

Cayzle's

Little Splat Book Of

BARDS

in Third Edition Dungeons & Dragons

Being a compilation of theory, analysis, and practical advice on the use and play of bards in a range of styles, with new magic items and two prestige classes.



Cayzle's Little Splat Book Of Bards

In Third Edition Dungeons & Dragons

Created and written by Cayzle, 2011-2018

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This book is dedicated to all you modern-day troubadours out there, most especially to They Might Be Giants. And I think I know who you are.

Contents

A Note to Players and Dungeon Masters	3
- <i>Fair warning to users of this book, with advice on how to use these rules wisely.</i>	
Chapter One: The Casting Bard	4
- <i>How to get the most out of your bardic spell selection.</i>	
Chapter Two: The Maximized Bard	6
- <i>A mathematical demonstration that bards are simply not as craptacular as they say.</i>	
Chapter Three: The Multiclassed Bard	9
- <i>The best ways to mix your bard up with other classes and prestige classes.</i>	
Chapter Four: The Equipped Bard	15
- <i>Pick the best magical instrument for your bard, or try new ones.</i>	
Chapter Five: The Prestigious Bard	19
- <i>Here are two new options, fine for other classes, but for bards they really shine.</i>	
Credits, Notices, and Thanks	26

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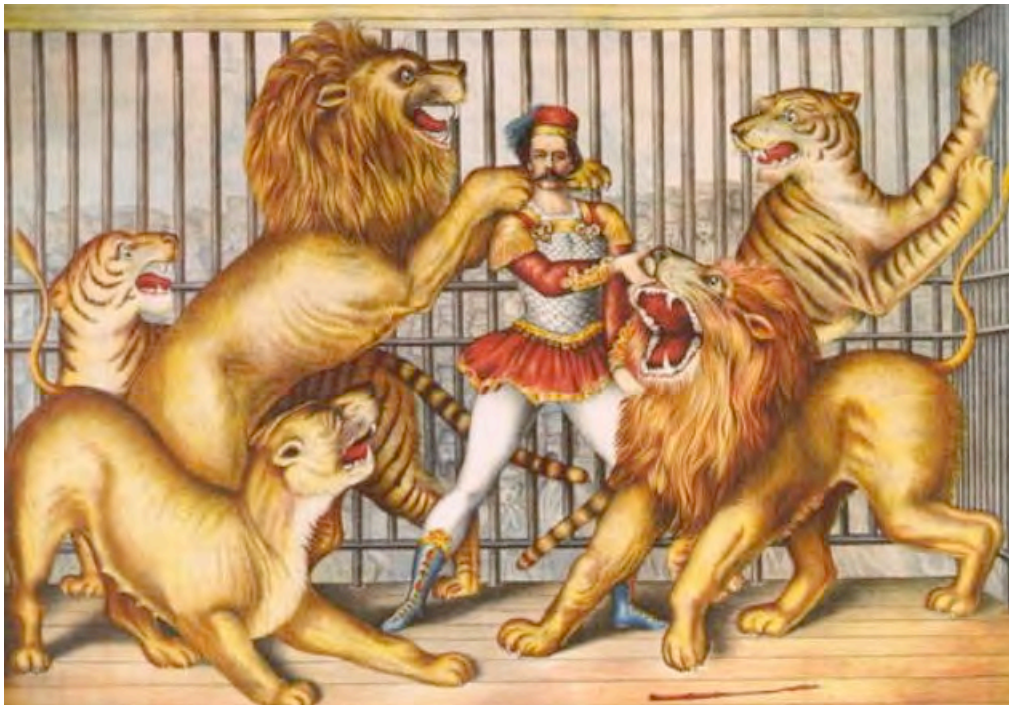
A Note To Dungeon Masters And Players

Cayzle's causes, caveats, and cautions for using this (and all) splat books

This e-book offers tips and tactics for getting the most out of your Bard character for Third Edition of the Dungeons and Dragons role play game (D&D 3.5). The beauty of the Bard class is that it allows you a wide range of versatility in creating different kinds of characters. You might be a diplomat, negotiating on behalf of your friends as the party "face." You might think of yourself as a spell caster who uses the arcane power of music. You might take the role of a fighter, albeit likely a skirmisher or shooter rather than a hulking tank — although even that is possible.

This book offers you ways to make these options real — while also making them useful and entertaining. Long ago I declared that [All Splat Books Are Bad!](#) I've evolved a bit from that youthful stance, but you should still treat this splat book, and all splat books, with skepticism and resolve. If you are a Dungeon Master, look for rules you dislike, and outlaw them in your game. Tell your players that by using this book, they agree to whatever revisions you require to fix things you discover to be broken ... whenever you figure out something is broken, even after the option has been used in the game. If you are a player, look for fun and interesting ways to play. If your DM nerfs something in this book, then grin and bear it – or don't use these rules in the first place!

And please do offer feedback and suggestions for future editions of this book. Email me at cayzle@cayzle.com, or tweet to me [@cayzle](https://twitter.com/cayzle). And visit cayzle.com for more D&D goodies.



A savvy DM, deliberate and resolved, surrounded by the splat books he has tamed.



Chapter One: The Casting Bard

For a bard, not all spells are created equal. Some are definitely more so.

The style, power, and capability of your Bard PC is determined in large part by spell selection. Bards, like Sorcerers, can spontaneously cast any spell they know, but the number they know is quite limited. Therefore, pick with care!

To maximize your Bard's potential, note that bards get some spells at a lower level than other casters get the same spell. For example *hideous laughter* (Called "*Tasha's hideous laughter*" in the printed Players Handbook) is a second level Wizard/Sorcerer spell, but a first level spell for a Bard. In my opinion, it is the Bard's best first level attack spell. In fact, most of what I think are the best Bard spells are those that the Bard gets a level "early." In fact, the Bard gets a handful of spells **two** levels early! Those are marked in bold below.

Here is a list of those "early gets," including Bard-only spells that compare in power (*glibness*) and omitting weak Bard-only spells (*lesser confusion*). The next best class and level of the spell is noted in parentheses, for comparison.

Level 1: Hideous Laughter (W2), Magic Mouth (W2), Obscure Object (W2), Undetectable Alignment (C2)

Level 2: Heroism (W3), Rage (W3), Suggestion (W3), Tongues (C3, W3)

Level 3: Charm Monster (W4), Confusion (W4), Crushing Despair (W4), Fear (W4), Lesser Geas (W4), Glibness (Bard only), Good Hope (Bard Only), Scrying (W4), Sculpt Sound (Bard only)

*Level 4: Break Enchantment (P4, W5, C5), Dominate Person (W5), Hold Monster (W5), **Legend Lore (W6)**, Modify Memory (Bard only), Zone of Silence (Bard only)*

Level 5: Greater Dispel Magic (W6, C6), Greater Heroism (W6), Mislead (W6), Shadow Walk (W6), Song of Discord (Bard only), Mass Suggestion (W6)

*Level 6: **Mass Charm Monster (W8)**, **Irresistible Dance (W8)**, Project Image (W7), Greater Scrying (C7, W7), **Greater Shout (W8)**, Sympathetic Vibration (Bard only)*

A careful consideration of the list above reveals a hole. Among 4th level Bard spells, there is one that is 6th level for Wizards, *legend lore*. This is not an attack spell, and not one that a Bard will cast daily, but it is powerful, and it fits well there. Among 6th level spells (first gained at Bard level 16), there are several very powerful spells that are 8th level for Wizards; again, this is a good fit for the class, given the very high Bard level required to cast them. However, that leaves a significant power hole at Bard level 13. A Bard character might well petition a DM to fix this hole, for example, by researching a 5th level Bard spell that either is or is equivalent in power to a 7th level Wizard spell.

Specifically, given the Bard's exclusive ability to cast *lesser confusion*, and his early get of *confusion*, it is amazing that the logical extension, *insanity*, is not a Bard spell. Similarly, the early get of *legend lore* is great, but oddly, the next step up, *vision*, is not on the Bard spell list! Both *vision* and *insanity* are 7th level Wizard spells; a reasonable DM may well allow a Bard to research both as 5th level Bard spells. **A kindly, sensible DM might even simply add Insanity and Vision to the Bard's 5th level spell list by house rule fiat.**

Note that most powerful attack spells at each level are Enchantments. If you choose to focus on them, make sure your Charisma is high (to boost spell DCs) and consider the *spell focus* and *greater spell focus* feats in Enchantment.

Considering that the number of spells a Bard gains per day is limited, especially in comparison with the other arcane spontaneous caster, the Sorcerer, a Bard might well choose to use item creation feats, especially *scribe scroll* and *craft wand*, to increase the number of spell effects that the Bard can effect in a day. With this strategy, use items to layer on more buff spells, and save for actual casting spells that benefit most from a high DC. For example, craft wands of *heroism*, *good hope*, and *glibness*, while reserving daily spell slots for *suggestion* and *confusion*.

However, note that focusing on these potent early gets, especially focusing on enchantments above all others, can be a double edged sword. Sure, especially at levels 10 and under, you are an enchanter to beat Wizard enchanters, hands down. But faced with undead, constructs, vermin, or a range of other enemies that are immune to mental attack, your strengths become useless. It is wise to have some back-up spells known, such as *grease* and *glitterdust*, say, in case your enchantments fail. Another option, of course, is to use weapons, especially missile weapons or a whip, seeing as you are likely not exactly a front line fighter. Or at the least, be ready, with *inspire courage*, cure spell wands, and summon monster scrolls, to fall back and play a support-only roll for your group.

Now, with all that said, you may not want to maximize your bard for potency. You may want to play an illusionist bard (a nice choice for gnomes), a healer bard (it's nifty to be the only arcane healer), or a sonic evoker. These and other choices can be great fun both to play and role-play.



Chapter Two: The Maximized Bard

A mathematical proof that bards are the best casters in the game -- sometimes!

Casting first-level spells, Bards can create effects (like *hideous laughter*) that Wizards and Clerics can cast only as second-level spells. So it seems reasonable to think of such Bard spells as second level spells if you seek to compare caster classes. That means that Bards can cast second-level spells at Bard level 2 -- **before** Wizards do!

Similarly, since Suggestion, Heroism, Rage, and Tongues are second-level Bard spells but third level to Wizards and Clerics, one might think of second level-Bard spells as third level when comparing classes. Looking at more potent spells, third-level Bard spells (Charm Monster) are fourth level in comparison. Fourth-level Bard spells are like fifth- and sixth-level spells, with Legend Lore being the sixth level spell. Fifth-level Bard spells (Mass Suggestion) are like sixth, and sixth-level spells (Irresistible Dance) are like eighth-level spells.

So it is fair to say that Bards get third-level spells at Bard level 4, fourth-level spells at Bard level 7, a sixth-level spell at Bard level 10, and eighth-level spells at Bard level 16 ... when comparing to other spell casters.

And don't forget Bardic music! At Bard level 1, Inspire Courage is like a first-level spell (in power). At Bard level 6, Suggestion is like a second-level spell (it's not as good as the Wizard third-level Suggestion spell since Bards have to Fascinate first and even then cannot use it in combat). At level 9, Inspire Greatness is like a third-level spell. At level 12, Song of Freedom, comparable to Break Enchantment, a fifth-level spell. At level 15, Inspire Heroics is like a fourth-level spell. And at Bard level 18, Mass Suggestion is like a fifth-level spell.

Granted, the Bard's save DC suffers by one, compared with spells gained by other classes a level later, but I still contend the point holds: Bards cast spells at certain levels before they are available to other caster classes.

When you take into account all these equivalencies, so what? Let's compare tables showing spells

cast per day. Let's assume Int/Chr at the following values: 16 at 1st, 17 at 4th, 18 at 8th, 20 at 10th, 21 at 12th, and 22 at 16th -- that assumes an item to add 2 at level 10 and later. Compare wizards and bards, both on the same table. Wizards in blue on the left; bards in red on the right:

Table 1: Wizard and Bard Spells per Day										
Level	0	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1st	3/2	2/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
2nd	4/3	3/1	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
3rd	4/3	3/2	2/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
4th	4/3	4/3	3/1	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
5th	4/3	4/4	3/2	2/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
6th	4/3	4/4	4/3	3/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
7th	4/3	5/4	4/3	3/1	2/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
8th	4/3	5/4	4/4	4/2	3/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
9th	4/3	5/4	5/4	4/3	3/-	1/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
10th	4/3	6/5	5/4	4/3	4/1	3/-	-/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
11th	4/3	6/5	5/4	5/4	4/2	3/-	1/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
12th	4/3	6/5	5/4	5/4	4/3	4/-	2/-	-/-	-/-	-/-
13th	4/3	6/5	5/4	5/4	5/3	4/1	2/-	1/-	-/-	-/-
14th	4/4	6/5	5/4	5/4	5/4	4/2	3/-	2/-	-/-	-/-
15th	4/4	6/6	5/4	5/4	5/4	5/3	3/-	2/-	1/-	-/-
16th	4/4	6/6	6/6	5/4	5/4	5/3	4/1	3/-	2/-	-/-
17th	4/4	6/6	6/6	5/5	5/4	5/4	5/2	3/-	2/-	1/-
18th	4/4	6/6	6/6	5/5	5/5	5/4	5/3	3/-	3/-	2/-
19th	4/4	6/6	6/6	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/4	4/-	3/-	3/-
20th	4/4	6/6	6/6	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	4/-	4/-	4/-

Next, the Bard spell progression from the Players Handbook AFTER reconsidering bard options:

Table 2: Reconsidered Bard Spells per Day										
Level	0	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1st	2	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
2nd	3	2	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
3rd	3	3	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
4th	3	4	3	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
5th	3	5	4	2	--	--	--	--	--	--
6th	3	3	7	3	--	--	--	--	--	--
7th	3	4	7	3	1	--	--	--	--	--
8th	3	4	8	4	2	--	--	--	--	--
9th	3	3	8	7	3	--	--	--	--	--
10th	3	4	8	7	3	--	1	--	--	--
11th	3	4	9	7	4	1	1	--	--	--
12th	3	4	9	7	4	3	1	--	--	--
13th	3	4	9	8	4	3	2	--	--	--
14th	4	5	9	8	4	4	3	--	--	--
15th	4	4	10	7	7	4	4	--	--	--
16th	4	4	10	10	7	4	4	--	1	--
17th	4	4	10	10	9	4	5	--	2	--
18th	4	4	10	10	9	8	6	--	3	--
19th	4	4	10	10	9	8	6	--	4	--
20th	4	4	10	10	9	8	6	--	5	--

In Table 1, the two casters do not stack up very well, do they? No wonder bards get such a bum rap -- they fare poorly on a direct comparison. But wait! Take a look at Table 2, after factoring in the issues I mentioned above. Table 2 reconsiders bard casting and performance to reflect the more accurate appraisal of Bard spells -- as described above -- AND adding in Bardic Music as spell equivalents. To be fair, how often would one cast Legend Lore and Song of Freedom? For the reconsidered table above, I assumed once per day each. I also assumed that the major Bardic music abilities (Inspire Courage, Suggestion, Inspire Heroics, etc) are used more or less equally. So that, for example, a level 6 Bard's six daily uses of Bardic music could be thought of as 3 first-level spells (Inspire Courage) and 3 second-level spells (Suggestion). Table 2 takes a fresh look at Bardic music in this way for all 20 levels, and adds in Bard spells at their "true" level.

Take a look at the column for 7th level spell equivalents. The 5th level spell hole in bard casting, mentioned earlier, is here especially obvious, looking at how empty the 7th level column is. This is more argument that spells such as *insanity* and *vision* should be added to the Bard spell list as 5th level spells. That would go far toward filling that hole, and I strongly urge its use as a house rule.

Anyway, comparing Tables 1 and 2, based on spell casting alone, the Bard actually beats the Wizard at levels 2, 4, 5 and 6. The Bard is about equal at levels 3, 7, 8, 10, and 16. At higher levels, the Bard beats the Wizard on number of lower-level spell equivalents, but the Wizard, with plenty of seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-level spells, comes out ahead. But even so, and especially at levels 10 and under, the Bard equals or beats the Wizard judged solely on a spell-vs-spell basis! The wizard's strength remains its incredible versatility, but based just on casting power, the bard equals or betters the wizard for the level 2-10 range.

Now add in the rest: Bards have better attacks, better reflex saves, ability to cast spells in light armor, a much better weapon list, Bardic lore, many more skill ranks, and a better hit die. Thrown into the mix, and it is clear that Bards beat Wizards easily through level 10 at the least. Does the Bard equal the Wizard at the highest levels, when Wizards have everything they can *wish* for? Admittedly not, but even then, a Bard with maxed out Use Magic Device can activate scrolls, wands, and staves with the best of them -- better than a wizard, given that Use Magic Device is powered by Charisma, a bard's prime stat.



Chapter Three: The Multiclassed Bard

Make the most of your bard by mixing it up with other classes and prestige classes!

I've just spent two chapters convincing you that bards are as good or better than wizards at pure magic. But on analysis, the bard only matches or excels at levels 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 16. The logical conclusion is that over your 20-level bard career, you should only take, say, 7-10 bard levels. What should you do with the other levels? Finding good multiclass combinations is the purpose of this chapter. Let's consider multiclassing as a caster, as a warrior, and as both.

Caster mixes: The deck is stacked against the spellcaster who multiclasses in 3E D&D. The prime power balancer for casters is highest spell level castable. The prime power balancer for fighters is base attack bonus (BAB). The Paladin5/Fighter5 is as strong as a Fighter10 — both have the same BAB. The Wizard5/Cleric5 is weaker than the Wizard10 or the Cleric10 — having more low-level spells per day does not compensate for being able to cast more potent spells, and it seems genuinely unfair that while fighter BABs stack, caster levels do not. That Wizard5/Cleric5 would be far more viable if he had the caster level (not spells per day) of 10 in both classes.

An unbalanced multiclass combo offers greater options. For example, the Bard8/Paladin2 is pretty sweet, with the charisma synergy, save bonuses, healing, weapon selection, and access to Paladin wands (although the alignment restrictions dictate that the Bard levels come first, and the character cannot progress in Bard after taking levels in Paladin). The Bard8/Fighter2 is also a good option. But for a true even-split multiclass, it does not work to the multiclassing PC's favor, especially for multiple caster classes.

Realizing the disadvantages faced by multiclassed spell casters, the 3.5 version of the core rules attempted to offer a couple fixes as prestige classes. The Mystic Theurge, Eldritch Knight, and the Arcane Trickster are examples of this, for the Cleric/Wizard, the Fighter/Wizard, and the Rogue/Wizard, respectively. None of these are designed to complement the strengths of a bard. Bards can qualify for these prestige classes, but the power balance works against the Bard. Specifically, a Wizard who takes one of these prestige class that advances his caster level and spells per day loses only a few bonus feats and familiar advancement. That's not a bad deal, especially

since these PrCs offer advantages that compensate, or more so. On the other hand, a Bard loses music and lore progression, gains fewer skill ranks per level, and has worse BAB and saves with these PrCs, for most of them.

So I do not recommend a spell caster mix. The Wizard/Bard and the Sorcerer/Bard offer no advantage over a straight Bard (despite the Sorcerer/Bard's Charisma synergy), since the spell lists overlap. Combined with Druid or Cleric, the Bard can wear armor and cast both arcane and divine spells, but as I mentioned above, casting more low-level spells does not compensate for missing out on high-level spells. The Bard10/Cleric10 is no match for the Cleric 20 or the Bard 20. Unless you have a huge role play reason to do it (playing the follower of the god of music, perhaps), you will find this option to be an exercise in futility.

Similarly, prestige classes that stack with base classes to boost spell casting ability (like the Loremaster) are almost always poor choices for Bards. The Bard/Loremaster, on the other hand, loses too much: Bard music, good BAB, good reflex saves, etc. Granted, the Loremaster gains 4 skill ranks per level, only two less than the Bard, and has a decent skill list, including *perform* and *use magic device*, but that's still not as good as the straight Bard. The Loremaster add-ons do not make up for that. The same goes for the Mystic Theurge, the Arcane Trickster, the Eldritch Knight, etc.

Fighting mixes: If we agree that caster mixes seldom pay off for the bard, you may set your heart on playing a battling mage. Here, the evenly split Fighter/Bard trumps the Fighter/Wizard and the Fighter/Sorcerer. As demonstrated earlier, from levels 1 to 10, the Bard beats or equals the Wizard as a spell caster for most levels. Spells including *heroism* and *rage* are especially good for the Bard with levels as a Fighter (or Ranger, etc.) The Bard's better BAB, hit dice, and ability to cast spells in light armor with no chance of failure also mesh very well. Speaking of armor, mithril breastplate and a mithril buckler offer the best protection with no chance of arcane spell error.

The evenly split Rogue/Bard also offers pretty good synergies -- especially in skills, where the two classes mostly overlap. Use magic device and other Charisma-based skills work well for this combination. *Suggestion* is a prime spell here, as well as charm magics, which a bard gains early compared with wizards and sorcerers.

The first trick a fighting Bard should learn is that of *inspiring courage* while fighting. Starting a song is a standard action, but thereafter it lasts for so long as you keep singing — and five rounds after you stop. Best of all, you can sing and fight just fine simultaneously.

If the Bardic music effect does not require concentration, it can be maintained as a free action each round, although spell casting and most magic item use is prohibited. That means a Bard is perfectly free to make standard and full attack actions while *inspiring courage*, and later in his career, *inspiring greatness*, and *inspiring heroics*.

It's not worth it for a Fighter to take just one or two levels of Bard just for this trick -- especially since the Fighter loses a +1 BAB as a first level Bard. The Fighter is better off using potions and other magic items to gain buffs.

But a multiclass strategy does help the character who is primarily a Bard, or who has a decent number of Bard levels. Then you gain the added bonus of Bardic buff spells, especially *heroism*, gained when the Bard is level 4 — although keep in mind that morale bonuses, such as those from *inspire courage* and *heroism*, do not stack.

But even with buffs like these, the Bard will never be a tank. His hit points and light armor work against that. Which suggests another combat path — missile weapons. The Bard works well as an archer, and benefits from a level or two of Fighter — for the longbow proficiency and the added feats.

Another interesting option is taking a couple levels of Paladin (although the character cannot progress as a Bard after changing alignment to lawful good), for the Charisma synergies. Bard/Ranger is another decent option, using the archery combat training, especially for skill Monkeys and those who want to pursue a more outdoorsy feel. *Wild empathy* works well with a high Charisma, and both classes do well in light armor. Another possibility for archer Bards to consider is a mount. Your mount can move as you take a full action to shoot multiple missiles. It is like *spring attack* without the need to take a feat. Pure Bards can ride well via *phantom steed*, while Ranger/Bards can get *animal companions* and Paladin/Bards can get *special mounts*.

Another, more subtle, and more difficult to execute combat path is available to the Bard — the tripper. With his whip proficiency, the Bard who takes feats including *combat expertise* and *improved trip/disarm* can have fun knocking people down and taking away their weapons. That works best as a team strategy, in which the party tanks take attacks of opportunity on foes who provoke them by trying to stand up or pick up their weapons. Take ranks in *tumble* if you try this, since you will need to maneuver around as you crack the whip. Your light armor works well here too.

The Bard/Shadowdancer is also an interesting combination. The required *perform* skill is not problem, and the role play synergies (music and dance) work nicely. Ranged attacks and sniping are interesting options for bard/shadowdancers, who can shoot and then hide in shadows without revealing themselves to attackers. A gnome bard shadowdancer can make an interesting illusion-specialist, especially if a kindly DM rules that the gnome's +1 to illusion DCs applies to the shadow illusion ability.

Fighting AND Casting Mixes: I've advised against prestige classes that advance a spells-per-day progression, but PrCs that require casting ability without boosting spell casting are excellent choices for Bards. The prime examples are the Bard / Arcane Archer and the Bard / Dragon Disciple. Let's consider these two options -- the best options available for bards in the core rules, in my opinion -- each in turn.

Bard / Arcane Archer: The best part of being a caster and arcane archer is the Imbue Arrow ability. With this power, gained early at level 2, you can fire the arrow at an enemy as you cast the imbued spell, and target the spell area at the target (if it hits) or the foe's square (if it misses). Think about that: *you get to cast a spell and fire an arrow in the same round.*

Doing two things in a round -- casting a spell and firing an arrow -- is pretty sweet. It is like casting a quickened spell and still making a standard ranged attack -- and you still get a move action (and potentially a conventionally quickened spell) to play with as well.

Overall, with good attacks, excellent skill synergies, excellent saves, and spells that hit an archer's sweet spot, the Bard / Arcane Archer makes a versatile character who is no slouch in the combat department, either.

Take ten levels in each class for a simple and effective multiclass combo. You might also

consider taking a couple Paladin levels as a useful prelude to becoming an Arcane Archer. That's an option for a half-elf Paladin/Bard rather than an elf Paladin/Bard because the half-elf's favored class flexibility is essential. The Arcane Archer's required +6 BAB is can be gained by taking four levels of Bard and three of Paladin, or even four of Bard, two of Paladin, and one of fighter; however, I prefer a build of eight levels of Bard, so that your Inspire Courage rises to +2). Even a second-level Paladin can get good use from wands of Paladin spells such as *divine favor*, *bless weapon*, *magic weapon*, etc.

Bard casting offers some real gems, including both buffs -- Expeditious Retreat, Cat's Grace, Heroism (a second level spell), Haste, Tiny Hut, and Greater Invisibility -- and area spells that are peachy used with Imbue Arrow -- Grease, Glitterdust, Silence, Calm Emotions, Confusion, Crushing Despair, Slow, and Shout among them. Pick up Scribe Scroll and put all your buff spells on paper -- that lets you use your relatively few spell slots for area spells you can imbue, and whose save DCs you want as high as possible.

Use your skills to widen your capabilities. As a bard, maximize your mobility with five or more ranks in Tumble, and max out your Perform skill to optimize your fascination and countersong abilities. If you like talking, ranks in Diplomacy and Bluff come in handy. The obvious synergy is scouting, so you might want to take Listen, Spot, Hide, and Move Silently from both classes. If your party lacks a ranger, you might take Search as a Bard, and Survival as an Arcane Archer; add the Track feat and you're all set. Riding is a great option for a shooter, since you can ride and make a full attack with your missile weapon in the same round -- you might want to use Leadership to attract a viable mount, or just use your bardic Phantom Steed spell.

If you take ten levels of bard and then ten levels of arcane archer, your bard-only skills (like Perform) will be capped at 13 ranks, unless you buy them at double cost cross-class. To avoid that, take 8 levels as a Bard, then switch to Arcane Archer for two, three, or four levels. Take another level of Bard, putting all your ranks into one or two of your favorite Bard-only skills. Take another two to four levels of Arcane Archer, and then your final level of Bard, again pushing ranks into Bard-only skills. In this way, even with no Int bonus, you can expect to max out your Perform and Search ranks at 17, as just one example, rather than 13. (The disadvantage is that you delay attaining the ability to cast 4th level spells, so you have to weigh the benefit of higher ranks ultimately versus not casting Greater Invisibility and Shout as soon as you otherwise could. But keep in mind that you only cast one of those spells a day anyway, and then only if you have an 18 Charisma.

Bard / Dragon Disciple: Before we get into the interesting options of a dragon disciple / bard multiclass, I have to get this off my chest: The Dragon Disciple is overpowered. At levels 1 to 9 it is powerful, yet not quite TOO powerful. The combat boosts are potent, and they pile up every level ... but adding combat powers to a caster class is not synergistic, and so is not overpowered. However, at level 10, the capstone powers are bogus beyond belief. I strongly suggest this fix: Reduce the Dragon Apotheosis ability! Keep the breath weapon boost, +2 (not +4) Strength, +2 Charisma, +1 to natural armor bonus (total +4), and resistance 20 to the energy type used by the breath weapon. Just say no to the half-dragon template, +4 Strength, low-light vision, darkvision, immunity to sleep and paralysis effects, and immunity to the energy type used by his breath weapon. Now you've got yourself a more balanced and playable prestige class.

And the Dragon Disciple is a PrC that remains a very interesting option for a bard. The DD is an option for a combat character, not a spellcaster, but it requires spontaneous casting and also grants

bonus spells. That makes it ideal for a bard, the best warrior of the arcanists. If you take a full 10 levels of bard before jumping to DD, then the DD grants an extra seven 4th level spells over 10 DD levels. And recall that 4th level bard spells are more like 5th level wizard spells in power. Add that to bard abilities -- plus a sensible choice of race, feats, items, etc -- to make your bard / dragon disciple a real power in combat.

Let's start with race. You are a Strength-based build, and Charisma is your casting stat, so rule out all races that penalize those. No halfling, gnome, dwarf, or half-orc. Elf, half-elf, and human are the best Core race choices. Of those, the elf's penalty to Con is not great, and you are a melee build, so the bow use is not that great either. The human's extra feat really tips the balance here -- of core races, humans are best for this kind of character.

But if your DM will allow you to go beyond core races, I have to say that wemics (aka liontaurs) are the best race out there for a bard/DD. You can find the rules for 3E D&D wemics on my site at <http://www.cayzle.com/DnD/3Epc2.html>. The ability score modifications are fine for a melee PC, but the best part is being large size with (paw) claws. That means you start with two claws (forepaws) as natural attacks, and then gain two more claws (hands) and a bite, for five natural attacks when you make a full attack action. Because you are large, the damage is 1d4 / 1d4 (paws) plus 1d6 / 1d6 (hands) plus 1d8 (bite). That beats a human's 1d4/1d4/1d6 easy!

As for feats, you MUST take the multiattack feat to reduce the penalty on secondary claw attacks from -5 to -2. For a one-feat investment, your liontaur is making a full-round attack at +0 / -2 / -2 / -2 / -2. Compare that to a devoted two weapon fighter with all three Greater / Improved / Two-Weapon Fighting feats: -2 / -2 / -7 / -7 / -12 / -12. THIS is the strength of the dragon disciple build. Sure, your base attack bonus is not as good as a pure fighter's, but you have strength bonuses to help your attack, and you do not care about iterative secondary and tertiary attacks anyway (you do not get those with natural weapons).

For other feats, Power Attack is a must-pick for versatility and boosting combat damage; against easier-to-hit foes, the ability to penalize your attack and gain the reciprocal bonus on ALL your natural attack damage is super sweet. Round out your build with other combat feats: Dodge, Weapon Focus, and the feats from the monster book: Improved Natural Attack, Improved Natural Armor, and (after you can fly) Hover.

You can wear light armor and cast without fail. Armor made of mithril shifts its weight class down a notch, so medium armor made of steel becomes light armor of mithril. That mithril breastplate looks pretty good from here! Max that armor's enhancement bonus for even better protection.

You want a shield, but you do not want to give up a claw attack. Here are two options for you, both with no chance of arcane spell failure. (1) A Ring of Force Shield can be turned on and off as a free action. So keep it on as you walk around towns and dungeons, but turn it off at the start of full attack. Get all your swings in, then turn it on again. (2) An Animated +1 Light Mithril Shield can be commanded to float around you at all times, freeing your second claw to attack. Both of these options grant a +2 shield bonus to AC. The ring is a little cheaper and also works against incorporeal attacks, but I still favor the mithril shield, because the enhancement bonus can be upgraded as your wealth grows.

You don't have to spend gold on weapons, but you do need to get your claws on an Amulet of Mighty Fists. Upgrade as your wealth allows. An alternative to the Amulet -- IF there is a friendly

druid in your party, is the casting of Greater Magic Fang. One casting gives all your natural attacks a +1 enhancement bonus for hours; if your friend is higher level and really friendly, maybe you can get a casting per natural attack. Buy them a lesser metamagic rod of extend ... heck, buy them two! You can dream of Permanency cast to make your Greater Magic Fang permanent, but good luck finding a wizard willing to sacrifice the experience points!

As for your combat strategy, your goal is to get close and make full-round attacks as fast as possible. For most combats, you start the battle out of melee range, so start combat with a buff and a move action to get closer. Bardic Music, especially Inspire Courage and Inspire Greatness, are sweet buffs. Spells like Greater Invisibility, Haste, and Heroism are even sweeter. The biggest hurdle here is that casting takes time, so when you have enough wealth, consider a lesser metamagic rod of quicken spell. So imagine a fight like this, you liontaur bard / dragon disciple: Round one: Quickened Haste, Inspire Greatness, and then move to the enemy (with hastened speed). Round two and after: Power Attack Bite/Bite/Claw/Claw/Claw/Claw!



Chapter Four: The Equipped Bard

Just as fighters need magic weapons, bards need magic instruments!

Naturally, you want the best stuff possible for your bard. But what would that be? As a musician, your first thought turns to magical musical instruments -- that seems like a no-brainer for a bard, right? But in fact, the magic instruments in Third Edition Dungeons and Dragons are a mixed lot. So let me list them all for you, in alphabetical order, with handy ratings to help you tell the Stradivari from the kazoos.

1. Chime of Interruption - This is a double-edged item, seeing as it is as likely to affect your allies as your enemies. And at 17 grand, it is not an item you can afford until, say, 9th or 10th level. And by that time, the 12th to 15th level enemy casters you will face have no trouble making the requisite concentration checks. Honestly, this item was created for use by non-caster NPC enemies to screw with PC casters, and then to dump gold into the party loot bag after the battle is done. How Rude! **Grade: D-**
2. Chime of Opening This one is sweet, relatively cheap, and invaluable at any level when you really need a Knock spell. **Grade: A**
3. Drums of Panic. Nice if you're heading into a pitched battle. And at a cost of 30 grand, you better be fighting a war to make this worth the pull on your purse. By the time you can afford it, few foes will have any problem making that DC16 Will save. **Grade: D**
4. Harp of Charming. The ten minute "casting time" makes this harp useless in combat, but seeing as it affects all the creatures who can hear the performance, the mass suggestion effect is pretty sweet. The item allows one suggestion per 10 minutes of playing, so the logical conclusion is that those who make their save do not realize that they have had to do so. The relatively cheap 7,500 gp cost makes this worthwhile -- if your game master includes enough noncombat opportunities to use this item. If so, **Grade: A-**
5. Horn of Blasting (regular and greater). These two items are priced as the formulae would suggest: caster level 7 x spell level 4 x 1,800 x 1/5 (once per day) x2 (slotless) makes it 10 grand for the regular. The 70 grand price for the greater horn is actually a bit of a discount, by 16/86ths. The problem here is that while the item fits the formulaic pricing for magic items, if you want to cast Shout or Greater Shout, you're far better off casting it yourself.

Buying items to cast higher level spells is a mug's game. **Grade: C+ for the regular horn; D+ for the greater.**

6. Horn of Fog. This item lets you make small patches of obscuring mists whenever you want, at a very reasonable price. It takes a lot of blowing to build up any decent amount of fog. And there are usually better things for you to do than to spend a valuable standard action making a 10x10 patch of fog. Still, the price of the item, as well as its taking up no slot, makes it a decent trick-up-your-sleeve that might just come in handy some time. **Grade: B**
7. Horn of Goodness/Evil. Being able to produce a Magic Circle against Good/Evil on demand is a useful ability at any level, especially if you are faced with summoned creatures, dominating vampires, or ghosts/mages who love their magic jars. It's tempting to use the item to replace your +2 cloak of resistance and your +2 ring of protection. That frees up two item slots and gear costing 12 grand gold with a 6.5 grand item. But that hour duration is a killer. You could buy two and still be ahead on the trade, if you think you can time the use just right. **Grade: B+**
8. Horn of the Tritons. In any water adventure, this item has real utility. Its value gets a ding because of the one-use-per-day limit, but in the right circumstances, it may well be the perfect tool for the job. **Grade: B**
9. Horn of Valhalla. This super expensive item makes you question whether the cost is worth it by the time you can afford it. That's half your personal wealth at level 12, for an item that you can use once a week? Use your Monster Summoning VI spells instead. **Grade: D**
10. Lyre of Building. This is the kind of item that is wonderful if you need it (and can use it), but a waste if you don't. Still, it has always amused me to imagine an altruistic bard who wanders the countryside in Habitat-For-Humanity mode, making cottages and barns for the poor -- kind of a Johnny Appleseed of housing. **Grade: C**
11. Pipes of Haunting. Another double edged sword ... affects your friends, unless you set yourself up to be in the midst of your enemies and at least 30 feet away from your friends. And what happens to you after your enemies make the easy DC13 save (or are unaffected due to having 6 hit dice each)? Well, let's just hope you're immune to flanking attacks. And have a lot of hit points. **Grade: F**
12. Pipes of Pain. Like Pipes of Haunting, these affect allies, so the standard caveats apply. Maybe you can deafen your friends before using these? The relatively low DC14 save limits utility, but the effect is decent and the price is not bad. **Grade: C-**
13. Pipes of the Sewers. This one is an odd lot. Cheap as free, and swarms are effective against lots of enemies even at higher levels, but is your game master nice about letting rat swarms be in the area? It's no bonus if your item is always useless. **Grade: D to B, depending**
14. Pipes of Sounding. Here's another cheap-as-free item, and it is nice to be able to make ghost sounds at will, but how odd is it for targets to watch you holding the pipes to your mouth silently, while they wonder where the roaring lion is? The low save DC means your sounds are soon revealed as illusions, too. This item may be most effective if you are using it while invisible or hiding. **Grade: C+**
15. Sustaining Spoon. Some may quibble with my inclusion of this item on the list, but in fact, the spoon has a [venerable history of use as a musical instrument](#). Anyway, this -- and a create water cantrip -- lets your party survive forever when trapped in a cave or cell, so no scoffing! A bit pricey, however, for an item whose main function is usually hand-waved away. Also, can I say that it annoys me that the item creates "pasty gruel" that "tastes like warm, wet cardboard"? Why create an item that sounds horrid to use? How about magic cloaks that are stained and ripped? Magic swords that are rusty and dull? Intelligent items that only know swears? Personally, I'm ignoring the lame RP insult and assuming that the oatmeal created has nice raisins, walnuts, and brown sugar. **Grade: C**

May I make the obvious observation about these magical items? They are mostly crappy! As the premier musicians of the game, bards deserve better items. So I have a simple suggestion: **For any magical musical item that requires a target or targets to make a saving throw, the saving throw DC is the perform check made by the user to activate the item.** This rule makes magical instruments much more useful, and rewards characters who pump skill ranks into Perform.

And while I'm fixing how magical musical instruments work in D&D, may I make another suggestion: **Magical instruments grant a +2 circumstance bonus on Perform checks except for checks made to activate their magical properties.** It is absurd that a bard is incentivized to use a nonmagical masterwork instrument to make regular perform checks (for the +2 bonus) rather than a magical instrument he or she has at hand. With this rule, a bard can use a magical instrument for all bardic purposes.

But even with the rule changes I suggest above, the game has still short-changed bards in the magical instrument department. The game allows four categories of instrument, so let me suggest a new magical item in each.

Pipe of Snake Charming: This magical musical instrument, a [pungi](#), gives the wielder power over ophidians. When played by a person with one or more ranks in Perform (Winds), the piper can choose one of two functions. (1) The first function allows the piper to fascinate a snake or snake-like creature -- including a couatl, medusa, naga, etc -- within 25 ft if the target fails a Will save vs the piper's Perform check. The snake or snake-kin is fascinated, [per the standard condition](#), for so long as the piper makes a move action each round to keep playing, up to ten minutes. OR (2) the second function summons [a snake](#) to fight for the piper. The viper summoned depends on the perform check used to activate the item: less than 10, nothing; 10-19, a tiny viper; 20-29, a small viper; 30-39, a medium viper; 40-49, a large viper; and 50+, a huge viper. A summoned snake remains so long as the piper makes a move action each round to keep playing, up to ten minutes. The Pipe of Snake Charming may be used once per day unless the owner is a bard; bards can use the item twice per day.

Moderate enchantment/charm; CL 6th; Craft Wondrous Item, summon nature's ally I, hypnotism; Price 12,000 gp.

Keytar of Kuring: This musical instrument, a magical keytar -- or for medievalish purists, an [orphica](#) -- helps you become a better musical healer, but it only functions if you have at least one rank in Perform (Keyboards). When played as part of casting a Cure spell, the casting time increases to a full-round action, and your caster level increases by one for that spell. In addition, if you make a Perform (Keyboards) check vs DC 10+double the Cure spell's level, then the spell is empowered (DC12 for a Cure Light Wounds, for example, up to DC22 for a Mass Cure Moderate Wounds). If you have five or more ranks in Perform (Keyboards), you gain a +2 synergy bonus on Heal skill checks. Finally, thrice per day you can use the First Aid function of the Heal skill at a range of 25 ft., and when you do so successfully on a character with negative hit points, you not only stabilize the character but also heal the target to 0 hit points, bestowing the disabled condition. *Strong conjuration; CL 12th; Craft Wondrous Item, cure critical wounds, mage hand, sculpt sound; Price 40,000 gp.*

Lesser Keytar of Kuring: This version of the magic instrument offers only the +2 synergy bonus on Heal skill checks and the ranged First Aid power, which can only be used once per day -- not thrice per day as with the standard item. For some bards, just having a portable keyboard instrument is worth it.

Faint conjuration; CL 12th; Craft Wondrous Item, cure moderate wounds, mage hand, sculpt sound; Price 3,000 gp.

Bells of Tintinnabulation: This magical bell comes in four varieties, one for each major alignment. Each is activated once per day as a standard action with a DC13 Perform (Percussion) skill check; a failed check still counts as a daily use. If you have the same alignment as the bell, then you can activate the bell three times per day. Although the effect varies, the duration is the same for all: 1d4 minutes. *All Bells of Tintinnabulation are made with the Craft Wondrous Item feat, CL 5th, and a cost of 5,000 gp; the spell required for crafting is noted below.*

- A Silver Bell (Chaotic Good) grants a +1 morale bonus to all saves, attacks, and skill checks for you and your allies within 25 ft. *Faint enchantment/charm; bless or heroism; creator must be chaotic good.*
- A Golden Bell (Lawful Good) creates an effect as if you had cast Shield Other on an ally within 25 ft. If the ally is your lawful spouse, the bonus to AC and saves rises from +1 to +3. *Faint abjuration; shield other; creator must be lawful good.*
- A Brass Bell (Lawful Evil) imposes the shaken effect on all enemies within 25 feet who fail a Will saving throw equal to the activation Perform check. *Faint necromancy; cause fear; creator must be lawful evil.*
- An Iron Bell (Chaotic Evil) causes a fresh humanoid corpse (less than 24 hours dead, with head and extremities intact) to rise as a [ghoul](#) that serves for 1d4 minutes at your command; thereafter the animating magic ends. *Faint necromancy; animate dead; creator must be chaotic evil.*

Fiddle of Gold: This pure gold fiddle is evil, but using it is not an evil act, and using it with skill may aid a bold musician who is willing to take a gamble. The powers of the fiddle may be activated once per day. If the activation DC is successful for a Perform (Strings) check, then a beneficial result occurs. If the check is failed, a baleful effect occurs as well. The required DC varies each time the item is activated; the DC is 10 or 5d20-50, whichever is higher

Beneficial Effect: You gain a +5 morale bonus on Intimidate checks and attack rolls against evil outsiders. You also gain a +2 profane bonus on all saving throws. A bard also gains an additional +1 to the morale bonus of his Inspire Courage ability. These effects last until dawn the next day.

Baleful Effect: You gain the beneficial results AND your alignment shifts one step toward evil. If you are already evil, you gain only a -5 penalty on all attacks, saving throws, and skill checks until dawn of the next day.

These beneficial and baleful effects end when Remove Curse (or equivalent) is cast on the fiddle player. However, a fiddle player will not want to revert an altered alignment, and may deny or stymie the efforts of others to do so. Moreover, after the next day's dawn, the alignment shift is permanent.

Moderate conjuration; CL 18th; miracle, bestow curse, creator must be evil; Price 16,000 gp.



Chapter Five: The Prestigious Bard

An ancient musical instrument, the mystical power of dance, and your bard character!

As demonstrated in earlier chapters, the Bard can be compared favorably in spellcasting power with a Wizard at several levels, especially at lower levels. The Bard's early acquisition of several powerful spells and spell-like Bard music abilities compensates — and at some levels, more than compensates — for the Bard's slower spells-per-day advancement.

However, at higher levels, especially after 10th level, the Bard begins to pale in comparison with the Wizard. Therefore, the Bard may benefit more from multi-classing with a prestige class than Wizards do. That is especially true for prestige classes that advance casting in unusual ways, or only obliquely. For example, the dragon disciple and the arcane archer are especially good options paired with Bards, as highlighted in Chapter Three. I've written a number of new prestige classes that are great choices for bards. In another D&D eBook, [Cayzle's Little Splat Book of Prestige & Class](#), you can find bard-friendly prestige classes such as The Wandslinger and The Jukebox Hero. An option that basically replaces the core rules bard is The Olde Tyme Bard, which harkens back to the first edition of the game. And in this book, I have two prestige classes designed as excellent — but not overpowered — options for bards.

The **Bullroarer** follows an ancient primitive tradition that focuses on using his instrument as a weapon as well as a tool for creating bardic music. Using a stone or wooden blade on the end of a twisted cord, the Bullroarer creates an unearthly and beautiful humming sound that can travel long distances. The cord and blade can be deadly to those close by.

The **Dance-Fighter** is an inspirational warrior/caster who uses grace and performance in battle. Dodging about the battlefield, the Dance-Fighter uses scarves, hats, and fans to befuddle, trip, and disarm -- or may use maracas, tambours, bells, or other percussive instruments as magical light weapons.

The Bullroarer

A 3E D&D PrC that draws on ancient and mystic musical traditions

By whirling a [bullroarer](#) -- a carved blade at the end of a twisted cord -- a trained practitioner can create [an eerie vibration with odd melodic sounds](#). For thousands of years, this archaic wind instrument has been used to make music, to send messages, and to perform magic. Known by the same name as the instruments they play, bullroarers have learned to use these traditions for inspiration and combat prowess.

Role: Bullroarers wield their tools both as weapons and as instruments. In this way, they serve to inspire and support their allies, as well as joining the fray as nimble warriors. They use magic to attune and strengthen their bullroarers, which otherwise would not make effective melee weapons. But in the hands of an attuned bullroarer, the instrument becomes effective in both performance and combat. Bards, of course, make natural bullroarers, but even wizards, sorcerers, and clerics can use magic to attune a bullroarer.

Alignment: Bullroarers can be of any alignment.

Hit die: d10

Requirements

- Skills: Perform (Winds) 8 ranks.
- Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Whip).
- Spells: Ability to cast Sound Burst, Sculpt Sound, or Shout.
- Special: Bardic Knowledge or Knowledge (History) 10 ranks.

Table: Bullroarer

Lvl	Att	Fort	Refx	Will	Special Abilities
1	+1	+0	+2	+2	Bardic Music, Inspire Courage +1
2	+2	+0	+3	+3	Bullroar +1
3	+3	+1	+3	+3	Roarcast
4	+4	+1	+4	+4	Musical Message
5	+5	+1	+4	+4	Bullroarer +3
6	+6	+2	+5	+5	Divining Bob
7	+7	+2	+5	+5	Magical Message
8	+8	+2	+6	+6	Bullroarest +5, Inspire Courage +2
9	+9	+3	+6	+6	Inspire Greatness
10	+10	+3	+7	+7	Dowsing Bob

CLASS FEATURES

Class Skills: Balance (Dex), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (History) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language (None), Spellcraft (Int), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Points per level: 4 + Int modifier

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: You gain no new proficiency in any armor. You gain proficiency with a special weapon that only Bullroarers can use ...

***Attuned Bullroarer:** This short flattened two-edged stone or wood blade is attached to a length of cord; it is spun and twisted to lash out at foes near and far. In combat, it is an exotic two-handed reach weapon that can strike adjacent opponents as well as those 10 feet away. It has the Trip and Disarm abilities. It inflicts 1d6 base slashing damage when used by a medium-size creature and crits for x2 on a 20. A medium size attuned bullroarer weighs 2 pounds.*

By itself, a bullroarer is just an instrument and is not suited for combat use. However, as a character with the bullroarer prestige class, you can create and tune yourself to your instrument through a ceremony requiring a day's labor and a special casting of Sound Burst, Sculpt Sound, or Shout. You can only have one attuned bullroarer at a time. It is not a masterwork weapon nor a masterwork instrument.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bardic Music: Once per day per bullroarer level, you can use your attuned instrument to produce magical effects on those around you (usually including yourself, if desired). Each effect requires both a minimum bullroarer level and a minimum number of ranks in the Perform (Winds) skill to qualify.

Activating a bardic music effect is a standard action requiring the use of your attuned bullroarer while you have both hands free. Maintaining your effect after activation is a free action that requires using just one hand. While using your bullroarer bardic music, unlike the bard's ability, you can cast spells and activate magic items if you can do so with just one hand free. You may use your bullroarer in combat while you are maintaining, but not activating, your bardic music.

If you have both bard and bullroarer levels, your levels stack to determine the effects you can use, the power of those effects, and your uses per day. Also, you can choose to use your bullroarer to activate and maintain all bardic music effects. The effects available to bullroarers specifically are: Inspire Courage, as a bard, starting with a +1 bonus at level 1 and rising to a +2 bonus at level 8; and Inspire Greatness, as a bard, at level 9. In addition, drawing on the ancient tradition of using bullroarers in magical ceremonies, you gain this effect as well:

***Roarcast (Su):** At 3rd level, if you have 11 or more ranks in Perform (Winds), then the vibrations of your bullroarer can aid you and your allies in spellcasting. To be affected, an ally must be able to hear your bullroarer; the effect lasts for 5 rounds after your bullroarer cannot be heard. An affected ally receives a +1 morale bonus on concentration, use magic device, spell penetration, and turning checks; to scroll activation checks; and to saving throw DCs and caster level of spells cast. Roarcast*

is a mind-affecting ability. For characters with levels in a class that grants bardic music, this bonus increases to +2 at a combined effective 13th level.

Bullroar +1 (Su): At second level, your attuned bullroarer gains a permanent +1 enhancement bonus, exactly as a magical weapon. This enhancement bonus also applies to Perform checks made to play your bullroarer. Also, using the standard rules to do so, you can enchant your attuned bullroarer, or have it enchanted (usually with some non-enhancement-bonus effect, such as shocking or thundering).

Musical Message (Ex): At fourth level, you can send messages with your attuned instrument that anyone with this prestige class can understand. You can train any creature to understand single word messages. A creature can be taught to understand a number of words up to his or her Int+1, minimum one. Any non-bullroarer can also learn to understand complex messages by learning a language to do so. Bullroarer messages can travel a distance in miles up to the result of your perform check in clear terrain, such as plains or desert, or half that distance in forest, hills, and mountains.

Bullroarer +3 (Su): At fifth level, your attuned bullroarer's enhancement bonus rises to +3, including the bonus to Perform checks.

Divining Bob (Sp): At sixth level, you can use your attuned bullroarer to question the cosmos, ancestral spirits, or divinities. Hold your bullroarer by its cord so that the blade dangles down. Ask a question: if the blade bobs toward you, the answer is YES; if it bobs away from you, the answer is NO. If it sways from side to side, the answer is ambiguous. Asking a question is a full round action. You may use this ability a number of times per day equal to your bullroarer level plus your Wisdom score. A single question asked requires one use of the ability.

Magical Message (Su): At seventh level, you can send the vibrations of your attuned bullroarer along the grandiocosmic strings that connect living creatures. You may send messages to any creature you have met, at any distance, even across planes, in a language that you know. The recipient cannot send any message back, but you do know if it was received.

Bullroarest +5 (Su): At eighth level, your attuned bullroarer's enhancement bonus rises to +3, including the bonus to Perform checks.

Dowsing Bob (Sp): At tenth level, you gain the ability to use your bullroarer for magical locating. Hold your attuned bullroarer by its cord so that the blade dangles down. Name a person, place, or object. Your bullroarer will point the way, as per a Locate Object spell or a Locate Creature spell, usable at will as a spell-like ability. You can also use your bullroarer in this way as a Find the Path spell once per day.

Design Notes

With excellent hit points, bardic music, a unique melee weapon, and a fighter's attack advancement, the bullroarer is designed for solid combat ability leavened with some interesting communication and divination options. The synergy with prior levels in a class that grants bardic music makes a bard the best bullroarer, naturally.

The Dance-Fighter

A 3E D&D PrC that applies the grace and movement of dance to the challenge of melee.

In the ballet of battle, some warriors pirouette away from attacks, waltz between enemies, and sashay around foes for a flanking position, en pointe. The forms and practices of dance grants success on the stage of war. These are dance-fighters.

Role: These charismatic combatants are natural leaders. Admired for their agility and accuracy, and even more for their ability to inspire others to join in the dance, these choreographers of conflict make their allies more effective. Bards are natural dance-fighters, of course, but others, such as sorcerer-monks and clerics who honor musical gods, make excellent dance-fighters as well.

Alignment: Dance-fighters can be of any alignment. Lawful dance-fighters plan each move and rehearse constantly; chaotic dance-fighters are masters of improvisation. Good dance-fighters delight in entertaining others; neutral ones enjoy the adulation of fans; evil ones revel in the pleasure of using beauty to inflict pain.

Hit die: d8

Requirements

- Skills: Perform (Dance) 8 ranks.
- BAB: +4
- Reflex save: +4.
- Spells: Spontaneous casting or the ability to cast spells without preparation.

Table: Dance-Fighter

Lvl	Att	Fort	Refx	Will	Special Abilities
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Dancing Defense, Evasion
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Soft Props, Uncanny Dodge
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Musical Props
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Dancecast
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Moved to Land
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Choreographer
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Moved to Break
8	+6	+2	+6	+2	Sashay, Improved Uncanny Dodge
9	+6	+3	+6	+3	Moved to Magic
10	+7	+3	+7	+3	Grand Jeté, Improved Evasion

CLASS FEATURES

Class Skills: Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (nobility) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of

Hand (Dex), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), Use Magic Device (Cha), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points per level: 6 + Int modifier

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: You gain no proficiency with any weapon or armor, but you do gain the ability to use certain dancing props as weapons (see below).

Spellcasting: Your dance-fighter levels stack with levels in other spellcasting classes to advance caster level, but not spells per day or spells known.

Bonus Spells: You gain one bonus spell each time you gain a level in this prestige class, as from having a high ability score. A bonus spell can be added to any level of spells you already have the ability to cast. If you have more than one spellcasting class, you must decide to which class you add each bonus spell as it is gained. Once a bonus spell has been applied, it cannot be shifted. You also learn one spell of a level you can cast each time you gain a level.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Dancing Defense (Ex): At level 1, wearing light or no armor and not using a shield, you add 1 point of charisma bonus (if any) per dance-fighter class level as a dodge bonus to your Armor Class. If you are caught flat-footed or otherwise denied your Dexterity bonus, you also lose this bonus.

Evasion (Ex): At level 1, you can avoid even magical and unusual attacks with great agility. If you makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save, you instead take no damage. Evasion can be used only if you are wearing light armor or no armor. If you are helpless, then you do not gain the benefit of evasion.

Soft Props (Ex): At level 2, you can use ribbons, scarves, veils, fans, hats, and strips of cloth worth at least 50 gp as masterwork tools that grants you a +2 circumstance bonus on Perform (Dance) checks. You may wield soft props as light melee weapons that inflict 1d4 nonlethal damage (if you are medium size), threatening a critical hit on an 18-20 for x2 damage (as with a sap, you can inflict lethal damage with soft props if you attack with a -4 penalty to hit). You can draw or put away a soft prop as a free action instead of as a move action. Used as melee weapons, soft props gain the disarm, monk, nonlethal, and trip special features and also grant a circumstance bonus on trip, disarm, and grapple checks equal to your dance-fighter level.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): At level 2, you retain your Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) even if you are caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. However, you still lose your Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized. If you already have uncanny dodge from a different class, you automatically gain improved uncanny dodge instead.

Musical Props (Su): At level 3, you can use maracas, castanets, finger-cymbals, tambourines, bells, and rhythm sticks to aid your dancing and dance-fighting. If you have at least five ranks in Perform (Percussion), you gain a +2 synergy bonus on Perform (Dance) checks made while using these instruments. You may wield musical props as light melee weapons that inflict 1d6 damage (if you are medium size), threatening a critical hit on a 20 for x2 damage. Used in melee and wielded by you, these instruments gain an enhancement bonus on attacks and damage equal to one quarter of your ranks in Perform (Percussion), starting with +1 at 4 ranks and increasing to +5 at 20 ranks.

Also, when used against targets that are entirely made of bone, stone, glass, gem, or metal, musical props gain the bane magical ability and ignore all damage reduction.

Dancecast (Su): At level 4, you may use dance moves (as somatic components) to replace verbal and material components of spontaneously cast spells. Treat this as if you were using the Eschew Materials and Silent Spell feats, but not taking up a higher level spell slot. Dancecasting does not alter casting time, even when metamagic feats are used with the spell being cast.

Moved to Land (Ex): At level 5, you may use your Perform (Dance) ranks in place of your base attack bonus and your Charisma modifier in place of your Dexterity or Strength modifier to attack and damage. You may use this ability once per day, just before rolling an attack; it is not an action.

Choreographer (Su): At level 6, you gain a form of empathic projection that allows you to mentally prompt your allies to move together effectively, in dance or in combat. Using this ability requires you to use a move action each round, and it has a range of 25 feet plus five feet per two dance-fighter levels. When performing, your allies use your Perform (Dance) check, not their own. When fighting, your allies gain your Dancing Defense ability, using your bonus, when wearing light or no armor and not using a shield; also when fighting, increase all morale bonuses to attacks and damage for you and your allies by +1.

Moved to Break (Ex): At level 7, you may use your Perform (Dance) ranks in place of your base reflex save bonus and your Charisma modifier in place of your Dexterity modifier. You may use this ability once per day, just before rolling a reflex save; it is not an action.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): At level 8, you can no longer be flanked. This defense denies rogues the ability to sneak attack you by flanking you, unless the attacker has at least four more levels in classes that grant improved uncanny dodge than you do.

Sashay (Ex): At level 8, you no longer provoke attacks of opportunity by leaving threatened squares, unless the square is also occupied by an enemy.

Moved to Magic (Su): At level 9, you may use your Perform (Dance) ranks in place of your caster level. You may use this ability once per day, just before casting the spell; it is not an action.

Improved Evasion (Ex): At level 10, your Evasion ability gets better; you take no damage at all on successful saving throws against attacks that allow a Reflex saving throw for half damage. What's more, you take only half damage even if you fail your saving throw.

Grand Jeté (Su): At level 10, when wearing light or no armor and not using a shield, you gain a fly speed equal to a Perform (Dance) check, rolled anew each time you use this ability. The ability lasts only until the end of your turn, at which time you lose the ability to fly, and may fall if you do not have good footing. You activate this ability at will as a swift action, but not in consecutive rounds.

Design Notes

In concept, the shadowdancer and the duelist already fill the niche of the graceful warrior, but they fail to satisfy the true dancer. This prestige class combines casting with fighting and a deep dependence on skilled performance. It does not advance spells per day, but that's not a strong point for bards anyway. This gives more flexibility and more spells without increasing raw spell power.



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