's great.● Spell-Catching: So this can be incredibly powerful especially because it also applies to spell like abilities. And lets face it, everyone would want to be able to say NO YOU. Pretty dope performance!● Master of Deception: Trapfinding and skill bonuses to sneaky shit. Dope!● Sneak Spell: Now THIS is good. Boost to DCs and caster level against spell resistance? Oh baby we love this.● Trap Sense: Again, not as much use as it probably needs.● Sneak Attack: Its slower scaling sneak attack. Still, we can make it work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bardic Performances: We lose A LOT of performances. All of the inspires are gone along with the suggestions and deadly performance. NOW suggestions and deadly performance both got really good trade offs. The inspires...well that depends on how much use you get out of stealing those spells instead of just giving people bonuses. Big versatility loss, and even harder to get back without versatile performance.● Bardic Knowledge: This one was a fair trade but its still sad to see it go, especially when we have to know who has what spells.● Versatile Performance: Seriously stop taking this why do you keep taking this!● Loremaster: Traded for sneak attack which I kinda wish was an option on the base bard.
<p>Overview: So this basically changes your whole bard from a buffer to a sneaky spell assassin. Its basically trying to be a clone of the spellthief from 3.5, but honestly I don't think it captures the power nearly as well. That said, if you are in a highly caster focused campaign</p>	

this will give you a serious leg up. OH and don't forget to take a level of [Vivisectionist Alchemist](#) to get full sneak attack progression after level 5. It's very very worth it.

(4/5) [Sound Striker](#) [*Heavy Metal Noises*]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wordstrike: It's real bad, basically never use this. ● Weird Words: Actually pretty good! As a standard action, spend 1 round of bardic performance to send a touch attack sonic blast at a target that does 4d6+charisma damage. You can send 1 more for every 4 levels, though it costs another round of performance. IT's SU so no spell resistance, and sonic is very rarely resisted in the first place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inspire Competence and Suggestion: OH hey, two performances we can totally go without! Score!
<p>Overview: Hey wanna give your bard a solid offense option but don't really want to do any weapons? Just want to hit people with nasty riffs? Well wonderful, take the Sound striker, and basically just trade two performances for the ability to spend performance to do sonic blasts! Not super complicated, doesn't need a lot to work, but its pretty consistent when you just...wanna do some extra damage!</p>	

(3/5) [Speaker of the Palatine Eye](#) [Psychedelic~]

What you gain	What you lose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Angelic Grace: Learn Celestial. Woo? ● Psychic Spells: So this should be an amazing thing right? Since we get to cast from the mesermist list. BUT that means we lose all of our neat bard specific spells...like shadowbard. Ouch. ● Corpse Speaker: Corpse...ventriloquist...why? ● Keen Ritualist: Rituals are wild and honestly you first have to have your DM to let you mess with it and its...crazy. But this helps? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Skills: We lose acrobatics and escape artist which is...not the best? ● Countersong: Weee can live without this really. ● Jack of All Trades: Eh depends on how you feel about it.
<p>Overview: You are here for psychic magic. Losing the bard spell list isn't ideal but if you want to be a mind bard? This is how you mind bard.</p>	

Multiclassing

So like most classes, multiclassing with bard is difficult. That said, there are two things that need every bard level that they can get: Bardic Performance and your 0-6 spellcasting. Everything that we choose has to measure against getting lower DC's, few masterpieces, and fewer performances, to the point that more than a level or two probably isn't worth it, because no other class can progress both. That said...one level or two should still be safe, and sometimes you can get A LOT out of that.

- **(5/5) Oracle [1 Lv Dip]**
 - We all know that oracle revelations are amazing, but for the bard? They are FANTASTIC. Curses can give you more spells known (if they are already on your list) or neat buffs and scale with half level. Even level 1 revelations can be HILAROUSLY powerful.
 - Lore Mystery loves you, both thematically and mechanically with Sidestep Secret, giving you charisma to AC (which we kinda need) or Lorekeeper, that lets you use your charisma for all of your knowledge checks instead of INT!
- **(5/5) Swashbuckler [1 Lv Dip]**
 - Trying to be a fighty bard but don't want to have to spend too much on feats? BOOM here you go. Panache fits our style, with being charming daring dancers, we get good proficiencies AND free weapon finesse! Woo!!! What more could you ask for?
- **(5/5) Medium [1 Lv Dip] (w/ Legendary Influence)**
 - Versatility! You get a bunch of weak abilities but each ability is a bit more helpful than the last. Moreover, with the legendary influences feat, you can use it as it means you can have a few feats assigned to spirits to let you switch up your build!
 - Special consideration goes to Spirit Focus on the Champion spirit, letting you get a +2 to attack and +3 to damage, which is STELLAR.
 - If you wanna get REAL crazy, the Wendo Caller gives you domains. So many options, so little time!
- **(4/5) Paladin [2 Lv Dip]**
 - YOOO DIVINE GRACE. CHARISMA TO ALL SAVES!!! You also get a little bit of smite for your troubles. Also good weapon proficiencies!
- **(4/5) Antipaladin [2-3 Lv Dip]**
 - Bards can be surprisingly dangerous with fear builds. Honestly? An Antipaladin 3/ Court Bard X might be an absolutely fear demon and I would not like to meet them in a fight. They'd straight up walk to me, call me an idiot and have me running for my life.
- **(3/5) Omdura [1 Lv Dip]**
 - Baby buffs that stacks with your bardic performances!
- **(3/5) Vigilante [1 Lv Dip]**
 - Social talents are dope and getting a hidden form can be really cool for a mysterious performer type character.

- **(4/5) Bloodrager (w/ Mad Magic) [1 Lv Dip]**
 - Morale bonus to Strength and Con and weapon proficiencies! Bonuses still stack and bards are masters of manipulating morale! Just make sure you pick up Mad Magic.

Variant Multiclassing (VMC)

So surprisingly, bards actually have a lot of feats they can benefit from...like a lot. Moreover, you can trade out feats for bardic masterpieces, which are also amazing. This means that anything short of amazing super godly is probably not worth it for the bard, because even if its good, is it better than picking up 5 masterpieces or wild other feats.

Note: Remember, that a VMC is a secondary class, meaning that while you gain their class features you do NOT count as having levels in that class for anything but what is described in the VMC.

Guides to VMC's in general

- ☰ [The ABC's of VMC \(Variant Multiclassing\)](#)
- ☰ [Amateur Night - A Guide to Variant Multiclassing](#)

- **(5/5) Cavalier**
 - AYYYYEE. Getting tactician, A Damage Boost, and a potential accuracy boost? With great abilities?
 - Orders worth noting are [Order of the Asp](#), which can give huge benefits to targets that you've debuffed, [Order of the Songbird](#), which can get you versatile performance, and [Order of the Dragon](#), because its just great for team play! AN **EXTRA SPECIAL MENTION GOES TO ☆ORDER OF THE BLOSSOM☆** which gives enemies penalty to SAVES and a bunch of neat spells, and sneak attack! Seriously, any bard would love this.
- **(4/5) Wizard**
 - Fully leveled school powers!!! Familiars!!! ARCANE DISCOVERIES!!! Sure the cantrip isn't useful but its very rare that we get an ability that is ACTUALLY good around level 15, and guess what? These are actually good!
- **(3/5) Magus**
 - Spell Fight!! Do you want to use spell and fight? This is the spell fight powers. Arcane pool is really good, magus arcana are amazing, if you have the right spells, spellstrike can be terrifying and really thats all you gotta know to know that this class is really good. That said, still a lot of feats.

Prestige Classes

HEEYY like i probably mentioned before that you have two main class features that need to scale: **Bardic Performance and Spells**. Now, multiclassing can't scale this, prestige classes CAN. And if you can scale both then you can actually get A LOT out of a prestige class, especially since most of the later performances aren't amazing. So when we look at prestige classes we will be looking for something that can scale our performances AND our spells and anything that doesn't scale both had better do something amazing.

- **(5/5) Evangelist**
 - Lose one level to progress everything you had before along with the amazing boons of the evangelist. It's very very good! I suggest becoming a disciple of Kazutal for some neat tricks.
 - You wanna know how to break this? Allerseelen has you covered [☰ On Bended Knee: A Guide to Pathfinder's Obedience Feats](#) . Trust me, its worth the read.
- **(5/5) Sphere Singer**
 - NOW WE ARE TALKING! Starsong rounds and bardic performance rounds stack, and while your bonuses may not get higher, the new performances are MONSTOROUS. Find the path??? Overland flight? Advantage once a round? This shit is insane! AND it progresses versatile performance. AND AT THE END YOU BECOME A MAGICAL FEY BUTTERFLY???? ABSOFUCKINGLUTELY WE WANT THIS.
- **(4/5) Argent Dramaturge**
 - Similar to one above but mainly for devil/outsider fighting. Great for keeping them locked down in one way or another, or just banishing from whence they came, so if you are going for a Tenacious D vibe, there ya go.
- **(4.5/5) Dawnflower Anchorite**
 - Hey you only lose one level of spellcasting, that you can get back with prestigious spellcaster, and can progress bardic performance with the Focused Class Feature. It also gives you a new mini inspire courage, which you can stack your other performances, which also gives bonuses to DC's against evil creatures! Woo!
- **(5/5) Sublime Chord (3.5)**
 - So I rarely if ever talk about 3.5 content. For good reason: its basically 3rd party and i try to keep my guides focused on first party content. That said, pathfinder did start out as a variant of 3.5, and I'd be a fool not to bring up one of the coolest bard prestige classes. Turn your 0-6 caster into a 0-9 caster, progress bardic performances AND get neat abilities. What more could you ask for????
- **(1/5) Battle Herald**
 - Mandatory mention because it will be brought up but i think this is very much less than ideal for bards. We have masterpieces that give us tactician, and our bonuses can get buffed in plenty of other ways...also this doesn't progress spells...or our other performances. Better for cavaliers than for us.

Feats

General Feats

- **(4/5) [Extra Performance](#)**: Get 6 more rounds of performance! Most people won't actually need more than this since it scales really well. Bards that get less performances or plan on multiclassing out. That said, its great at low levels, and means bardic masterpiece users don't have to worry as much.
 - **(5/5) ☆[Master Performer](#)☆**: So this is a first party feat that was made FOR a specific faction but, if that faction doesnt exist in your world, no reason your DM can't ya know just let you have it. Why is it 5/5? Well it boosts the bonuses granted to allies for all bardic performances by 1...all of them. Heroics? Yes. Competence? Absolutely. Courage? You know it. Yeah. You want this. You absolutely want this.
 - **(5/5) ☆[Grandmaster Performer](#)☆**: Hey remember the thing from before? Its that but with another bonus.
 - **(5/5) [Verbose Performer](#)**: MAKE PERFORMANCES BIGGER. Gets even better if you consider masterpieces bardic performances. But seriously range matters, and again, this applies to ALL bardic performances.
 - **(3/5) [Silent Performer](#)**: When you absolutely need to be silent and normally couldn't, this is great but its also EXPENSIVE!!! Really expensive.
- **(5/5) ☆[Lingering Performance](#)☆**: Hey wanna TRIPLE your bardic performance uptime? Here you go! It doesn't look like much at first until you realise you can always stop your performances as a free action, and as you get later in the game, starting you performances gets easier, and fights usually aren't as long. If you use one round to start the performance, and then end your turn, congrats, you've used 1 round of bardic performance to get 3 rounds worth of effect. There is a reason why bardic masterpieces had to specifically call this out. It's that good!!!!
- **(5/5) ☆[Improved Dirge of Doom](#)☆**: IF they were shaken when you started your dirge of doom they IMMEDIATELY become frightened. ALSO the range of dirge of doom extends out to 60 feet, which is hilariously huge.They can only be affected by this feat once per 24 hours but like...will you really need to do this twice? I don't think so. Hilarious boost to one of your best performances, take it and run. Combos fantastically with the spell blistering invective.
 - **(5/5) [Greater Dirge of Doom](#)**: Dirge of doom now LINGERS on a target for two extra rounds (Oh hey lingering performance, i see that you probably stack. Nice!) AND if they were already frightened they get upgraded to panicked!!! Now its harder to get frightened than it is to get shaken but...if you have lingering performance you can just stop your performance and then immediately start it the next round to autopanic people while they take the penalties of frightened...which is funny as hell.
- **(5/5)* [Battle Singer \(Goblins Only\)](#)**: If you, for some reason, have a goblin only party, this lets you get your inspire courage bonus to ALL SAVES which is very impressive especially

with how high inspire courage can get, and how rare morale bonus to saves are. That said...all goblin party.

- **(5/5) Discordant Voice**: HAHAHA so remember how i said 1d6 damage per turn is bad? An extra 1d6 sonic damage PER ATTACK is not. With the amount of attacks martials can throw out, and will with full attacks, this can get to hilarious levels, and remember, sonic damage is VERY rarely resisted.
- **(5/5) Wind Song**: HEY having the ability to do your performances from a range so that you can put good performances on you team without having to be in melee range or bad performances on your enemies is REALLY FUN! :D MORE VERSATILITY IS DOPE.
- **(5/5) Spellsong**: So the hiding spell trick here is cool and all but the REAL fun of it is that you can maintain spells as a move action instead of a standard action while spending bardic performances, so you can keep casting!!! Combine this with gnomes' effortless trickery and you can end up with three different concentration spells at once! WOOOOO!
- **(5/5) Spell Focus (Enchantment) / (5/5) Greater Spell Focus (Enchantment)**: So in most cases, I don't rate these feats too highly, but the Bard is not most cases. It just so happens that we are a class that has a GREAT deal of spells of a single spell school that REQUIRE difficult save DC's for which WE do not have enough save DC due to our spell level disparity. As such, it is INCREDIBLY worth it to take spell focus, as you WILL be getting use out of it one way or the other.
- **(4/5) Inspiring Mentor**: Hey everyone in 30 feet becomes more competent! Great for perception checks, or other checks that multiple people can get a chance at.
 - **(4/5) Omnipresent Mentor**: Permanent Competence! Spend 4 rounds of performance to give an ally the effects of inspire competence for the entire day!!!! Only to a single skill mind you, but its still a buff and we love that!
- **(4/5) Harmonic Spell**: Hey whenever you cast a spell, you don't have to spend that round of bardic performance maintaining the performance. Moreover, you can switch performances as a swift action with no downtime in between! This pairs AMAZINGLY with spellsong, in which you can get a spellslinger bard, constantly dancing and warping minds what feels like indefinitely.
- **(5/5) Versatile Spontaneity**: Congrats, you are now a prepared caster. Prepare one that is on your list from a written source, be it a scroll, or a spellbook. If you do it from a scroll, the scroll is expended. If you do it from a spellbook it is not. It uses a spell slot one higher than its actual level and it takes 10 minutes per spell level to prepare...AND ITS STILL FUCKING AMAZING. Getting to have a spellbook of spells that you can search through when your (hopefully) well crafted list doesn't help is huge. Pairs very well with Arrowsong's Lament and a Ring of Spell Knowledge for plenty of hot swapable spells.
- **(4/5) Emergency Attunement**: This makes otherwise situational spells really adaptable, as you just need to make a baby spellcraft check and can just...switch it. Being able to alter options after the fact is really useful for all prestige classes and remember, you have SKILLS TO SPARE so this shouldn't be too bad for you.
- **(4/5) Improved Initiative**: Going first is amazing! It's a pretty solid bonus.
- **(4/5) Noble Scion (Scion of War)**: Remember, we want to get Charisma to as many things as we can. Initiative is going first, and going first is winning first. This should almost always

get you a bonus higher than improved initiative, and guess what, they stack! Realistically though, you'll only need one or the other.

- **(3/5) Toughness:** Look it's not complex, but it helps. You don't have a lot of health and so having more, even just one per level, is nice.
- **(3/5) Skill Focus or (3/5) Exotic Heritage:** Both of these are Meh feat tax pre-reqs that you need to get to the actually juicy stuff. You take the skill you need to get into the bloodline you want. That said, you do like certain skills a lot, like bluff, so this is less bad for you than usual.
 - **(3/5) Eldritch Heritage / (5/5) Improved / (3/5) Greater:** So in effect, you get bloodline powers! Sorcerer bloodlines can be incredibly impactful, and if chosen wisely, can completely change how a character plays. The first feat gets you the 1st level power, the second gets you the 3rd or 9th (both of which can often be devastatingly powerful) and the third gets you the 15th level power, but you'll rarely go that far. You should easily meet the pre-reqs so its really about what power you want!
 - If you want suggestions, [check out my sorcerer guide](#).
- **(5/5) Knowledgeable Spellcaster:** Okay so this one is hilariously powerful because in exchange for a knowledge roll, you can get +3 to overcoming SR and then when you have 10 ranks, its +5. That beasts out and stacks with spell penetration and all you have to do is be decent at knowing things. 1000% worth it. YOU ARE THE BARD. YOU KNOW EVERYTHING!!! THIS SHOULD BE A CAKEWALK!

Metamagic Feats

So even more than full casters, we really can't afford to take metamagic feats that are more than a +1. That doesn't mean that you don't want them! Just that we have to be a lot more careful about choosing them.

- **(6/5) Sacred Geometry:** Free metamagic. FREE METAMAGIC. Combined with the right metamagic feats, this ability is downright godly, the qualifications are dirt easy and you can make every spell unstoppable. Why don't most people take it? Well all of that horrible math of course! [If only someone had made an online easily accessible and useful calculator...hint...hint!](#)
 - **(1-6/5) Ascendant Spell (+5):** Okay so basically, ascendant spell lets you cast a spell as its MYTHIC version which is...completely ridiculous. All mythic spells are just straight up better versions of the base spell, and getting access to them in non mythic games is great...or **it would be if it didnt bring you up +5 spell levels**. Damn. If only we had a way, that was relatively easy, to be able to use metamagic without raising the actual level of the spell! **Then well this would be amazing wouldn't it? Probably busted.**
- **(5/5) Spell Perfection:** More free metamagic! Very late game, but its incredibly useful, and all that it asks from you is that you take more metamagic! Can do!!! (Also remember that it doubles ANY other feat based numerical bonuses. Caster level, DC, anything.)

- **(5/5) [Extend Spell \(+1\)](#):** Doubles your duration. Short sweet, gets the job done, great for long term buffs or other effects. Definitely worth picking up. Being able to extend buffs, or potent boosting effects is really useful to us.
- **(5/5) [Persistent Spell \(+2\)](#):** Effectively roll twice and take the lowest for all saves involved with the spell. Bards have A LOT of save or sucks/loses. For a lot of later game spells, it's save or be absolutely destroyed, so this can be an INCREDIBLY useful power to have. Incredibly. Very very worth picking up mid to late game.
- **(5/5) [Piercing Spell \(+1\)](#):** Hey do you know that SR is the worst? Like the absolute worst? This makes your enemies SR count as being 5 lower and only raises your spell level by 1. This can and will save your ass at least once so it's a good pick up.
- **(5/5) [Bouncing Spell \(+1\)](#):** HEY failsafe spell. Really good for getting another try at those save or sucks, especially if you just need to get somebody in general to get the flow going!
- **(5/5) [Heighten Spell](#):** Usually, whatever, just makes a spell count as a higher level than it is. Gives you some extra DC's
- **(4/5) [Encouraging Spell \(+1\)](#):** Boost your morale bonuses a little bit! It's not crazy, but we have A LOT of morale bonuses to throw around, so you'll almost always find a use for it.
- **(3.5/5) [Scarring Spell \(+1\)](#):** So if you hit with a fear or emotion effect they get a -2 to all the rest of them for some really fun snowballing. Now it doesn't stack with itself, but even a -2 can be helpful in the long run.
- **(4/5) [Usurping Spell \(+1\)](#):** AYE if they fail a saving throw against your spell, they now count as an ally for flanking purposes AND cannot make any AoO's against you. Nice little defensive and offensive trick, and they really just have to fail their save once.
- **(5/5) [Threatening Illusion \(Gnome Only\) \(+1\)](#):** Your illusions now threaten squares!!! We have a lot of illusions, so gnome bards get a LOT from this.

Combat Feats

- **(4/5) [Flagbearer](#):** Morale bonus to attack and damage stacks with our usual competence bonus to attack and damage. If you are picking this up its mandatory that you get a [Banner of Ancient Kings](#) to keep your bonuses competitive. A fun trick is putting this feat on a long spear using the "Training" weapon enchantment. That way, you dont have to spend the feat, and its literally attached to the spear where you will be hanging your banner! WIN WIN WIN!
- **(4/5) [Arcane Strike](#):** As a swift action, do a bit more damage. It's again, one of the few scaling bonuses to damage, so we like it for that! Since we DO be casting arcane spells this a easy way for bards to get damage to keep up with the frontliners, especially since our swift action is usually free.
 - **(5/5) [Spell Cartridge](#) / (4/5) [Infused Spell Cartridge](#):** Did you want spell bullets? This is how you get spell bullets. Spell cartridge is AMAZING because it takes out the need to reload, which is what holds a lot of firearms back from being amazing. Infused basically gives you a ranged spellstrike-lite, which we might actually be able to use, but it involves a lot of feats.
- **(4/5) [Combat Reflexes](#):** Extra attacks of opportunity! Extra smacks are extra smacks!!!

- (4/5) **Diva Style** / (1/5) **Diva Strike** / (4/5) **Diva Advance**: Style all around perform feinting! Diva style is good for giving you move action feint that you can capitalize on later. Diva strike is...god awful honestly, but Diva advance lets you feint from range, for possible RANGE SNEAK ATTACKS. Again, best for sandmen bards who can really take advantage of this.

Ranged Combat Feats (Archery and Gun/Crossbow)

- (3/5) **Point Blank Shot** (5/5) **Precise Shot**: **Are you doing ranged combat? Yes? Then these feats are your prerequisites. You WILL be taking them.** Point blank shot is just connected to too many ranged feats.
 - (5/5) **Clustered Shots**: Getting to add all of your damage BEFORE dr is amazing.
 - (5/5) **Rapid Shot / Manyshot**: Get more arrow attacks! These feats are part of why ranged can be such a powerful playstyle!!!
 - (4/5) **Snap Shot** / (3.5/5) **Improved Snap Shot**: You get a tiny threat range with your bow, and can eventually get REACH to have some attacks of opportunity with your bow. Again, not really necessary, but like, it feels nice to get some extra shots in, especially when its not your turn.
 - (3.5/5) **Improved Precise Shot**: Ignore ac bonuses from anything less than total cover, and miss chance from anything besides TOTAL concealment. This can really help if you DM is taking advantage of these rules, and being tactical, but if you aren't having this issue, then its not necessary.
- (5/5) **Deadly Aim**: Do you plan to be in ranged combat...at all? Take this feat. Why? It is one of the three **scaling** damage feats in the game. Yes, that's right. Scaling. Most pathfinder feats give you a static bonus at best, much less get better as you level up! **If you are in combat, you are taking one of these!!!! No questions!!!!**
- (3/5) **Hammer the Gap**: Each attack does a little more damage! Considering we are planning on making A LOT of attacks, this is very helpful, but very not necessary.
- (5/5) **Rapid Reload**: HEY Are you using a crossbow or a gun? Yes? Take this. It makes it easier to reload and that means you can attack more. So like...yeah you need this. Mandatory.

Finesse Combat Feats

- (5/5) **Weapon Finesse**: Let's use dex to attack. Do you intend to do that? Then boom this is your feat.
 - **Weapon Focus / Fencing Grace or Starry Grace or Slashing Grace**: If you do dex to attack, these are dex to damage and you love them, but the feat tax sucks. Remember you do get proficiency in rapiers! You either take this or agile.
 - **Dervish Dance**: Okay does the same thing as the above feats but guess what? Less feat tax, yay!
- (5/5) **Piranha Strike**: Do you plan to be in combat...at all? Take this feat. Why? It is one of the three **scaling** damage feats in the game. Yes, that's right. Scaling. Most pathfinder

feats give you a static bonus at best, much less get better as you level up! **If you are in combat, you are taking one of these!!!! No questions!!!!**

Intimidation Feats

- (4/5) **Intimidating Prowess**: Add Strength to Charisma for intimidate. Simple nice boost that we will be enjoying for melee strength builds.
- (5/5) **Soulless Gaze {x2 Damnation Feats}**: So most damnation feats are GARBAGE but this one is absolutely terrifying. Just taking this feat on its own is basically nothing, just a measly +2 but taking a second damnation feat with it gives you the HORRIFYING ability to increase people's fear effects instead of simply applying them from a demoralize. This means if a guy repeatedly fails their save (which btw they probably will) you can get them cowering in seconds. You WANT this sooo bad if you are doing a fear build
- (5/5) **Signature Skill (Intimidate)**: You can only take it at level 5 but you will love it so dearly. This lets you start applying more deadly fear effects from the beginning and then just makes them worse. Hell yes. All intimidation builds are taking this feat, no questions asked!!!!
- (5/5) **Power Attack**: Do you plan to be in combat...at all? Take this feat. Why? It is one of the three **scaling** damage feats in the game. Yes, that's right. Scaling. Most pathfinder feats give you a static bonus at best, much less get better as you level up! **If you are in combat, you are taking one of these!!!! No questions!!!!**
 - (5/5) **Cornugon Smash**: Okay we can apply fear effects to people, and can stack them on top of one another. How do we do this all in LESS than a standard action. Well I welcome you to Cornugon Smash. For the low low cost of hitting someone with Power Attack (something again, you should be doing anyway) you get a FREE demoralize attempt...which goes with intimidate skill. Badda boom Badda bing, now anyone who gets caught in the aura catches this horrific fade.
- (4/5) **Hurtful**: By demoralizing someone you can get an additional attack on them as a swift action...which we should be doing a lot. This and Cornugon Smash make it so that you are getting a LOT of extra attacks over the course of the game, even not considering haste...and if you miss their condition ends but so what!!! Just hit the bitch again!!!!
- (4/5) **Dazzling Display**: Full-Round action to demoralize everyone within 30 feet. Now when you can only shaken, this is a sort of meh use of your time...but once you can get frightened and higher fear statuses, this starts to become a KILLER crowd control mechanic.
 - (5/5) **Shatter Defense**: Hey anyone who is feared counts as being flatfooted against you, which makes them much easier to hit, procs other abilities and in general ruins their day while making you a beast
 - (3/5) **Intimidating Performance**: Perform intimidates when you start performances! On its own its whatever, but when combined with dazzling display it gets MUCH BETTER letting you start off a battle with a mass demoralize.

Equipment

SO reader I am going to level with you. **I HATE EQUIPMENT SHOPPING.** I hate it, I hate it, I hate it. Least favorite part of character creation. There is too much equipment in the game, and too many ways it can be used, and it's EXHAUSTING. So I refused to tell you all of the best things. Luckily, someone else has done all the work for me. **So if you want to know what the best gear is, read [The Armamentarium](#), a guide written by Allerseelen.**

Also check out [Improving your class with items](#) and [Item Master List](#) for an even wider selection. These people have done the work, check them out.

- **THE BIG SEVEN:** Basically, the seven items the game is expecting you to get and something to hold everything else. Can be replaced by the [Automatic Bonus Progression System](#), but if not, here they are:
 - [Magic Weapon](#)
 - **Luther Rapier:** +1 holy rapier that can give you a temp boost to charisma! Love this little trick/
 - **☆Tuned Bowstring☆:** Hey are you an archer bard who cant afford to spend feats on lingering performance? Fantastic, here, take this bowstring that covers the cost of maintaining a bardic performance every time you shoot an arrow and gives you a bonus to perform checks. Yeah its just that good. Gets even better if you are using a bardic masterpiece to cover the maintain cost.
 - [Magic Armor](#)
 - **Harmonizing Enchantment:** +5 perform and lesser linger performance.
 - **Singing Steel:** Lets you start performances faster sooner! It is horrifically expensive but at least it worths like mithril!
 - [Cloak of Resistance](#)
 - [Stat-boosting item \(Charisma and Con\)](#) (headbands for mental stats, belts for physical)
 - [Ring of Protection](#)
 - [Amulet of Natural Armor](#)
 - [Bag of Holding](#) / [Handy Haversack](#) / [Portable Hole](#)
- **Poet's Cloak:** AYE give your melee brawlers rage that won't fatigue them and a rage power!!! Now you have to pick which rage power goes into the cloak. I suggest the superstition rage power as it gives you really good saves, just make sure you put your buffs on BEFORE you drop rage in the cage.
- **Lyre of Building:** Really more of a classic than anything. You won't need it in every scenario but if you have 30 minutes, the work of 100 humans for 3 days straight is A LOT OF BUILDING especially in medieval times. Have fun!
- **Banner of Ancient Kings:** +4 levels for inspire courage. Its a staple for a reason, especially if you took the flagbearer feat along side it for some SERIOUS buff power.

- **☆Three Reasons To Live☆**: THIS MAKES THE BANNER OF ANCIENT KINGS LOOK LIKE A BITCH. If you use the horn as part of the performance, it goes up by SIX LEVELS. SIX. AND THEY STACK. AND ITS THIS CHEAP??????? WHAT ARE YOU DOING? **GET THIS! GET THIS NOW! IT WORKS ON ALL OF YOUR PERFORMANCES AND IS AMAZING.**
- **Dervish Sikke**: Bard made and loved. Lets you take 10 on any performance check, gives you +5 to bardic knowledge, and boosts your inspire courage and competence by 1 (which is equivalent to a large level boost). **Really all bards should have this too.**
- **Circlet of Persuasion**: Better than it looks. This is a +3 to most of the skills you care about, you get more use out of charisma skills than anyone with versatile performance and pageant of the peacock. Super potent for a lot of what you do, don't overlook it.
- **☆Ring of Spell Knowledge☆**: Roll a DC 20 spellcraft check when you see a written, active or cast version of a spell between levels 1-4 (depending on the ring you get). Boom you are now able to cast that spell. Just...forever I guess...and you can swap them out??? And arcane spells that aren't on your list only count as one level higher. Jesus christ. Rob your Sorcerer, Summoner, Cleric and Shaman friends and have a grand day out. **WORTH. EVERY. COPPER. EVEN MORE FOR YOU BECAUSE YOU ONLY HAVE 0-6 SPELLS!!!!**
- **Circlet of Spell-Eating**: Okay this one SPECIFICALLY says only arcane spells, which is still really good, is a second way to get spells you shouldn't have, and works great. Just make sure you take it off before bed and save yourself the will save? It's not like the spell is going anywhere...
- **Ring of Wizardry**: Remember, you have fewer spells so you get a lot more out of this for the levels that you need. Even your simple second level spells aren't anything to mess with, so taking this is NOT a bad idea by any means, and honestly you'll want at least a level 3 by level 15.
- **Mnemonic Vestment**: Look I don't usually rate items but this is DIRT CHEAP And one of the most POWERFUL ITEMS IN YOUR KIT. Being able to keep a wall of scrolls of all of your favorite situational spells, or options is a godsend and a game changer. Every spontaneous caster should make this their second purchase after something to boost their charisma. Immediately.
- **Saliharion***: Hey for normal people, this gets you a +2 to all knowledge and heal checks to identify injures and weaknesses in people. Which is okay and not bad for the price. For *FOLLOWERS OF SARENRAE*, this gives you a **SACRED BONUS EQUAL TO YOUR CHARISMA MODIFIER**...which stacks with like...everything and should be super high. Which means you are taking it because let me remind you...KNOWING THINGS IS USEFUL!!!
- **Bracers of the Glib Entertainer**: +5 to all perform checks and glibness. Not shabby.
- **Daring Dancers**: +5 to dancing and dimension door~
- **Glorious Gorget**: +5 Diplomacy/Intimidate/Oratory and scaling good hope abilities
- **Lute of Discord**: Intelligent items with scary SLA's!
- **Staff of Accompaniment**: Cheap staff with some fun bard spells inside. Save yourself some spells known.

- **[Amulet of Reverse Incantation](#)**: Can warp spells to make them more versatile! Inflict spells cure! Evil spells now affect evil people. Spells become their own reverse! Even if its only three time per day, for a spontaneous caster, this is three times per day where you can get some SERIOUS variety.
- **[Numerology Cylinder](#)**: This would be a pretty hard knowledge roll to do in the morning...if we didn't get a bonus to knowledge equal to half our level...and didn't get to take 10 on knowledge...and weren't ya know, the bard. For us? This is just part of brushing our teeth, to get that juicy +2 to overcome SR. Trust me, you want it.
- **[Ring of Continuation](#)**: Is it expensive? Yes. Is it worth it? Also yes. Turning 10 minute per CL spells into ALL day spells is really good. This gets even more nutty with the Shapechanger Bloodline, who at third level, can make 1/minute per CL spells into 10 minute per CL spells, making spells like Fly, Paragon Surge, Invisibility, or Mirror Image all day buffs.
- **[Metamagic Rods](#)**: Basically let you use some metamagic for free a couple times a day. These are great for either situational metamagics that you don't wanna burn a feat on or metamagic that is super expensive, and you don't want to burn a slot on. Below I'll include some fan favorites, but feel free to read through and choose your own.
 - [Extend](#)
 - [Quicken](#)
 - [Persistent](#)
 - [Piercing](#)
- **[Cloak of Displacement, Minor](#)**: One of the few times I would suggest a minor version over the major version. Save yourself the second level slot, and just have the defense on permanently, and if things get dicey, cast displacement to become a wall of fuck off.