CMOS for Musicians

As a music student, you have most likely used the *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS) or its student version, called Turabian, to format your class papers. CMOS not only has rules for footnotes and bibliographies, it also governs style. Among other things, style determines which words you capitalize and italicize, when you spell out a concept, and when you use symbols. These stylistic details not only provide a uniform way of representing information, but they actually convey meaning.

Formatting the titles of musical works or knowing music-specific vocabulary is not intuitive. Western art music developed out of several different cultural and linguistic contexts over an extended period of time. For this reason, how we format the titles of musical works and use music-specific vocabulary often depends on linguistic and historical conventions as well as style conventions—in the case here, CMOS.

CMOS is the go-to style guide for music, but it does not cover everything. CMOS recommends D. Kern Holoman's book, *Writing about Music: A Style Sheet*, as a supplemental guide for finer details concerning style when writing about music.

Capitalization Schemes

Sentence Case
In **sentence case**—also called **sentence style**—only the first word is capitalized and all proper nouns are capitalized. In other words, we capitalize the title like we would capitalize a sentence. CMOS uses both schemes to capitalize the titles of works. For more on sentence style, see CMOS 8.158.

Title Case
In **title case**—also called **headline style** or **headline case**—the first and last words, and all major words, are capitalized. In CMOS, major words include nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and some conjunctions. For more details about what constitutes a "major word" in headline style, see CMOS 8.159.

Language
Capitalization schemes often depend on the language. For example, titles in English are formatted in title case, whereas titles in Italian or Latin are usually formatted in sentence case with only the first letter of a title and any proper nouns capitalized. For more on capitalization schemes and how they relate to languages, see Holoman 1.20 and 2.42–2.50.

Titles of Musical Works

Musical works can have three kinds of titles, and each is formatted differently.

Titles Given by[1] the Composer
These titles are usually in their original language and follow capitalization schemes for that language.

Generic Titles[2]
These titles consist of the genre or form and often the identifying opus or index number. Generic titles follow title case for capitalization and are generally not italicized. Generic titles can be assigned by the composer but are often assigned by scholars or librarians after the death of a composer.

> In the mid-20th century, German music librarian Wolfgang Schmieder compiled the *Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis* numbers, or BWV numbers, connected to all of Bach's works. Likewise, the *Köchel-Verzeichnis* numbers, or KV numbers, that organize W.A. Mozart's work are named after Austrian music historian Ludwig von Köchel, who cataloged all of Mozart's work in the mid-19th century.

Titles of Musical Works *(continued)*

Common Names/[3] Nicknames   Last, we have common names or nicknames of works. These names often emerge from stories—some true, some not—associated with the works. These titles are usually put in quotation marks.

> Johann Sebastian Bach titled *Clavier-Übang*, better known as the "Goldberg Variations," after his pupil Johann Gottlieb Goldberg. Goldberg supposedly played these variations at night to help a Russian envoy manage his insomnia.

The table below provides examples of commonly known works. Not every work will have each of the three kinds of titles, but it is highly likely there will be at least two.

Composer	[1]Title Given by Composer	[2]Generic Title	[3]Common Name
Johann Sebastian Bach	*Clavier-Übang* (or *Keyboard Practice*)	Theme and Variations in G Major, BWV 988	"Goldberg Variations"
Johann Sebastian Bach	*Das wohltemperierte Clavier* (or *The Well-Tempered Clavier*)	(for one work within this larger collection) Prelude and Fugue in C Minor, BWV 847	
Ludwig von Beethoven		Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, op. 27, no. 2	"Moonlight Sonata"
Joseph Hayden		Symphony No. 94 in G Major, H. 1/94	"Surprise Symphony"
Antonin Dvořák	*Z Nového světa* (or *From the New World*)	Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, op. 95, B178	"New World Symphony"

Titles for Songs, Operas, and Musicals

In general, italicize the title of a full work and put quotations around titles of songs from within the work. Capitalization schemes generally first follow the capitalization appropriate to its original language and then follow CMOS conventions. Consider the titles in the following table:

Composer	Original Language	Full Work	Songs within the Work
Guiseppe Verdi	Italian	*La traviata*	"Addio del passato"
George Gershwin	English	*Crazy for You*	"Embraceable You"
W.A. Mozart	German	*Die Zauberflöte* (or *The Magic Flute*)	"Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen" ("Queen of the Night Aria")

Because *La traviata* and "Addio del passato" are in Italian, we follow sentence case, whereas the other titles in the table are in English and German, so we follow capitalization schemes appropriate for those languages. See Holoman 2.42–2.52 for capitalization schemes for various languages commonly encountered in Western art music.

Titles for Movements within a Work

Sometimes movements within a larger work (e.g., symphony, piano sonata, dance suite) have their own titles, but at other times they are only identified by their tempo marking. Typically, all the movements being played in a concert are listed separately in a program.

Sonata in B-flat Major, KV 570

W.A. Mozart
(1756-1791)

I.   Allegro
II.   Adagio
III. Allegretto

When to Capitalize and Not Capitalize

A vs. a   Within prose, you have probably seen musical terms both capitalized and in lower case. So when is it Sonata, and when is it sonata? Generally, when musical terms are used as the titles for movements, they are capitalized. If they are used to signify broader concepts—genres, kinds of movements, keys, etc.—then they are written in lowercase. Consider the examples to the right for the terms *sonata* and *major*.

Most piano sonatas start with a fast sonata-allegro movement, but Beethoven opens his Piano Sonata No. 12 with a slow-moving theme and five variations.

In Mozart's Sonata in B-flat Major, the first subject is in B-flat major, and the second subject is in F major.

When to Italicize and Not Italicize

A vs. *A*

Other than italicizing the titles of works, you want to minimize italicization in your essay. Consider the following two principles to decide if you should italicize a word or not:

- Italic typeface can be used for single words borrowed from languages other than English. The changed typeface cues a reader to switch pronunciation or signals a change of cultural context.

- Dynamic markings and their abbreviations (e.g., *forte, ff, piano, mf*) are generally italicized. When used in prose, tempo markings or other interpretive nuances are not always italicized (e.g., crescendo, pizzicato, ritardando); however, it can be helpful to italicize them to signal context (e.g., "the *legato* passage" vs. "play this passage legato") or to avoid confusion (e.g., "a tempo" vs. "*a tempo*").

Additional Resources

Chicago Manual of Style. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

CMOS is the go-to style and documentation guide for most publications in music, including musicology, ethnomusicology, and music theory. This style guide contains information on formatting citations of musical works, formatting musical terms, and how to format musical symbols. The following sections are most relevant for formatting music:

- Names, terms, and titles of works: CMOS 8.193–8.197
- Spelling and treatment of musical terms: CMOS 7.71–7.75
- Formatting titles in languages other than English: CMOS 11.6–11.10

Holoman, D. Kern. *Writing about Music: A Style Sheet.* 3rd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

Example of Formatting

Here's an example of a program note containing the style elements we've discussed. How are titles and musical terms capitalized or italicized in accordance with the ways discussed in this handout?

Title of musical work ——————

Tempo markings as titles for movements within the work ——————

Title given by composer ——————

Generic title ——————

Generic title ——————

Italic typeface to signal a language change and avoid confusion. Notice that almost all musical terms in this program note are not italicized or capitalized.

Preludes for Piano   George Gershwin
                                                                    (1898–1945)
                                              transcribed for two pianos by Gregory Stone
                                                                    (1900–1991)

I.   Allegro ben ritmato e deciso
II.   Andante con moto e poco rubato

with Jane Doe, piano

The American composer George Gershwin is best known as a songwriter for musical theater, but he was also a talented pianist. He did not perform classical piano repertoire in public, as he considered his music reading ability inadequate, but he did perform his own works and was an incredible improviser. In a 1926 recital, he performed several "jazz preludes" on piano. Three of those preludes were published in the following year. These *Preludes for Piano* demonstrate Gershwin's ability to meld jazz idioms with concert forms. Today, I will be performing the first two preludes with Jane Doe.

Ever the showman, Gershwin's opening prelude—Prelude No. 1 in B-flat Major—sounds like an orchestral overture for a musical. He treats the piano as if it is a brass, wind, and percussion ensemble. One can imagine trumpets or clarinets soloing the melody lines above the ensemble's chordal accompaniment. The syncopation in both the accompaniment and melody drives the piece forward. As a songwriter, Gershwin was a master of melody. He was also fascinated with blues music. The second prelude—Prelude No. 2 in C-sharp Minor—melds Gershwin's talent for writing melody and his knowledge of blues music. His use of "blues notes"—lowered notes of a musical scale, often the 3rd or 7th degree—combined with an elastic tempo (*rubato*) makes the melody mournful. The ostinato accompaniment gives the melody a weight it would otherwise not have. Blues notes, elastic tempo, and ostinatos are three elements of blues music that Gershwin uses to give character to this melody.

Originally written for solo piano, these works have since been transcribed for two-piano performances. The preludes' dense textures makes them challenging for the solo pianist. Even though these textures are divided or doubled between two performers in these arrangements, they remain challenging to play together. In two-piano arrangements, the first piano (*primo*) usually plays the melody lines, while the second piano (*secondo*) plays the accompaniment. However, in these arrangements, the piano that plays the main themes and the piano that plays the accompaniment alternates; therefore, performers have to change their dynamic shading to emphasize who has the primary part. Likewise, the syncopation and elastic tempos mean that performers must frequently communicate in performance—either by making eye contact or breathing together—to coordinate entrances and play together.

Crawford, Richard and Wayne J. Schneider. "Gershwin, George." *Grove Music Online/Oxford Music Online*.
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Wyatt, Robert. "The Seven Jazz Preludes of George Gershwin: A Historical Narrative." *American Music* 7,
      no. 1 (Spring 1989): 68-85. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3052050