

Objectives – Students will be able to:

- Have a working knowledge of the formal and informal framework in which SCA bards operate
- Name 3 objectives they wish to pursue for the coming year
- Identify 1 long term goal they wish to pursue as a bard

Introduction – What is a bard?

- “Bard” in the SCA is a catch-all term, and is primarily about your endeavors rather than your persona
- SCA Definition (for this class) – Solo vocal performer
- Things SCA bards sometimes do:
 - Sing, tell stories, poetry
 - Adapt period works for performance to modern SCA audiences
 - Write original works which are often (but not always) about our Society
 - Collaborate with other bards
 - Choose not to call themselves “bards”
- The roles of a bard in the SCA:
 - Entertainer: Circle performer/Fire-walker, busker, stage performer
 - Baronial or kingdom level “champion”
 - SCA historian, creator of “word-fame”, teacher of societal values
 - Patron and advocate for bards and the Bardic Arts
- The place of Bardic Arts in the SCA
 - Falls under Performing Arts
 - Falls under Arts & Sciences pillar of the SCA (as opposed to Martial or Service)
 - Peerage path is primarily the Laurel path, usually requires research focus to advance
 - Lack of physical artifacts makes bardic a difficult fit with A&S, and recognition varies wildly from kingdom to kingdom
 - Two areas bards may compete: in bardic competitions (primary focus on performance), and A&S competition (primary focus on research and documentation)

Getting started as a bard

- What should you perform?
 - What excites you as a performer, *right now*?
 - What are you good at performing, *right now*?
 - What would excite you to learn or get better at, *right now*?
- Where/when should you perform?
 - Bardic circles – especially when publicized at big events
 - Informal bardic circles at smaller events
 - Local bardic circles or workshops in between events
 - Informal venues, such as street corners or at camp
- What should you be careful about when you’re getting started?
 - “Hostage bardic” – stop after you finish a piece, and do not continue unless asked
 - Leaving as soon as you finish performing, if there are other performers
 - Give author credit when you know it, and claim it if it’s yours
 - Appropriateness of a piece to the venue – watch performers, or ask someone leading
 - Does it need to be period? (The answer is very often “no”, but check)
 - Is risqué or bawdy okay? (If young ones, then no; if serious drinking, then probably)
 - The 10-foot rule – if it doesn’t sound brazenly modern or have obvious references to modern life or tech, is probably broadly SCA appropriate

- How will you know you are doing well?
 - Applause and audience response
 - Praise after a performance
 - Tokens (if someone tells you the provenance of a token or gift, try to write it down)

Developing as a bard

- How do you learn new material (or source material)?
 - If you loved something you heard, ask the performer about it (away from the space)
 - Who wrote it? (Don't assume the performer unless stated)
 - What is the period source or SCA inspiration, if any?
 - Would it be all right for you to perform it (with attribution)?
 - Ask experienced performers about sources – whose performances do you enjoy?
 - Is there a period, or a period work, or a period form that you enjoy? Research it
- How do you improve your performance, composition, or research skills?
 - Classes at events, and local group bardic workshops
 - Take time to introduce yourself to performers who impress you – honest praise works
 - Online forums, such as the “SCA Bardic Arts” group on Facebook
 - Network at bardic gatherings, competitions, and special events
 - Online research – YouTube is your friend
- Recognize other bards – after a few events or a year, find/make tokens of your own to give

Advancement

- Most kingdoms have 3 levels of A&S award – AoA level, Grant level, and Patent level (the Laurel)
- Grant level and Laurel are usually the result of demonstrating period work, research, and PLQ's
- Some kingdoms have special awards for performing or composition
- Competitions, championships, and other special bardic events bring prestige
- Finding a mentor – traditionally, a Laurel to apprentice with after a one-year stint as “student”
 - Someone you have a strong rapport and mutual respect with
 - Someone with experience, strong performing skills, and a good reputation (ask around)
 - Someone in your kingdom and general performance type is good, but not always critical
 - Can give honest helpful feedback, network, promote/protect you, support your goals
 - Assess areas that are not long-term strengths, and consider a mentor who balances that
- Do you want to perform concerts? Get to know organizers / regional bardic champions, discuss
- Do you want to be a recording artist? Explore with other experienced performers, ask questions

Fame and Reputation

- Wanting to “get known” is understandable in the SCA, and especially as a performer
- What you get known for becomes your reputation, which will last longer than your fame will
- Humility isn't about thinking you're not that good, it's about knowing there is more to learn, and everyone you meet has something special that is worthy of your respect and attention
- Progress in the SCA will be occasionally very fast, and often very slow
- Social mistakes are *much* more damaging than messing up *any* performance you give
- If you make mistakes, it will be hard to get feedback unless people know you have a mentor to speak to
- Have a mentor and maybe two close friends (plus your spouse or partner) that you can vent to
- Focus on your growth, your enjoyment, and what you create, rather than outcomes and awards