



Theater Arts – Finding Production Reviews

Reference Department
Albert S. Cook Library

Finding Production Reviews of Plays

To find production reviews of plays it is best to use an indexing/abstracting database. In many cases, besides providing you with the citation for the article, the database may also offer you an electronic full text version of the article.

Two large databases containing review citations are **LexisNexis** and **Proquest**. **Proquest** is particularly useful for local productions as it indexes the *Baltimore Sun* newspaper. To open these databases, use this path if on campus: **Cook Library Web Page** (<http://cooklibrary.towson.edu>) - **Subject Gateways - News** (you will see links for *LexisNexis Academic* and the *Baltimore Sun*).

If entering from off campus, open the Cook Library web page and click on the **Off Campus Log in** link under **Quick Tools**. **Select TU as your institution** and **log in** following on-screen instructions and. Go to the alphabetical title index and choose each database directly by title.

Once you have opened **LexisNexis Academic**, choose the **News** Search Tab at the top of the page. Then follow the steps outlined in the diagram below:

The screenshot shows the LexisNexis Academic search interface with several yellow callout boxes providing instructions:

- Select News tab**: Points to the "News" tab in the top navigation bar.
- Enter play title surrounded by quotation marks**: Points to the search input field containing "piano lesson".
- Select Book reviews from drop down menu in Select Sources box**: Points to the "Book, Movie, Music, Play, and Video Reviews" option in the "Select Sources" dropdown menu.
- Reset time default box – dates should reflect run of play**: Points to the "All available dates" dropdown menu under "Specify Date".

When you have filled in all the boxes, click on the **Search** button at the right of the screen. Your results will be displayed in a list format. Click on the article title to read the article. If get too many results, add the playwright's name in the **Required Terms** box.

To search for local play reviews, use the *Baltimore Sun* in **Proquest**. Open the database following the above path, but select **Baltimore Sun** instead of *LexisNexis*. Follow the instructions given below:

The screenshot shows the ProQuest search interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Basic, Advanced, Topics, Publications, and My Research (0 marked items). Below the tabs, it says "Databases selected: Multiple databases...". The selected publication is "The Sun, Baltimore, Md." with a sub-note "Full text coverage: Sep 16, 1990 - current".

The search section is titled "Search for articles within this publication:". It features a search input box containing the text "servant of two masters". To the right of the input box are "Search" and "Clear" buttons. Below the input box, there are several options: "Date range:" set to "All dates", "Look for terms in:" set to "Citation and document text" (with a red "Abort" link), and "Limit results to:" with an unchecked checkbox for "Full text documents only".

At the bottom, there is a "Browse specific issues:" section with "View issues from:" and "To:" dropdown menus, both set to "Any month". There are "Browse Issues" and "Clear" buttons.

Two yellow callout boxes provide instructions: one points to the search input box with the text "Enter play title within quotation marks in this box", and another points to the "Date range:" dropdown with the text "Set date range to All dates".

When finished, click on the **Search** button to the right of the box containing your play title. Your results will be displayed in a list format. Click on the article's title line from the result list and the full text will display. Results from both databases can be printed, saved to a disc, or emailed.

- The time default should include the span of time that the play was in production.
- Articles from *The Baltimore Sun* should be full text going back to 1986. For older reviews (1985 and earlier), use the *Baltimore Sun Historical* database.
- *The Baltimore Sun* is also available in microfilm if you wish to see the actual article with any accompanying images (photos, etc.)

There are two other theater related databases that will also allow you to search for production reviews. To see these, follow the above path, but at the **Subject Gateways** link, select "**Theater**" instead of "News." You will find *The International Bibliography of Theatre and Dance* and the *International Index to the Performing Arts* databases there.

The International Bibliography of Theatre and Dance is illustrated below. Remember to open to the **Advanced Search** mode. Follow the directions on the illustration below:

The screenshot shows the EBSCO Research Databases search interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Basic Search', 'Advanced Search', 'Visual Search', and 'Choose Databases'. Below this, the search criteria are defined as 'adding machine AND theatrical production'. A callout bubble points to the search terms with the text: 'Type **play** title here'. Another callout bubble points to the 'Theatrical production' search term with the text: 'Type **"Theatrical production"** here'. The results section shows 'All Results: 1-12 of 12 Page: 1'. A list of results is displayed, including 'Add It Up', 'THE ADDING MACHINE', and 'Beam Me In'. A 'Narrow Results by Subject' sidebar is visible on the left.

Click on the title line of each article in the result list to see the full information about the article and availability options.

Another useful database is the *International Index to the Performing Arts*. This database actually has a document type limit that allows you to search specifically for theatre reviews. To start, from the *IIPA* home page, select the **Search Articles** tab on the **left side** of screen. Follow the directions below to see a result list:

The screenshot shows the IIPA search interface. On the left, a navigation menu includes 'Home', 'Search Articles', 'Search Journals', 'Browse Journals', and 'Information Resources'. A callout bubble points to the 'Search Articles' tab with the text: 'Be sure to begin with **Search Articles** to see this screen'. The main search area has a 'Quick Search' field and a 'Search Articles' heading. Below this, there are options to 'Limit search to:' with checkboxes for 'Full text articles only', 'Peer-reviewed articles only', and 'Exclude reviews'. The 'Keyword(s):' field is empty, and the search scope is set to 'Citations and article full text'. A 'Search' button is visible. Below the search fields, there are input boxes for 'Article title:', 'Author:', 'Broad subject:', 'Narrow subject:', and 'Document type:'. A callout bubble points to the 'Document type:' dropdown, which is set to '"Theater Review"', with the text: 'In the **Document Type** box type **"Theater review"**'. Another callout bubble points to the 'Broad subject:' field with the text: 'Insert **Play** title here'. At the bottom, there are 'Special features' checkboxes for various content types like 'Cartoons', 'Maps', 'Charts', 'Musical scores', etc.