

### **Minstrels**

When I first mentioned the changes that I was considering for the Minstrel there was, with reason, a large outpouring of concern and question about the changes. More pointedly, however, many players wanted to know why we were making changes to the Minstrel in the first place. I hope, through this diary, to allay those concerns and questions enough to allow for a gentle transition to the new methods employed by the Minstrel. If nothing else, I hope that this diary explains the reasons for the changes and provides a roadmap for the future of the class.

### **Medium Armour – Super Important**

Minstrels will no longer be able to wear medium armour. The trait allowing Minstrels to wear medium armour is being replaced with something that is equally valuable. It is important to note that any medium armour that is bound and that the Minstrel is wearing when the Isengard expansion goes live will become light armour.

### **Terminology**

Minstrels are based around performance and music. The terminology of the Minstrel's skills has always been closely tied to the musical terms, though they are inconsistent in many cases. This remains true, but the reliance on musical terminology has been expanded somewhat. I am calling this out because it has a measure of relevance as you read more.

### **Ballads**

This is the first place where the changes will be felt by the Minstrels. No longer will the Minstrel need to use a previous tier of ballad to gain access to the next. Ballads have been consolidated into three types: Major, Minor and Perfect. This terminology is rooted firmly in music and not in progression. Minor refers to the minor intervals or chords that make diminished or dissonant sounds; major to the intervals and chords that make bold and pleasing sounds; perfect refers to chord progressions and intervals that are in perfect sound alignment striking resonant and whole sounding tones.

Each ballad still provides buffs to the Minstrel, but these buffs are tied more closely to the goal of the stances that the Minstrel employs. The stances, discussed in the next section, roughly equal healing, damage and power conservation. Each ballad provides buffs that enhance healing, power reduction or damage. Unlike the previous system, the buffs provided do not wear off over a short period of time; nor do these buffs enhance the Minstrel as greatly as they did before. Instead, these buffs apply themselves to the Minstrel and will stay active on the Minstrel until they actively leave combat for a short period or they use other skills that remove them. In addition to providing buffs each ballad also deals damage to a target or, in the case of the Major Ballad, serves a dual purpose to heal or deal damage dependent on stance.

### **Minor Ballad**



This is the icon for Minor Ballad.

The Minor Ballad is the primary damage-dealing ballad. This is a direct damage skill that acquires bonuses from the tactical value of your weapon. It can be used to initiate combat or at any time in combat. The skill will apply a buff to you that increases the damage output of tactical skills by 3%, increases outgoing healing by 1% and decreases the cost of all non-anthem skills by 1%.



This is the icon for Minor Ballad Bluff.

### **Perfect Ballad**



This is the icon for the Perfect Ballad.

The Perfect Ballad is the secondary damage-dealing ballad. This is a direct damage skill that acquires bonuses from the tactical value of your weapon. It can be used to initiate combat or at any time in combat. The Perfect Ballad will apply a buff to you that decreases the cost of non-Anthem skills by 3%, increases the damage of tactical skills by 1% and increases the outgoing healing by 1%.



This is the icon for the Perfect Ballad Buff.

### **Major Ballad**



This is the icon for the healing version of the Major Ballad.



This is the icon for the damage-dealing version of the Major Ballad.

The Major Ballad is a morphing skill. When the Minstrel has no stance selected, the skill will heal their fellowship for a flat value enhanced by the tactical value of their weapon and the bonus of their outgoing healing. This can only be used in combat.

When the Minstrel is in Harmony stance or War-speech stance, the Major Ballad will become the tertiary damage ballad. Again, the damage is increased by the tactical value of your weapon and can be used to initiate or throughout combat.

The major ballad will apply a buff to the Minstrel that increases their outgoing healing by 3%, increases the damage of tactical skills by 1% and decreases the cost of all non-Anthem skills by 1%.



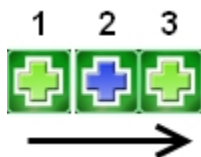
This is the icon for the Major Ballad Buff.

### **Ballad Buff Rotation**

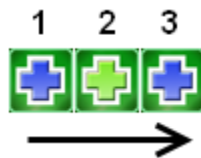
Ballad buffs will apply to the character in a rotational way, each stacking their bonus onto all other existing ballad buffs. This rotation will allow the Minstrel to support three ballad buffs active at any given time and will overwrite each other in a first in, first out rotation.

This is a little difficult to understand with just words, so let me provide you with some visual aid:

A Minstrel, healing a six-man group, wants to have some flexibility to heal well and maintain a little power. This Minstrel opens the fight with a Major Ballad, Perfect Ballad and finally another Major Ballad. His buffs look like this:



As the fight progresses, the Minstrel realizes that his power is disappearing quickly and so they want to increase their power savings. They play another perfect ballad:



As you can see, the oldest Major Ballad buff was bumped for the newly played Perfect Ballad. The next ballad to be played will bump the oldest buff off and move into the newest location. This is the new ballad buff rotation.

An important piece of the ballad buff rotation is that it is extraordinarily flexible allowing the Minstrel the ability to fine tune the buffs to the situation that they are facing. If they are in for a long DPS fight and not required to heal they can lower their overall damage output by utilizing the power reduction Perfect Ballad buffs. For moments when they want to burn hot, they can switch their ballads to all damage. Perhaps they want to remain balanced in their approach and apply one of each ballad. Or maybe heals need to be very, very strong and they can switch to all Major Ballad buffs. The transition is fairly quick and can be shifted as needed.

### **Minstrel Stances**

Minstrels have had two stances for quite some time now – no stance and War-speech. With the revisions as part of Isengard there are now three stances that the Minstrel can use. In this section we are going to discuss the stances themselves and identify the skills that they alter to paint a clearer picture of what the Minstrel can come to expect when they employ these skills.

#### ***Melody (No Stance)***

Minstrels not currently employing a stance are now considered to be using the Melody stance. Melody is considered to be the main healing stance and is the basic stance for Minstrels. Melody provides no innate abilities but will alter some skills to target them more towards healing.



#### ***Melody – Anthem of the Third Age (Melody)***

This anthem increases the Minstrel's outgoing healing by 10% and also reduces the induction of all Minstrel skills by 25%.



#### ***Melody – The Melody of Battle***

This is the Melody version of the skill Echoes of Battle. While in Melody, the skill provides a target with a boost to their parry rating and also provides them with a small reflective damage shield. This can be applied to any member of your fellowship and is a toggle skill.



#### ***Melody – Coda of Healing***

The coda, discussed in detail later, will heal a target for a large amount. This heal has no induction time.



#### ***Cry of the Chorus (Melody)***

In the baseline stance, Cry of the Chorus will provide the Minstrel with three Major Ballad buffs, which will unlock anthem and coda use and apply a bonus to damage, healing and a reduction in power costs.

#### ***Harmony Stance***

The Harmony stance is a unique stance driving the Minstrel into the fray to fight foes up close. The primary role of Harmony is to be the fellowship buffer, but healing and damage remain possible while in this stance. Harmony adjusts the bonus in healing granted by Noble Cause infused Herald's Hammer and provides a moderate amount of bonus damage for ballad skills. As with Melody, Harmony stance alters the same skills in different ways, allowing them to be used in a method that fits the stance more readily.



#### ***Harmony – Anthem of the Third Age (Harmony)***

This anthem reduces the cost of all anthems by 20%.



#### ***Harmony – Echoes of Battle***

In the Harmony stance, the skill for Echoes of Battle becomes the baseline version of the skill as it has always been.



#### ***Harmony – Coda of Resonance***

The Coda of Resonance allows the Minstrel to deal damage to nearby targets as well as healing nearby friendly targets.



#### ***Cry of the Chorus (Harmony)***

In the Harmony stance, Cry of the Chorus will provide the Minstrel with three Perfect Ballad buffs, which will unlock anthem and coda use, and apply a bonus to damage, healing and a reduction in power costs.

### ***War-speech Stance***

War-speech is the main DPS line for Minstrel. War-speech decreases the cooldown on Piercing Cry, increases the chance that Piercing Cry will critical, increases the damage on all ballads and converts all healing skills to be self only. You did not read that wrong – the negative healing has been removed and replaced with self only healing while in War-speech. War-speech converts the Minstrel into a damage dealer. To help alleviate the issues that this may cause when grouping, we have removed the tail effect from War-speech. You can now drop War-speech and heal as you please. Like the previous two stances, the same skills undergo conversions when the Minstrel is in War-speech.



#### ***War-speech – Anthem of the Third Age (War-speech)***

In War-speech the Anthem of the Third Age increases all damage from your call abilities by 10%.



#### ***War-speech – Timeless Echoes of Battle (War-speech)***

In the War-speech stance this skill deals more damage to a target and remains a toggle skill as it is now.



### ***War-speech – Coda of Fury***

Coda of Fury deals a significant amount of damage to a single target and is an excellent finisher for the Minstrel.



### ***Cry of the Chorus (War-speech)***

In the War-speech stance, Cry of the Chorus will provide the Minstrel with three Minor Ballad buffs. This will unlock Anthem and Coda use and apply a bonus to damage, healing and a reduction in power costs.

## **Anthems**

Perhaps the most significant change to the Minstrel class is the change made to anthem skills. In the pre-Isengard build, anthems were dual purpose skills. With the revisions coming with Isengard, anthems are now buffs. They will buff you or your fellows but they will now only be buffs. Anthems will now require the Minstrel to have three active ballad buffs on them to cast, but there are no longer any anthems that remove ballad tiers. Critically, anthems now all have identical durations and share a unified cooldown; the cooldown base is 20 seconds and the duration base is 10 seconds. This will force the Minstrel to take a more active role in maintaining buffs from anthems on themselves and their fellows. Careful trait selection will allow the Minstrel to more effectively use and maintain their Anthems.

Anthems will now require the Minstrel to have three active ballad buffs on them to cast.

A lot of consternation arose over the secondary application of anthems. The concern that Minstrels were becoming very much like a Warden seem to stem from the change to anthems that allows them to add extra benefits to the coda. This is an important piece of the revision as it provides some truly powerful bonuses that may become mainstays of the Minstrel class. At the end of this section, I will provide a little chart that expresses the effects that anthems have on codas separated from all the other information.



### ***Anthem of Compassion***

Anthem of Compassion decreases the amount of threat that the Minstrel generates when casting healing skills. While active the coda gains: Coda generates 0 threat.



### ***Anthem of the Free Peoples***

Anthem of the Free Peoples increases the amount of in-combat morale generation to your fellowship. While active if the coda is used: Applies a small morale over time effect to the Minstrel.



### ***Anthem of the Third Age (Melody, Harmony, War-speech)***

The exact benefits of these effects are discussed in the stance sections above, so we only need to spell out the effect of the skills on the codas.

Melody grants - While active if the coda is used: Your next Bolster Courage can be cast without an induction timer or power cost if cast within ten seconds.

Harmony grants – While active if the coda is used and criticals: Anthem of the Third Age (Harmony) is reapplied to the Minstrel.

War-speech grants – While active if the coda is used: Remove the cooldown on Call of the Second Age.



### ***Anthem of War***

The Anthem of War increases your fellowship's melee damage output by 10% and their ranged and tactical damage output by 5%. While active: Coda gains a significant addition to its critical rating.



### ***Anthem of Prowess***

This anthem increases the armour, evade and attack speed of all your fellow members. While active if the coda is used: Coda activates Noble Cause without invoking the Noble Cause cooldown.



### ***Anthem of Composure***

The Anthem of Composure increases the resistance rating and tactical mitigation of all your fellowship members. While active if the coda is used: Coda applies a short power over time restoration to the Minstrel.

#### **Anthem**

#### **Coda Influence**









### ***Anthem of Compassion***

Coda generates 0 threat when used



### ***Anthem of the Free Peoples***

Coda applies a small morale over time to Minstrel

	<b>Anthem of the Third Age (Melody)</b>	Coda grants free use of Bolster Courage for 10 seconds.
	<b>Anthem of the Third Age (Harmony)</b>	On critical restores the Anthem of the Third Age (Harmony)
	<b>Anthem of the Third Age (War-speech)</b>	Coda removes the cooldown on Call of the Second Age
	<b>Anthem of War</b>	Coda has an increase chance to critical
	<b>Anthem of Prowess</b>	Coda grants Noble Cause effect
	<b>Anthem of Composure</b>	Coda applies a short power over time to Minstrel

### Codas

Having just talked about how these new skills are altered by both stance and anthem it seems that we should discuss what the codas actually do. This is a new Minstrel mechanic that takes a nod from some of the previous functionality that the Anthem used.

The coda looks at all anthems that the Minstrel is currently running, applies any of the effects that it should apply to the Minstrel and removes any existing anthems and ballad buffs from the Minstrel. It also has a core ability based off of the stance that the Minstrel is currently using. Codas require that the Minstrel possesses three active ballads before they can be used.

To ensure that you are getting the most out of your Coda skills, you should always make certain that there is at least one active anthem on your character at a given time.

### Other Skill Changes

So far we have discussed the revisions to stances, ballads and anthems, as well as the addition of codas, but what about the other skill changes that must be coming with the Isengard revisions? In this section, we will highlight the other changes that are coming to the skills that Minstrels use on a battle to battle basis.

### **Cry of the Valar**



This former anthem is now a cry. The difference between cries and calls is the ability to use cries outside of War-speech. This means that the skill no longer requires ballads and can be used as part of any stance's damage rotation.



#### ***Cry of the Wizards***

Another convert from anthem to cry, Cry of the Wizards, once acquired, can be moved into the basic rotation for all Minstrel builds.



#### ***Song of Aid***

Class abilities that are opened while Song of Aid is active are consistent with the changes made to all classes. Skills or abilities unlocked are a little more potent in some cases.



#### ***Story of Courage***

The skill is renamed from Cure Fear to Story of Courage; this was done to fit more in line with the terminologies used for the Minstrel class.



#### ***Story of the Hammerhand and Song of the Hammerhand***

Lyric of the Hammerhand was renamed to Story of the Hammerhand. Story and Song of the Hammerhand have been altered to allow for the protective effect to no longer drain power in place of morale. Instead, each skill now applies a damage absorbing morale bubble on the Minstrel that will last for 30 seconds. The skills can be used very often, but will cost 5% of your power to cast. However, if the bubble expires (completes its duration without being destroyed) the power spent to create the bubble is restored to your power pool.



#### ***Gift of the Hammerhand***

Like the Story and Song of the Hammerhand, the Gift of the Hammerhand is now a damage absorbing morale bubble that lasts for a short time (10 seconds) and will prevent the target from receiving morale damage until it either expires or is destroyed by taking more damage than it can absorb.



#### ***Invocation of Elbereth***

This skill was formerly called Cry of the Valar. With Anthem of the Valar becoming Cry of the Valar, one skill had to have a name change. Since this skill literally invokes the name of Elbereth to drive fear into your enemies, we renamed it accordingly.



#### **Call to Greatness**

Changes with classes have changed the effects granted by Call to Greatness. Minstrels, for example, who are now called to greatness are given +10% to their Outgoing Healing and reduce the reset time on Chord of Salvation by 5 seconds.



#### **Tale of Battle**

Changes to the way that resistances are handled increased the value of this tale by turning the wound resistance into a bonus that now affects all resistances instead.

There are other skills that have changed too, but the changes are very minor or simply beneficial in that the reset timers have been reduced. Most of the renaming matches the new convention of using "improved" in the name of the improved skills instead of renaming them entirely.

#### **Traits and Trait-lines**

Other important changes to the Minstrel are taking place in the traits and trait lines. The changes here are to support the three distinct trait lines and highlight the flexibility present in the new ballad system. Any traits not listed here have not been adjusted and will continue to function as they always have.

##### *Watcher of Resolve*

*Life Singer* moves from providing a discount in power costs and gains an increase to the critical chance for your healing spells. The trait also increases the bonus received to healing from all ballad buffs.

*Silver Tongue* loses the reduction in song cooldowns and increases the magnitude of your healing critical effects.

*Subtle Movements* trades the ability to lower the threat generated by skills and instead modifies Bolster Courage to no longer suffer setbacks when taking damage.

*Improved Song of Soothing* now removes the induction time of *Song of Soothing* and increases the radius of the ability by 5 meters.

*Improved Raise the Spirit*, in addition to reducing the cooldown and induction time of the skill, also adds a 10% bonus to healing.

*The Watcher of Resolve* trait line changes are fairly impactful and extend throughout the set bonuses. The capstone remains the same, but the two-set bonus becomes a 5% bonus to all outgoing healing. At the three-set bonus the Major Ballad bonus gains a 1% increase and *Chord of Salvation* gains a 10% bonus to healing and the four-set bonus provides the Major Ballad buff with an additional 2% bonus to healing, the Minstrel also gains another 10% bonus to outgoing healing and the Anthem of Compassion, once cast, will remain active on the Minstrel for as long as they are in combat or do not use their coda.

#### ***The Protector of Song***

*Absolute Pitch* trades the ballad duration buff for an increase in the bonus power reduction offered by all ballad bonuses by 1%.

*Heralded Saviour* loses the bonus duration of *Song of Aid* and gains an increase in the healing done by Herald's Strike when Noble Cause is active.

*Flow of Harmony* trades the power per second cost of tales for a reduction in the cost of anthems.

Battle-hymn loses the bonus morale generation that it once gave to Cry of the Valar (this is moved to the skill) and gains bonuses to the armour and evade ratings that the Anthem of Prowess offers to the fellowship.

Lyrics of Bravery now increases the resistance and the tactical defence of the Minstrel.

*Smooth Voice* is altered to now allow anthems to cool down 5 seconds faster and reduces the cost of all ballad skills.

*Heralded Resolve* replaces the minor self morale restoration to Herald's Strike with a minor power restoration instead. This works only on Herald's Strike(s) used without Noble Cause.

*Glorious Anthem* now increases the duration of all anthems by 5 seconds.

The *Protector of Song* trait-line maintains the Master of Tales capstone and moves the two-set bonus to a 20 second reduction in Call to Greatness. The three-set bonus reduces the cooldown on all anthems by 5 seconds and increases the reduction in power cost offered by the Perfect Ballad buff by another 1%. The four-set bonus now reduces the cooldown on Anthems by another 5 seconds and increases the duration by 5 seconds. In addition, it also decreases the cost of anthems and further increases the power reduction by another 2%. Finally, it also makes Anthem of the Third Age (Harmony) is permanent while in the Harmony stance.

#### ***The Warrior-skald***

*Discordant Melody* replaces Harmonious Melody and provides a bonus to the critical chance of Minor and Perfect Ballads.

*Powerful Voice* now decreases your target's resistance rating against your War-speech calls.

*Light in the Dark* provides a damage bonus to ballads and codas and also increases the damage bonus offered by all ballad buffs by 1%.

*Armour of Song* replaces the trait allowing the Minstrel to wear medium armour. This is a significant change and we have instituted a method to replace medium gear with light in the game. The change to this trait allows us to create better armour sets for each of the classes and the overall effect allows the Minstrel to achieve better values on their armour rating.

*Enduring Morale* increases morale and when in War-speech gives your calls a chance to allow for your healing to be used on targets other than yourself. This skill mirrors the ability that the Power of Song granted with healing skills unlocking War-speech calls.

*The Warrior-skald* trait-line undergoes some minor changes. The capstone remains the same. The two-set bonus increases the damage bonus on the minor ballad damage buff by 1%. The three-set bonus is unchanged and the four-set bonus now increases the ballad damage by 25% while also increasing the damage bonus on the Minor Ballad buff by 2%. Finally, the Anthem of War will also become permanent when in War-speech.

### Changes to Instruments

With the changes to the nature of the Minstrel we also needed to take a pass at all the instruments that are available. These changes are listed here.

<b>Instrument Modifier (Base)</b>	<b>Modifier (Critical)</b>
Cowbell Ballad and Coda – Damage Ballad, Cry and Coda – Power Cost Reduction	Threat Reduction
Horn Healing – Critical Bonus Threat Reduction	Anthem – Power Cost Reduction
Clarinet Healing – Critical Bonus Healing – Power Cost Reduction	Threat Reduction
Bagpipe Ballad and Coda – Critical Chance	Threat Reduction
Theorbo Healing – Bonus	Threat Reduction
Drum Ballad and Coda - Damage	Threat Reduction

Flute      Ballad, Cry and Coda – Power Cost Reduction Threat Reduction

Harp      Anthem – Power Cost Reduction                      Threat Reduction

Lute      Healing – Power Cost Reduction                      Threat Reduction

### Conclusion

The metamorphosis that Minstrels have undergone is likely to seem overwhelming. I expect that some folks are not going to appreciate the changes for some time. I am confident, however, that the changes are going to be much easier than they appear on paper and will allow for the Minstrel to feel more active and viable during play.