

chicago manual of style for theater studies

Applying the Chicago Manual of Style for Theater Studies: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago manual of style for theater studies serves as the bedrock for academic and professional discourse within the theatrical realm, ensuring clarity, consistency, and credibility in scholarly work. This exhaustive guide will delve into the intricacies of employing Chicago style specifically for theatre research, encompassing everything from citation practices and formatting nuances to the unique considerations of documenting performance, dramatic texts, and scholarly analysis. Mastering these principles is crucial for students, researchers, playwrights, critics, and anyone contributing to the robust body of knowledge surrounding theatre. We will explore how to effectively present arguments, support them with rigorous evidence, and adhere to established academic conventions that lend authority to your work. Understanding these guidelines is not merely about following rules; it's about participating in a long-standing tradition of scholarly communication within theatre studies.

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Understanding the Core Principles of Chicago Style

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), often referred to as the Turabian style when adapted for student papers, provides a comprehensive framework for academic writing. For theater studies, its emphasis on precision in citation and clear presentation of complex information is particularly valuable. At its heart, Chicago style offers two primary systems for citation: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. The notes-bibliography system, generally favored in the humanities, including theater studies, relies on footnotes or endnotes for citations and a bibliography at the end of the work. This system allows for detailed commentary and explanations within the notes, which can be beneficial when discussing nuanced theatrical elements.

The author-date system, more common in the sciences and social sciences, uses parenthetical in-text citations followed by a reference list. While less prevalent in traditional theater scholarship, it might be adopted in interdisciplinary research. Regardless of the chosen system, the fundamental principles remain: accuracy in attribution, consistency in formatting, and clarity for the reader. This involves meticulously recording publication details, author names, and page numbers to allow readers to easily

locate the original sources. Understanding the basic mechanics of CMOS, such as handling different types of sources like books, articles, and web pages, is the first step before delving into the specific applications for theater studies.

Notes-Bibliography System in Theater Studies

The notes-bibliography system is the de facto standard for many theater studies programs and publications. Its strength lies in its flexibility. Footnotes (or endnotes) can not only provide a source reference but also offer additional context, critical commentary, or elaborations on points made in the main text. For instance, when discussing a director's innovative staging, a footnote could cite the primary source detailing the production while also briefly mentioning a related critical review or a theoretical concept that informs the interpretation. This layered approach enriches the scholarly dialogue and allows for a more in-depth exploration of theatrical phenomena.

When using the notes-bibliography system, each note corresponds to a specific point in the text. The first citation of a source typically includes full bibliographic information, whereas subsequent citations of the same source are shortened. A comprehensive bibliography, alphabetized by author's last name, must follow the main body of the paper, listing all sources cited in the notes. This dual system ensures that both the immediate evidence for a claim and the broader scholarly landscape are accessible to the reader.

Author-Date System for Interdisciplinary Work

While less common, the author-date system can be useful in theater studies when engaging with disciplines that predominantly use this method, such as sociology of art or certain digital humanities projects. In this system, a parenthetical citation in the text, such as (Smith 2022, 45), directs the reader to a corresponding entry in a reference list at the end of the paper. This list contains full bibliographic details for all works cited. The advantage here is conciseness within the text, but it sacrifices the space for detailed commentary often found in footnotes.

Citing Dramatic Texts and Plays

One of the most fundamental aspects of writing in theater studies is the accurate citation of dramatic texts. Plays are primary sources that require specific handling to ensure readers can identify the exact version and edition being referenced. The Chicago Manual of Style provides clear guidelines for citing plays, whether in a standalone edition, an anthology, or a collection. The key is to provide enough information to distinguish between different editions and to clearly indicate the act, scene, and line numbers for direct quotations, which are essential for analyzing dramatic structure and language.

Citing Standalone Play Editions

When citing a play published as a standalone volume, the citation in the notes-bibliography system should include the author's full name, the play title (italicized), the city of publication, the publisher,

the year of publication, and, for quotations, the act, scene, and line numbers. For example, a footnote might read: 1. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1980), 3.2.110-112. The bibliography entry would follow a similar format but be presented in a slightly different order and without note numbers.

It is crucial to consult the specific edition you are using. If the edition you are citing includes a modern spelling or punctuation that differs from older versions, this should be noted. Always aim for the most authoritative scholarly edition available, as these often contain valuable introductions, annotations, and textual variants.

Citing Plays in Anthologies and Collections

When a play is included in an anthology or a collection of an author's works, the citation needs to reflect this broader context. The note should identify the author and play title, followed by "in" and then the details of the anthology or collection. This includes the title of the anthology (italicized), the editor(s) of the anthology, the publication information for the anthology, and the page numbers where the play appears within the collection. For instance: 2. Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, trans. William Archer, in *Six Plays of Henrik Ibsen*, ed. James McFarlane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 153-230. The bibliography would also list the anthology as a source, with the specific play being a component of that larger work.

Pay close attention to whether the play has been translated. If so, the translator's name should be included in the citation, as translations can significantly impact the interpretation of a dramatic text. The original language title may also be included, especially if discussing linguistic nuances or cross-cultural comparisons.

Documenting Performances and Productions

Beyond the printed text, theater studies often involves the analysis of live or recorded performances. Documenting these ephemeral events presents unique challenges, as they are not static in the way a book is. The Chicago Manual of Style offers guidance on how to cite performances, though it often requires adaptation and clear explanation from the scholar. This includes citing reviews, archival materials, and even personal recollections or recordings of productions.

Citing Performance Reviews

Reviews are a vital source for understanding how productions were received and interpreted. When citing a review, treat it as a periodical article. Include the reviewer's name, the title of the review (if any), the name of the periodical, the date of publication, and the page number(s). For example: 3. John Smith, "A Bold Interpretation of Macbeth," *The New York Times*, October 27, 2023, C5. If the review is from an online newspaper or magazine, include the website name and URL, along with an access date, if applicable, though print sources are generally preferred for historical scholarship.

When discussing a specific directorial choice or design element highlighted in a review, ensure your citation accurately points to that critical assessment. This adds a layer of evidence to your analysis of

the production.

Citing Archival Materials and Recordings

Archival materials, such as production photographs, promptbooks, design sketches, or video recordings, are invaluable for researching historical or contemporary productions. When citing these, be as specific as possible. For archival materials, include the name of the archive, the collection name or number, and the specific item being referenced. For example: 4. Production Photographs, *Waiting for Godot*, dir. Peter Brook, 1955, Royal Shakespeare Company Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon. For video recordings, include the title of the recording, director, production company, and date of recording or release. If citing a personal recording, indicate its status as such.

When referencing a video recording of a theatrical production, treat it similarly to a film. Include director, production title, and date. For example: 5. *Hamilton*, dir. Thomas Kail, filmed 2016, released on Disney+, 2020. For scholarly purposes, it is often beneficial to note the specific streaming platform or physical media used for access.

Formatting for Theater Studies Research

Beyond the content of citations, the overall formatting of a scholarly work in theater studies adhering to Chicago style contributes significantly to its professionalism and readability. This includes guidelines for manuscript preparation, the presentation of headings, tables, figures, and the proper use of whitespace and typography. Consistent formatting ensures that the reader's attention remains focused on the arguments and evidence presented, rather than being distracted by stylistic inconsistencies.

Manuscript Preparation Guidelines

A well-formatted manuscript demonstrates attention to detail. Chicago style typically calls for double-spacing throughout the manuscript, including block quotations, notes, and the bibliography. Margins should be generous, usually 1 inch on all sides. Font choices should be standard and legible, such as Times New Roman, 12-point. Page numbers should appear consecutively, typically in the upper right-hand corner, starting with the first page of the main text (after any front matter like the title page or table of contents).

Block quotations, which are five or more lines of prose or three or more lines of poetry, should be indented from the left margin without quotation marks. The parenthetical citation or footnote/endnote marker should follow the quotation, typically after the terminal punctuation. This visual distinction helps separate the author's own prose from quoted material.

Using Headings, Tables, and Figures

Clear organization is paramount in scholarly writing. Chicago style provides flexibility in the use of headings and subheadings to structure complex arguments. Primary headings (usually the main

section titles) are often centered or flush left, while secondary and tertiary headings are progressively indented and styled differently (e.g., bold, italicized). The specific hierarchy of headings should be consistent throughout the paper.

Tables and figures (which can include images, charts, or diagrams relevant to theater studies, such as ground plans or costume sketches) should be clearly labeled and numbered consecutively. Each table and figure should have a descriptive caption. For images or figures, a credit line or source attribution is necessary, typically placed below the caption. References to tables and figures should be made in the text, allowing readers to easily locate and understand the visual information presented.

Special Considerations for Theater Scholarship

Theater studies, by its nature, often deals with unique forms of evidence and analysis that require specific approaches within the framework of Chicago style. This includes the analysis of performance as a text, the study of stage directions, and the integration of visual and auditory elements into written scholarship. Adhering to CMOS principles while acknowledging these specificities ensures rigor and clarity.

Analyzing Performance as Text

When analyzing a performance as a textual event, scholars must carefully define their methodology. While CMOS doesn't have a specific chapter solely on "performance texts," its principles of accurate source description and detailed evidence apply. This means meticulously documenting what was observed, when, and where. For live performances, this might involve detailed notes on blocking, vocal delivery, design elements, and audience reception. For recorded performances, the recording itself becomes the primary artifact to cite.

The challenge lies in translating the multi-sensory experience of theater into written language. CMOS encourages precise language and clear attribution of all analytical claims. If drawing on a theoretical framework for analyzing performance, such as semiotics or embodiment studies, ensure those theoretical sources are cited correctly according to CMOS guidelines.

Interpreting Stage Directions and Dramaturgy

Stage directions are an integral part of dramatic texts, offering insights into the playwright's intentions regarding setting, action, and character. When quoting or referencing stage directions, it is important to follow the citation rules for dramatic texts, including act, scene, and line numbers if applicable. However, the interpretation of stage directions can be subjective and require careful argumentation supported by textual evidence and scholarly context.

Dramaturgical analysis often involves examining the relationship between the text, the historical context, and the performance. CMOS provides the tools to cite all these elements accurately. For example, when discussing the historical context of a play, you would cite relevant historical texts. When discussing the dramaturgical choices of a specific production, you would cite reviews, interviews with the dramaturg, or archival documents. The goal is to weave together these disparate

sources into a coherent and well-supported argument.

The Chicago Manual of Style's Relevance in Digital Theater Studies

The advent of digital technologies has profoundly impacted theater studies, opening new avenues for research, creation, and dissemination. The Chicago Manual of Style is adaptable to these changes, providing guidance on citing digital resources, online archives, and multimedia content. Staying abreast of CMOS recommendations for digital citation ensures that scholarship in this evolving field maintains academic rigor and credibility.

Citing Online Resources and Databases

Many theater studies resources are now available online, including digital archives of play scripts, production photographs, performance recordings, and scholarly journals. When citing these online resources, the general principles of Chicago style for web content apply. This typically involves providing as much identifying information as possible, including author, title, website name, publisher or sponsoring organization, date of publication or last update, and a stable URL or DOI (Digital Object Identifier). A clear access date is also often required for resources that might change over time.

For example, a note might read: 6. Royal Shakespeare Company, "Digital Archive," accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.rsc.org.uk/archive>. When a specific digital item is referenced, such as a digitized promptbook, more detail would be needed, including the item's title and specific location within the digital archive. The bibliography entry would mirror this information.

Incorporating Multimedia in Scholarship

Digital theater studies may involve incorporating multimedia elements, such as embedded video clips of performances, audio recordings of interviews, or interactive timelines. While the specific presentation format might vary depending on the platform where the scholarship is published (e.g., a digital journal, a website), the underlying principles of attribution and citation remain crucial. Any multimedia content used should be properly credited, with its source clearly indicated according to CMOS guidelines. If a video clip is used, the citation should lead back to the original source, providing details about the performance, director, and date, similar to citing a recorded performance.

It is essential to consider copyright and fair use when incorporating multimedia. CMOS provides guidance on the ethical use of copyrighted material. The goal is always to integrate these elements in a way that enhances understanding and supports the scholarly argument without infringing on intellectual property rights.

The Chicago Manual of Style for Theater Studies: A Concluding Thought

Navigating the Chicago Manual of Style for theater studies is an essential skill that empowers scholars to communicate their research with precision, authority, and clarity. By diligently applying its principles to the unique demands of theatrical scholarship—from citing dramatic texts and ephemeral performances to formatting complex arguments and incorporating digital resources—researchers can contribute meaningfully to the field. The robust framework provided by CMOS ensures that the rich and dynamic world of theater is documented and analyzed with the rigor it deserves, fostering a deeper understanding for both current and future generations of theater enthusiasts and academics. Adherence to these guidelines is not a mere formality; it is a commitment to scholarly integrity and the advancement of knowledge in this vibrant discipline.

Q: What is the primary citation system recommended by the Chicago Manual of Style for theater studies?

A: The Chicago Manual of Style primarily recommends the notes-bibliography system for humanities disciplines, including theater studies. This system uses footnotes or endnotes for citations and a bibliography at the end of the work, allowing for detailed commentary and flexibility in presenting scholarly arguments.

Q: How should I cite a play that is part of an anthology when using Chicago style for theater studies?

A: When citing a play from an anthology, you should include the author and title of the play, followed by "in" and then the title of the anthology (italicized), the editor(s) of the anthology, the publication information for the anthology, and the page numbers where the play appears within the collection.

Q: Are there specific rules in Chicago style for citing live theatrical performances?

A: Chicago style does not have a single, rigid rule for citing live performances due to their ephemeral nature. However, it suggests treating performance reviews as articles in periodicals and being as specific as possible when citing archival materials or recordings, including details of the archive, collection, or recording, and the date.

Q: How does Chicago Manual of Style address citing digital resources in theater studies?

A: For digital resources in theater studies, Chicago Manual of Style advises providing as much identifying information as possible, including author, title, website name, publisher, date of publication or update, and a stable URL or DOI. An access date is also often recommended for online content that may change.

Q: What is the difference between citing a play's text and citing a specific production of that play?

A: Citing a play's text involves referencing the published dramatic script, including author, title, and act/scene/line numbers for quotations. Citing a specific production requires documenting the live or recorded event, which might involve citing reviews, archival materials, or video recordings, providing details about the director, venue, and date of the performance.

Q: Can I use block quotations for stage directions in my theater studies paper according to Chicago style?

A: Yes, if your quotation of stage directions consists of five or more lines of prose, you should format it as a block quotation according to Chicago style. This means indenting the entire quotation from the left margin without using quotation marks.

Q: How should I handle translations when citing dramatic texts in Chicago Manual of Style for theater studies?

A: When citing a translated play, you must include the translator's name in your citation. For example, a note might read: "[Play Title]," trans. [Translator's Name]. This acknowledges the interpretive work of the translator, which can significantly impact the text.

Q: Is there specific guidance for citing directors' concepts or directorial interpretations in Chicago Manual of Style for theater studies?

A: While CMOS doesn't have a dedicated section for "directorial concepts," such interpretations should be supported by evidence, which can include citing specific reviews, interviews with the director, production notes, or archival documents related to the production. Ensure all cited evidence is properly attributed.

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