

# GSA APPLICANT GUIDE

## Vocal Music



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## **I. Program Description**

The Vocal Music program at GSA is designed to develop each student's fundamental musicianship and to encourage healthy and natural tone production. Students participate in private lessons and in group ensembles, performing a wide range of vocal music styles from Renaissance to 21st Century. GSA vocalists receive an introduction to singing in languages other than English, as well as instruction in a wide variety of topics including music theory and sight-singing. Students attend performances by and learn from guest artists and leading professionals. Along with the Vocal Music faculty, these guests share their personal experiences as performers to assist discussions about college and career planning. Students present a performance of solo, chamber, and choral work on the final day of the program.

## **II. Preliminary Round Application Requirements (due January 10<sup>th</sup>)**

*Submit the materials in this section through the online platform no later than January 10<sup>th</sup>. NOTE: Applicants will be prompted to pay a \$30 application fee when submitting their materials (or \$35 if applying in two art forms). Students on free/reduced lunch may opt to have this fee waived when payment is requested.*

For the Preliminary Round, submit the following (*see below for more detail*):

- a. Two Recommendation Forms
- b. Personal Short Essay
- c. Personal Question Video
- d. Prepared Solo Video

### **a. Recommendation Forms (do this first!)**

Identify two people to fill out recommendation forms for you: a school administrator (e.g. counselor) and a teacher/instructor (see below if those do not apply). Enter their names and email addresses in your online application, and the individuals will receive emails instructing them on how to complete the recommendation process.

- Before submitting your recommenders' information, contact them to ask for their permission to use them as a reference and explain why you want to attend GSA. Confirm with them when you submit their email addresses to ensure they receive the recommender email. Initiate this process as soon as possible so your recommenders have time to complete the forms before the application deadline.

- *Your teacher/instructor recommender does not have to teach at your high school, nor do they have to teach you in your art form of focus (although we recommend you choose someone who is familiar with your creative work, if possible).*
- *You do not need to submit letters of recommendation. Recommenders will receive an online form to fill out, which will serve as their recommendation for you.*
- *If you are home schooled, and/or you otherwise do not have a school administrator or teacher/instructor who can fill out your recommendation forms, please seek out another adult who can speak to your qualities/character/abilities in one way or another; this could include a mentor, a youth minister, a coach, etc.*
- *Applicants' parents/immediate family may not fill out their recommendation forms.*

#### **b. Personal Short Essay (250-word max)**

Provide an answer to the following question in essay form:

*As you envision yourself attending GSA, describe to us one thing you will bring to/offer the community, and one thing that you know will challenge you.*

Be open, honest, and authentic in your response – let us learn something about you. Upload this essay response as a document file; type out the question at the top of your response, so the question and answer are both in the document (the question restatement does not count toward the word count limit). When uploading your essay, title the file "Personal Short Essay."

#### **c. Personal Question Video (90-second max)**

Provide an answer to the following question in video form:

*Artists play a vital role in society, ranging from sparking large cultural movements, to facilitating meaningful interpersonal connections. What impact do you seek to make on your community/world as an artist, and why is that an important impact to make? How will GSA help you achieve this?*

- Be open, honest, and authentic in your response – let us learn something about you. While you are encouraged to prepare your thoughts before shooting the video and you may consult notes as you speak, please do not just read off a transcript. We want to get a sense of your personality.
- Record your answer in an interior space that is free from interruptions, noise, etc. Do not edit or splice the video. You do not need to include an introductory frame or any effects such as fades, etc.

- Shoot straight on, leaving the camera in one location. Review the video to ensure you can be seen AND heard. Ensure the video plays all the way to the end.
- When uploading your Personal Question Video, title the file "Personal Question Video."

#### d. Prepared Solo Video

Begin your recorded solo video by introducing yourself and your selection.

- Your solo must be between 2-4 minutes in length
- Memorized solos are preferred, but not required
- The audition piece should be a prepared piece which is the best example of your performance without being excessively simple. Selections need not be in a foreign language.
- Your selection should be an Art Song, Folk Song, Aria, Hymn, or an appropriate selection from the Musical Theatre repertory.
- Do not perform Vocal Percussion, Rap, Hip Hop, or selections with excessive belting. These styles/genres do not provide adjudicators with an appropriate opportunity to hear your vocal quality.
- It is strongly encouraged and highly preferred that you use a live piano accompanist for your prepared solo. If you do not work with or know an accompanist, ask for suggestions from teachers, houses of worship, arts/culture organizations, or family friends in your community. If you are unable to access an accompanist, videos using recorded accompaniment, self-accompaniment, or no accompaniment will be considered.

### **III. Final Round Requirements**

*Some applicants will be invited to participate in the Final Round of GSA Auditions/Reviews, which will consist of the elements described below. All applicants will be notified on February 26<sup>th</sup> of whether they are invited to the Final Round. If you are selected to participate in the Final Round, you will be required to attend in-person on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, or 22<sup>nd</sup> in Lexington, KY at the University of Kentucky as scheduled by GSA.*

The Final Round for Vocal Music will include:

- a. Questionnaire
- b. Prepared Solo
- c. Sight-Singing and Pitch Memory Exercises
- d. Interview

#### a. Questionnaire

When you arrive at the main registration table for your auditions/reviews, you will receive and complete a one to two-page questionnaire.. This questionnaire may cover a range of topics, including your previous experience in your art form, your favorite artists, and/or your college and career goals. The questionnaire is not a quiz and is not scored, but it is a way for adjudicators to get to know you. The questionnaire may be used to customize questions in your interview.

#### b. Prepared Solo

You are required to sing the same piece that you submitted for the Preliminary Round. Even though this will be the same selection as your application, please introduce yourself and your solo. Your solo may be interrupted at any time at the discretion of the judges.

#### Accompaniment

An accompanist is provided at the audition site. You must use the provided accompanist. Recorded accompaniment, *a cappella* selections and accompanying oneself are not allowed.

**Please provide 3 total copies of your music: 2 for adjudicators and the 1 for the accompanist.**

For the copy of music provided to the accompanist:

- Music must be in the correct key
- All audition music must be two-sided copies, three-hole punched, and placed in a three-ring binder. Make sure that the entire accompaniment is clearly copied to the page and all cuts are clearly marked. Music should not be placed in plastic protective sleeves.
- When giving your music to the accompanist at the audition, provide them with direction on your desired tempo, and make them aware of any cuts, added markings, etc. in the music.

#### c. Sight-Singing & Pitch Memory Exercises

Finalists will participate in a sight-singing exercise furnished by the GSA adjudicators. Additionally, finalists will participate in a pitch memory

exercise. In this exercise, a series of notes will be played for you by the accompanist and you will be asked to sing the notes back at the correct pitches, unaccompanied.

#### d. Interview

There will also be a short interview with the adjudicators.

### IV. Criteria

*The work of each student will be given an objective review by the adjudicators as to how they fulfill each of the following criteria:*

#### **Tone Production**

An ideal applicant sings correct notes with accurate intonation. The sound produced is resonant and breath support is consistently even.

**Rhythm & Tempo** An ideal applicant's rhythmic accuracy is consistent and tempo supports technical ability.

#### **Musicality**

An ideal applicant consistently incorporates expressive tools (dynamics, phrasing, etc.) into their performance. Their overall interpretation of the music supports the meaning of the text, and the applicant can explain how so.

#### **Diction/Articulation**

The ideal applicant clearly articulates the text, while vowels and consonants are appropriate to the language and the style of the musical selection.

#### **Dedication to Art Form, Growth, and Community**

An ideal applicant demonstrates a commitment to and passion for their art form, as well as a desire and ability to grow as an artist. The applicant can thoughtfully and authentically explain why they want to attend GSA and how they are uniquely qualified to contribute to a robust, diverse community of artists.

#### **Sight Singing/Pitch Memory Proficiency (Final Round only)**

An ideal applicant produces consistent pitch and rhythm accuracy during the sight singing and pitch memory exercises.

## **V. Tips**

*These tips are suggestions. They are NOT eligibility requirements for admittance to GSA.*

- **Choose a solo suited to your current ability.** GSA highly recommends candidates choose solo selections in Italian or English. French and German sometimes demand young singers to make sounds and vowel choices that may compromise sound quality.
- When choosing your solo, **focus on finding a piece that highlights the best qualities of your voice**, rather than focusing on how difficult, dramatic, or unique a piece is. Remember there are many operatic arias that are better suited for college-aged singers; even if you can sing a piece, it may or may not be the wisest choice for an audition setting.
- Be prepared to explain **why and how** you chose your audition piece, considering the previous two bullet points.
- For your solo, make certain that you are **prepared to explain either a translation or give a brief synopsis of the events described in the song**. If selected for the final round you may be asked to do so.
- **Develop expressiveness and passion** in your singing.
- Practice to **develop good intonation**; consider recording yourself and listening for that.
- **Practice sight-singing!** Sight-singing may be performed on any syllable(s) of the singers choosing.
- Consider practicing **mock auditions** for your teacher, peers, or family members.
- **Wear professional clothing** (e.g., dress slacks, shirt, and shoes for men. Ties, jackets and suits are not necessary. Dresses, skirts, or pants for women), **but dress comfortably**. Do not overdress or underdress in anything that could cause a distraction from your application recording and final round audition.
- For the finalist audition, be prepared to **pass on any notes to the accompanist** regarding tempo, repeats, etc.
- Be prepared to talk about **your experience in music**—school/church choir, ensembles, private studies, etc.

- Be prepared to talk about **why** you are passionate about music and why you are interested in attending GSA.
- Be prepared to discuss **what** you wish to get out of GSA and what you believe your strengths and weaknesses to be in your singing.
- **Pay close attention to the adjudication criteria.** While GSA students are accepted based on their holistic identity as a young artist, the criteria are the foundation of how your materials are being scored.

## **VI. Class Announcement**

From the Final Round in March, adjudicators will choose the 2020 GSA Summer Program class for all 9 art forms.

On **Friday, April 10** you'll receive your results via email. GSA will also make a big announcement on our website: [www.kentuckygsa.org](http://www.kentuckygsa.org). Accepted and Alternate students will be listed. Accepted students will also receive paper written notification of their results via standard mail.

**For technical support with the application  
contact Acceptd**

Email: [support@getacceptd.com](mailto:support@getacceptd.com)

Phone: 1.888.725.2122, press 2

**For questions about Summer Program, the content and/or requirements  
of the application,  
contact GSA**

Email: [gsainfo@kentuckycenter.org](mailto:gsainfo@kentuckycenter.org)

Phone: 502.566.5192