



A Bardic Harp Miscellany

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What is a bard? *from my notebook:*

- * Bards are shamans who open doors to the power of the word/arts
- * poets, musicians, storytellers, lorekeepers
- * Bards record the heritage, myth, lineage, mythology

& stories of the tribe

* They create music, song, poetry and art in all its forms. They are "shapeshifters", attuned to the natural world and its rhythms, and part of nature (as all humans are meant to be), and able to embody different aspects of the natural world

Myth: "The immense inner language of the soul" (Michael Meade). The idea is that this becomes imprinted on our souls during the process of our birth. It is our inheritance. In response to the gifts of nature and creation that we are born into, humans are here to offer back this poetic imagination we all carry inside. We each do this (ideally) in our unique ways.

A bard consciously works with myth - this inner language of the soul - by way of the threads of their legacy & teachings, and own unique imagination.

An idea about the creative force of sound:
the Word is used to generate "seeds of light" - sound that echoes through creation, changing it (magic)

"The bards of old inhabited a magic reality of their own making, and they made of their lives a fairy tale. They could not be caged by possibilities, nor could they be bought. Poetic insight is more important in our lives than ever in this computerized, industrialized age. We desperately need people who are passionately alive in an enchanted reality, cohabited by the spirits, the ancestors, and the gods."

- Robin Williamson, forward to **The Bardic Sourcebook**, ed. John Matthews.

"There is no shortage of mysteries. What would happen if you were to understand one of them?" - Rumi

"The true university is the forest. We need simply to open ourselves to the life around us." - Brooke Medicine Eagle, forward to **Sacred Plant Medicine** by Stephen Harrod Buhner

"We are mythic by nature. We find the subtle symbolic ground hidden in ourselves. Myth is the second nature of the world. Nature with its rhythm, cyclical activity ... is the first." - Michael Meade, **Entering Mythic Territory**

As a 21st century bard, or harper & wordsmith, you might want to go to these sources for 'training'/inspiration.

The Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids (OBOD) - www.druidry.org

Yes, you can actually study to be a bard with their Bardic grade distance learning course. Includes a lot of Celtic lore, ritual, history of the Druids and what it means to be a Druid in our time, natural mystery, and more.

The Festival Guild - www.festivalguild.com

Immerse yourself in celebrating the rhythms of the natural world. Membership in the Guild offers you a wealth of information in what the eight earth festivals are (the Solstices and Cross-quarter festivals), what they represent symbolically and energetically in the wheel of the year and how that links with our personal lives, plus fun and easy ideas for celebrating the festivals with children.

NatureWalk free 7-day e-course, and the Kamana Naturalist Training Program (independent study) - Wilderness Awareness School - www.wildernessawareness.org

Humans *are* part of the natural world. WAS helps you develop skills and awareness that is our birthright as human beings. Underlying their work in nature awareness is a mentoring model and style of teaching derived from common elements in various native scouting cultures from throughout the world.

Kindling The Celtic Spirit - by Mara Freeman

Celtic folklore and tales, saints lore, festivals, gods & goddess connecting with the Wheel of the Year.



Audio recordings by mythologist & storyteller **Michael Meade** - www.mosaicvoices.org Each of us has gifts and a unique life purpose that yearns to be expressed and recognized and blessed. View your life and the unraveling of our modern culture through the lens of myth, poetry and story. This is amazing stuff!

YES! The Journal of Positive Futures - www.yesmagazine.org

Part of the work of our times is to change the stories that our culture tells itself and our young. We need to pass on hopeful stories, and stories of abundance and positive change that are happening now, without blinding ourselves to the hard realities and challenges of our times.

"Changing the prevailing stories in the U.S. may be easier to accomplish than we might think." - David Korten, "The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community", **YES!**, Summer 2006



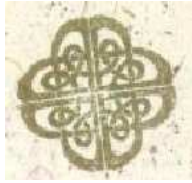
Magic For The Morning

Text from ***Celtic Devotional: Daily Prayers & Blessings by Caitlin Matthews***. Play with interspersing these or other musical ideas in with the words! Set harp set to Key of C

OPENING: Invocation of the Divine

harp: improvise in G Mixolydian (or noodle on G chords - using just the notes G, D, & B, with a few 'passing tones' in between)

(spoken with harp tidbits here and there, evocative of the images):



Kindler of Dawn
Spirit of Summer
I rise up with you
Under winds and water,
under hills and heavens
this summer day

AWAKENING THE SOUL: which is like the traditional waking of the hearthfire in the morning

(you can chant the words or make up a melody based on the phrasing - how you might speak the words. Play some drones, perhaps using F chords. For some extra stuff, add harp sparkles for all this "light" stuff)

I illuminate the soul with
the gift of sunlight
ray of love
ray of light
ray of life
be upon my heart, my brow, my hands
May my soul be preserved
from morning's break
to night's falling

THE ENCIRCLING OF HELP

I make the encircling and go forth today
under the power of the heavens

light of sun
radiance of moon
splendor of fire
speed of lightning
swiftness of wind
depth of sea
stability of earth
firmness of rock

From the heights to the depths may I be
encircled in love & safety

play glissandi in sweeping circles on
your harp

- play Cs up and down harp
- random high clusters of notes
- bright sparkling chords

- zigzagging downward glissandi
- light swift glisses
- low, flowing sounds
- C - G - C chords
- ?

Play high and low stuff, and then sweep
through the middle range of your harp.

Bardic Harp Workshop

Welcome! We'll begin by "bringing our minds together as one" - or, in our case, "bringing our harps/hearts together as one". Beginning and ending a gathering in Thanksgiving is an ancient practice of the Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse). Better known to many as the Iroquois Confederacy - this confederation of northeastern Native peoples (the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora Nations) has built a peace with one another that has lasted for more than 1000 years. Their practice of Thanksgiving helps them to align with each other and with the natural world, to mystery, and to the future generations. This regularly connecting inspires thoughtful decision-making, as well as peace of mind.

[See the children's book **Giving Thanks**, by Chief Jake Swamp, for a sense of their actual Thanksgiving Address.]

What we'll do here is a simple way of offering thanks, while also diving into Bardic Harp - mixing spoken word with harp. Have harps tuned to Key of C!

THANKSGIVING CIRCLE:

Everyone plays G chords (G, B, D notes in any configuration) in a slow 4/4 rhythm. Get that soundscape going, then soften so that everyone can hear what's being said. Each person will say something that they are thankful for - (example: "the summer sun" or "this great opportunity to come together this weekend and play harp together"). As each person finishes saying something, allow space for the people on either side to noodle a little something, or pluck a few random strings. No need to feel like you have to be splashy or brilliant - just do a short simple something, even if its just playing a G or two!

Keep the circle moving, and at the end, the person who starts the circle says something like: "And now our minds (or harps, or hearts) are together as one" or "And now our Circle is attune".

WHAT IS BARDIC HARP? Simply put, it's just the mindset of weaving a space outside of ordinary place & time using harp and word, of consciously taking the listener to some other realm (not necessarily magical). As players of our beautiful harps, this happens anyway. I'd just like you to see yourselves as weaving an Otherworld, mythic, sanctuary, or sacred space when you take up the harp and speak - even if it's just to say your name!

The harp in particular weaves this magical space. See how magical the ordinary sounds when you accompany it with harp:

BEYOND THE ORDINARY:

Go around the circle. Each person says something 'ordinary' like "I have a red car", "I like rice and beans", "my cat's name is Fido" while playing

a few notes, a chord or an arpeggio on the harp. For "extra credit", try speaking in a dramatic voice of some kind - bold, scared, wistful, whatever. It almost doesn't matter what you say when you have the magic of the harp as well as intent in your voice. Be silly, playful, and have fun!

A BARD'S TOOL KIT:

Here are some useful ideas or skills to have when trying to figure out what you might do with your harp in relation to words. With the two previous circles, they've probably all been done by now! [Note to guide: how about introducing each idea, then getting a volunteer or two to try out it out, perhaps pulling a Rumi card, or just reading a sentence off a handout

Improvisation (or "noodling"): The simplest forms are just playing notes of a chord or a chord pattern, as was done in the Thanksgiving Circle. Try creating chord progressions - Am to G to Em - for example - to sandwich a poem, or interweave it with the poem.

Special effects: harmonics, glisses, tremolos, tuning keys on strings ...Great for evoking moods are emphasizing an image

Harp as punctuation: Here, you really aren't concerned much with musicality. Ex.: Voice: "The cloud hurled itself on the dozing cow!"

Harp (as your hand slaps the strings): *whack*.

Snippets of songs: Use them to set the scene, or between sections of a story or poem, or ...

Harp as percussion: Don't forget that the harp sound box is a drum! You can tap a rhythm, or make the sound of someone walking and then breaking into a run

Whole songs: Patrick Ball often tells stories this way - placing a song interlude during different points of the tale.

You can use your voice in different ways: you can *speak* the words, *chant* them, or *sing* them. (maybe other ways too!)

Playing With Possibility.

Each person draws a Rumi card or a 'silly sentence' card, and reads it. After a minute go around the circle again, with each person saying the words (or something like them!) and accompanying the words with harp. The idea once again is to experiment, and try something new, not to 'perform'.

Any questions? Ideas? Thoughts?

Releasing The Circle.

This can be short and sweet: Everyone will think of one thing they're thankful for. On the count of three everyone shouts that word and plays a little something based on a C or G chord. And now our harps/hearts are separated! Thanks to all of you for taking part in this workshop-by-handout, and to Deb for being your guide!