SIUC School of Music Guide to Some Music-Specific Issues in Writing
drawn from
and
Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago
Style for Students and Researchers. 7th ed. Revised by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G.

Musical Titles in Prose Writing
Specific Titles
Pieces with specific titles (such as operas or tone poems) are capitalized just like
book or movie titles (for example: words like "the, a, and" are lower case unless they are the first
word in the title) When a title is in a foreign language, you should follow the rules for
capitalization in that language. Since few of us are fluent in German, Italian, AND French, we
suggest looking to a CD, sheet music, or other reference material, and copy what they do. Also,
the titles of larger works are generally italicized, but movements are put in quotes. Turabian
suggests that shorter works should also be put in quotes. Opus or other numbers are not
italicized. (Long works=italics, short works/sections=quotes)

Orfeo  Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune  Don Juan, Op.20
Vier ernste Gesänge, Op. 121, No. 4  “All You Need Is Love”
"I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" from Messiah  "Infernal Dance" from Firebird

Generic Titles
Many works are titled Symphony or Sonata. These should not be in italics, but
definitely capitalized. Small ordinal numbers should be written out, long ones should not. (fifth,
not 5th)

Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony  Bartok’s Fourth String Quartet  Quartet No. 4
Haydn’s 103rd Symphony

However, when not referencing a specific work, these words are not capitalized.

They played six string quartets. Haydn wrote dozens of symphonies.

Generic titles should be capitalized, but not in italics or quotes. In a title you capitalize "Major"
and "Minor." You should include opus numbers or other (ex. Koechel) numbers whenever
possible. Capitalize "Op." "No." or "K".

Piano Concerto in C Minor, K. 491  Piano Sonata No. 12, Op. 121
Concerto No. 20 for Piano and Orchestra in C Minor, K. 491

Works with generic titles that have been given nicknames usually put the nickname in
parenthesis and italics when referencing the complete title. If referring to the work by its
nickname in prose, just use italics.

In 1801, Beethoven composed his Sonata No. 14 in C-Sharp Minor (Moonlight).
Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata is my favorite piano piece.
**Note Names** Always capitalize note names in a sentence. Write out "flat," "sharp," and "natural" and use a hyphen.

Chopin wrote Prelude in A-Flat Major in 1832. His favorite note was B-flat.

NOT-- Chopin wrote a prelude in a flat major. Bach liked Bb and C#.

**Musical Eras** Capitalize historical musical eras- Baroque, Classical, Romantic. However, when distinguishing classical music from popular music, that is not capitalized. (Words like “classical” and “romantic” are not capitalized when used as adjectives.) Centuries are not capitalized, but are hyphenated when used as an adjective. No apostrophe is used in “1800s” and decades are in lower-case.

Mozart lived in the Classical era. In his personal life, Beethoven was a romantic man. Stravinsky lived in the twentieth century. He wrote twentieth-century music.

He lived during the 1900s. He wrote his best music during the thirties.

**Citations of Musical Sources in Chicago/Turabian**

**Recordings** You have to make some decisions about which is more important, the performer/s or the composers. On some recordings this is obvious, on others less so. Also, some recordings have a specific title, while others just use the name of the works recorded. It can be useful to look at the spine of the CD before writing your citation, to see what the publisher thought was most important. The format of your recording should be noted: LP, Audiocassette, etc. Turabian suggests listing the code number as well, usually found on the spine of the CD. (Most other style manuals don’t do this, and frankly, it isn’t much help in locating most CDs.) If you are only citing one specific song or track on the recording, that song title should be in quotes, then follow with other information. For recordings obtained electronically, cite as a normal recording, then include information about where it was accessed. (Whenever possible, cite a “stable URL”)


**Liner Notes**


If there is no author or separate title for the liner notes, (look carefully!) then skip that part of the citation.

**Musical Scores** Citing a score is like citing a book.  

**Other Writing Issues**

**Punctuation reminders**
- 1900s, CDs, it is = it’s, belongs to it = its
- the United States’ policies, the Beatles’ records, Miles Davis’s albums
- Beethoven’s symphonies, Stravinsky’s ballets

**Troublesome words**

A few words to beware of:

- The *principal* horn player has lofty *principles*.
- The *Premier* of Russia heard the *premiere* of a new opera.
- Bach wrote *canons*. *Cannons* go boom and kill people.

A *song* has words and is sung (and generally is not purely instrumental). *Piece* or *work* is a more appropriate term for instrumental music.

Make sure you know the difference between words such as:
- *atonic*, *dissonant*
- *arrangement, orchestration, instrumentation*
- *tempo, rhythm, meter*
- *contemporary, modern*
- *composing, writing*

They are not necessarily interchangeable.

**Good places to start for music research**

Available through Morris Library's site under "Databases"

- Oxford Music Online (includes Grove Opera, Grove Jazz and other Grove articles)
- Credo Reference (includes Harvard Dictionary of Music, other basic reference sources)
- Naxos Music Database (free streamed recordings)
- JSTOR (database that includes many good music periodicals)

**Music Reference books**

- Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, Theodore Baker
- Music Since 1900, Nicholas Slonimsky

Bibliographies from your textbooks are also good resources.

**Parting Advice** When in doubt, ask your professor, or look at a *reliable* music resource and copy what they do. Try oxfordmusiconline.com, your textbook, or other reference books on music. Most style manuals have a chapter on citing recordings, musical works, and other musical issues. Whatever style you choose, be sure you use it *consistently* throughout your paper.