

## DEFINING HISTORIC PERFORMANCE: A Glossary of Historic Performance Terms

If you feel a little, uh, stupid when it comes to knowing just what to call a costumed historic performer, don't feel bad. You are in good company. Even the performers themselves are grappling with that issue.

Historic performance includes a wide variety of types of performance. Most of the professional historic performers in the Kansas Alliance of Professional Historic Performers focus on first person narratives of historic characters, with each performance as a distinct character, whether the character is a historical figure like Joyce Thierer's interpretation of Calamity Jane or a composite character like Jo, her Civil War veteran on the cover of this *Guide*. Yvonne Larsen (Nan's Covered Wagon), however, uses mostly third person narration, staying in the present time while telling stories and doing living historic demonstration, as does Judy Ann Miller of Vintage Creations. And SME Portals of Time occasionally puts more than one character on stage at a time to do museum theatre.

It can be confusing. Which is why we are offering a list of terms associated with historic performance, in alphabetical order.

Term	Definition
<b>Artifact</b>	an object created and/or used during the era being portrayed
<b>Chautauqua</b>	generally held under a tent to emulate the chautauquas (originated in Chautauqua, NY) that provided adult continuing education during summers in the late 1800s and early 1900s; chautauquans should be scholars performing as historic, literary or political figures who give a lecture, take questions in character, and then take questions as the scholar
<b>Composite character</b>	a fictional person based on stories of real people, especially appropriate where primary written sources about individuals within particular groups of people, such as female Civil War soldiers, who generally hid their identity throughout their lives, are largely unavailable
<b>Costumed Docents</b>	museum volunteers who give tours in period costume
<b>Costumed historic performers</b>	the broadest category for those who dress in period clothing and play a role
<b>Costumed street entertainers</b>	play up the myth, appropriate for festivals and tourist attractions; generally not able to answer questions about history, might be actors; similar to re-enactors
<b>Direct address</b>	a performer brings the audience into the play by talking directly to them as though they are in the historic figure's era
<b>Farb</b>	derogatory term used by re-enactors to describe someone whose garb and gear are not completely accurate
<b>First person narrative</b>	a monologue in which the performer assumes the identity of someone else
<b>Historic characterization</b>	first person narrative of someone from the past
<b>Historic performer</b>	one who tells a first person narrative of someone from the past

<b>Historical figure</b>	a real person who lived in the past
<b>Living history</b>	carrying out daily activities as close as possible to the manner in which they were pursued at a designated time and place in the past (individual identities are not important--related to social history which is interested in how categories of people lived)
<b>Living history demonstrators</b>	those who demonstrate a particular skill such as butter churning, blacksmithing, or harness-making. They do not necessarily have a persona, or answer questions in the time period of the skill, but are usually dressed in period clothing.
<b>Monologue</b>	a one-person performance (first person narratives are a type of monologue)
<b>Museum theatre</b>	a scripted play related to the museum's mission
<b>Pageant</b>	a colorful play telling the story of a community or a people over a long period of time, usually outdoors with a narrator doing most of the speaking for a large cast, often including horses and other animals
<b>Period clothing</b>	dress appropriate, in style and material, to the era being portrayed
<b>Persona</b>	the identity taken on by an individual participating in a re-enactment
<b>Personae</b>	plural of persona and pronounced with a long "e" ("knee") at the end
<b>Presenter</b>	the group or individual sponsoring the appearance of a performer
<b>Props</b>	"properties" a theatre term for the material culture used in a performance; although sometimes performers use reproductions, sometimes they are fortunate to be able to locate artifacts
<b>Red shirts</b>	uniformed staff members or volunteers who can answer the public's questions from contemporary perspective
<b>Re-enactors</b>	usually buffs (knowledgeable amateurs) who know a great deal about a narrow topic; if they get paid it is usually for expenses; they attempt to recreate a particular event or type of event, such as a battle; usually they will not get out of their personae and can add to the ambience of an event such as a festival
<b>Reproduction</b>	a prop that has been created to look like an object from the era portrayed
<b>Storytellers</b>	use first or third person narratives to tell stories, usually not assuming one particular historic role, but using the costume to create a mood and evoke and era
<b>Third person narrative</b>	a talk about the past from the perspective of the present, may be done in period clothing
<b>Venue</b>	where the performance will be held
<b>Walking mannequins</b>	sometimes called " <b>atmospherics</b> " because they are excellent at providing atmosphere, but that is as far as it goes. Costumes should look accurate, but the wearers of the costume should not be expected to have done any research or be able to "become" a particular character. In fact, it is best if they are seen from a distance so that the public does not ask them questions.

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