

Dear 2025 VM-er,

Greetings! My name is Thomas Frost, and on behalf of the Vocal Music Faculty of Governor's School for the Arts (GSA), I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your selection for our 2025 program! You are one of only 31 singers chosen for this session from the many who auditioned from around our state. We, the faculty, are truly excited about the opportunity to work with you and we hope that you will come to us both excited and eager to participate in three rigorous (*but very fun-filled*) weeks of musical activity. ***Once you have read this letter, please email me at the address listed at the end to let me know!***

As my first order of business, I would like to introduce the members of our 2025 Vocal Music Faculty with whom you will work this summer:

**Dr. Joy Burdette**, dramatic soprano, is in her twenty-sixth year as a professor of voice at Northern Kentucky University. She has performed opera, oratorio, and various concert works regionally and internationally. Her operatic roles include Leonore in *Il Trovatore*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Vanessa in *Vanessa*, Mrs. Maurrant in *Street Scenes*, Magda in *The Consul*, and Mother in *Hänsel und Gretel*. Joy has performed various roles, as well as professional chorus work, with Opera Theatre of Lucca, Italy, Cincinnati Opera, Kentucky Opera, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and the University of Louisville School of Music. Joy has performed concert works with the Opera Theatre of Lucca, Italy, Kentucky Symphony Orchestra, Hamilton-Fairfield Symphony Orchestra, Viva Voices Choral Organization, Voices of the Commonwealth, University of Louisville, University of Virginia, Northern Kentucky University, Hartnell Chorus, and the Northern Kentucky Community Chorus. Joy presents recitals and masterclasses regularly, and is in demand as an adjudicator.



A regular with Cincinnati Opera, she has been a member of the company's professional chorus for twenty years and is often featured as a soloist in outreach events and chorus showcase concerts.

Equally comfortable in the field of musical theatre, Joy has taught in the theatre departments of Xavier University and Northern Kentucky University. She is the past music director for the NKU Preparatory Department's Mainstage Theatre Company.

Joy earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Louisville School of Music, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Education from the University of the Cumberlands (Williamsburg, Kentucky).

In the summers of 2012 and 2019, Joy spent five weeks teaching music courses in Salzburg, Austria as part of the Kentucky Institute of International Studies.

Joy is a member of the American Guild of Musical Artists and the National Association of Teachers of Singing. She is married to Tony, also a singer, and they have two children, Calia and Benjamin. They reside in the Northern Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati area.



An arts educator for over twenty years, **Barry Lawrence** has taught on the Voice Faculty of both Bellarmine University and Benedictine University. A native of Louisville, Mr. Lawrence has received critical acclaim for his beautiful, powerful and resonant voice. Mr. Lawrence's musical studies were conducted at the University of Louisville and Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music where he studied with the internationally-renowned Bass, Nicola Rossi-Lemeni, and the famed Soprano, Virginia Zeani. Mr.

Lawrence has performed principal roles in Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*, Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Britten's *Peter Grimes*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Menotti's *Amahl and The Night Visitors* and Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*.

Mr. Lawrence's international exposure came in performances of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* which he performed throughout Europe and Asia. Mr. Lawrence has, additionally, appeared in concert with the American Spiritual Ensemble and the Black Classical Artists of Louisville with whom he has performed at the *Piccolo Spoleto* Festival in Charleston, SC. Mr. Lawrence, a winner in the *Francesco Paolo Neglia* Competition, the Marseille Opera Competition and the Rome Baroque Music Competition, has been a three-time, first-place winner of the Kentucky District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

Returning for his 30th year as a faculty member of the Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts, Mr. Lawrence has his own private voice studio, *Ars Vocalis*, where he continues to share his love of vocal music.



Heralded for her "soaring lyric soprano voice," **Dr. Angelique Clay** has garnered accolades for performances in the United States, Europe, and South America. Operatic roles include Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus*, the title role of Susannah from Floyd's American drama *Susannah*, and Bess in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. Dr. Clay's oratorio repertoire includes Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Brahms' *Requiem* and Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*.

Dr. Clay has recorded and toured as a featured soloist with the American Spiritual Ensemble throughout the United States, Spain and Brazil. Dr. Clay has performed with international and regional orchestras such as the Slovak State Philharmonic, in Kosice, Slovak Republic; Sinfonia

Warsovia in Poland; Cincinnati Orchestra, Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra, Missouri Symphony Society; Knoxville Symphony Orchestra; Lexington Philharmonic, Louisville Orchestra and Arcadiana Symphony Orchestra.

Dr. Clay is in the process of completing a recording project entitled *Songs for the People: Art Songs of African-American Women Composers* to be released soon. She received her Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Kentucky and is currently an Associate Professor of Music at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Clay has students who are performing in opera house throughout the United States, including, the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Chicago Opera, Sarasota Opera, and Des Moines Opera.

**Thomas Frost** is a conductor, singer, and teacher whose work is rooted in artistic expression, community engagement, and educational access. He is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Frost earned his Bachelor of Science in Music from Tennessee State University and his Master of Music with a dual concentration in Vocal Performance and Choral Conducting from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.



While not a Kentucky native, Frost has strong ties to the Paducah music community through his work with the *Paducah Singers*, where he performed and served as Youth and Education Outreach Coordinator. In that role, he led the inaugural season of the *Paducah Singers Choral Scholars*, a youth chamber ensemble designed to provide advanced choral opportunities for developing singers seeking rigorous artistic and vocal growth.

Previously, Frost served as Instructor of Music at Dyersburg State Community College, where he developed and implemented the Associate of Science in Music Emphasis degree program. He is thrilled to return to the Governor's School for the Arts, continuing his commitment to advancing artistry and inspiring creative expression among young musicians.

In addition to our Vocal Music Staff also includes wonderful pianists with whom you will all have opportunities to interact:

Ziyi Wang  
Doug Schultz  
Kaleb Hilton  
Angela Eton

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Your three weeks at GSA will be very rigorous and challenging! The average day at GSA is longer than your average day at school. An average day will begin with studio from 10:00am to 1:00 pm, lunch break from 1:00pm to 2:00 pm, studio from 2:00pm to 6:00 pm, dinner break from 6:00pm to 7:00 pm, and then either studio again from 7:00pm to 10:00pm or an evening performance. While this sounds like \*a lot,\* we do give you plenty of time for breaks during the academic day and we include lots and lots of fun while learning! Each day you will receive a daily schedule, and the daily schedule will contain a wide variety of activities, including (but not limited to):

- 1) Private voice lessons (you will be assigned a teacher when you arrive)
- 2) Choir Rehearsals

3) A Vocal Music Alumni Masterclass and recital presented by your lovely voice faculty, where you will meet alumni from previous years and hear their wonderful, post-GSA vocal development

4) Vocal Masterclasses in which YOU will get the opportunity to meet and to sing for guest instructors from higher ed institutions, including:

The Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (Cincinnati, OH)  
Murray State University (Murray, KY)  
The University of Kentucky (Lexington, KY)  
The University of Louisville (Louisville, KY)  
Northern Kentucky University (Highland Heights, KY)  
Indiana University (Bloomington, IN)

5) Music Theory classes

6) Aural Skills classes

7) Diction classes

8) Several performance opportunities

. . . and *much, much* more!

The best advice I can offer you to help you prepare for this experience is to **ARRIVE RESTED!** We plunge into a full schedule of activities on our first day, so make sure that the last couple of days before you leave home are filled with as much relaxation as you can stand!

Three IMPORTANT things for which you should be prepared are:

1. The Sing-Off
2. Your Music Theory Placement examination
3. Joining our FACEBOOK GROUP

The first event is very friendly, even though they can *sound* intimidating. In one of our first sessions, after all of the introductions are out of the way, we hold a “Sing-Off” where you’ll re-sing your audition selection for us. **THIS IS IN NO WAY ANOTHER AUDITION!** We do this so that all of the Voice Faculty members and your student colleagues will have the pleasure of hearing your voice! You are at GSA because you are talented and have loads of potential, and while I have had the wonderful opportunity to meet and hear all of you, Dr. Burdette, Dr. Clay, Mr. Lawrence are still eagerly awaiting having the distinct pleasure of hearing all of you for the first time!

**THE PIECE YOU WILL SING FOR THE SING-OFF IS THE SAME PIECE YOU SANG FOR THE AUDITION!**  
PLEASE COME TO GSA WITH THAT PIECE OF MUSIC IN YOUR LUGGAGE.  
**EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY:**

- 1) **PLEASE SEND A PDF COPY OF THIS SELECTION TO ME BY MAY 30<sup>TH</sup>** so that I will be able

to pass it on to the pianists who will play this session!

Send it to [thomas.frostjr@gmail.com](mailto:thomas.frostjr@gmail.com)

PLEASE BE SURE to scan your selection as one PDF file, not as individual PDF file for each page. **PLEASE MAKE SURE** that you do not accidentally chop off sections of the music (we get lots of copies, alas, with no left hand music for the pianist!).

- 2) While it is *very important* to send the music to me, it is also *very important* for you to **review** and **sing through** the music in the days before you arrive. We want you to be able to present yourself and your voice at their best when you are vocally introduced to your colleagues, and one way to make sure of that is to make sure that you have re-familiarized yourself with your audition selection.

The Music Theory examination is **just** for placement purposes (since we offer different levels of Theory). In order to appropriately assist your development in this area, we will need to know your strengths and weaknesses and this test will assist us in determining the level at which your studies should begin. There is no studying that you need to do to prepare for this exam. We simply wish to ascertain what you already know.

We know that Facebook has fallen out of vogue with the youth of today; however, the lovely ability to make groups on FB and to share information through the platform is invaluable for how we communicate during GSA. Since we all live on our devices and smartphones, the GSA 2025 VM Facebook Group (search for “GSA 2025 – Vocal Music SESSION ONE”) will be how we update you with information when we’re not all together as large singing family. If you already have a FB page, the FB group page will go live the week GSA begins, so search for the group, which will be listed as private, and request to join. If you do not have a FB page, please consider asking your parents if it’s okay that you join for GSA purposes. Speaking of parents, there will also be a GSA VM PARENTS page that is just for them. Since they aren’t students, they will not be members of the GSA 2025– Vocal Music page. Your parents can search for “GSA 2025 – Vocal Music Parents and Friends SESSION ONE”

Some other things which will be very handy to have ***if you already own them***:

- 1) If you possess a copy of either the 24 Italian Songs and Arias or the 26 Italian Songs and Arias, please bring it/them with you, since some of the music you may be assigned may come out of one of these collections. In general, if there are any collections of classical songs you would like to bring, please feel free.
- 2) We know you’ll be able to use smart devices this year, and if those have a voice recording app, be ready to use those! If you do not have a voice recording app downloaded, there are several that are free and very, very good. You can also bring a handheld voice recorder if you like. You are encouraged to bring iPads/Tablets/Laptops with you to class and lessons. **DO NOT RELY ON HAVING YOUR PHONE WITH YOU.** Phones are strictly to be used only on the residential side of campus. You will be highly encouraged to record all of your voice lessons and if you have your own recording and playback equipment, it will be very easy for you to study your lesson recordings!

- 3) GSA Singer's Survival Kit:
- a) one permanent, personalized water bottle
  - b) comfortable walking shoes and socks
  - c) a notebook/binder and lots of pencils!
- 4) Please be sure to bring at least one outfit that would be "appropriate" for a vocal concert. When you have the opportunity to sing for others, including our masterclass clinicians, you will want to **look** as well as **sound** GREAT.

a) Standard clothing for female-identifying individuals is a dress (or a skirt and blouse) with dress shoes (of reasonable height), or dress pants/slacks with a nice top. Additionally, ladies, for the sake of uniformity, please note that dresses/skirts should end **JUST ABOVE** the knee! Please do your best to find one of this length. Dresses and/or skirts that are "significantly above the knees" **will not be allowed for these concert events. I repeat – WILL NOT BE ALLOWED.** I've attached a picture that shows what length the dress should be, just so there is no confusion on what "above the knee" looks like.



b) Standard clothing for male-identifying individuals is a suit, but a sport coat with dress pants is also a perfectly good combination. Additionally, please note that we **REQUIRE** a tie, a belt, and dress shoes for some events. If you're not sure if your tie matches your suit/jacket/belt/shoes, ask someone!!

c) If you identify outside the gender binary and are not sure what to wear, feel free to reach out to me (thomas.frostjr@gmail.com). I am happy to help you find something that expresses who you are as a person within the classical performance format.

If you are in doubt as to appropriateness of your choices, please consult your parents, your high school Choral Director or please feel free, as well, to call the GSA office at (502) 566-5192 or text me directly at (313) 695-9695.

***We've also included a brief message from our counselors-in-residence:***

GSA is an experience like no other with opportunities to make memories and be part of an arts community to cherish for a lifetime. In preparation for your time with us, please keep in mind a few important points for



both your physical and mental health.

- Even though your brain might go into “summer mode” after wrapping up the school year, please know that the 3 weeks of GSA aren’t like a typical summer camp. Every day you will work and play hard and, along the way, be challenged and inspired!
- Because our days are full of activity, be sure to try your best to prioritize rest, healthy eating, and opportunities to recharge when you can. Quite honestly, we recommend making these priorities right now in preparation, so it’s a smoother adjustment.
- The GSA staff, faculty, and counselors are available to help if you ever feel out of balance while on campus. We’re your go-to people to help you find the best fit in our unique community and to help with any adjustments that are needed. Don't wait to reach out because we're there to help from Day 1!
- As it applies to you, don’t forget to bring any prescribed medication (we can help with reminders but do not administer) and know that we can help with coordination of telehealth therapy sessions (with your already established provider) while at GSA as long as it’s not overly disruptive to your studio schedule.

As a faculty member, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of these three short weeks. Plan to come with a positive attitude, flexibility, plenty of energy, a willingness to learn, and a healthy sense of humor. We love to have fun with music, laugh a lot and work hard at GSA! Should you have any questions, please feel free to call the GSA office where there is a very helpful staff ready to answer any and all questions! Also, you and your parents should always feel free to contact me directly (at the e-mail address and phone number, both listed earlier in this letter)! I look forward to seeing and especially hearing you soon! **Remember to email me (thomas.frostjr@gmail.com) once you’ve read this letter!**

Sincerely,  
Thomas Frost  
2025 Vocal Music Chairperson  
Governor's School for the Arts