

GSA APPLICANT GUIDE

Vocal Music



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, with a strong emphasis on classical technique. 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, leading professionals, and college professors. 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 10th)

Submit the materials in this section through the online platform [Acceptd](#) no later than January 10th. NOTE: Applicants will be prompted to pay a \$30 application fee when submitting their materials (or \$35 if applying in two artforms). 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. Artform-Specific Questions
- e. Prepared Solo Video

a. Recommendation Forms (do this first!)

Identify two people to fill out the following recommendation forms (each person will complete one of the following options: your application must include one of each form):

1. School Administrator Recommendation Form: in this form we ask the recommender about your role as a member of your learning community as displayed through items such as attendance, disciplinary record, and general achievement. As such, this form should be completed by a school administrator (e.g. counselor, principal, etc.), or if you are homeschooled, a non-family member who can speak on behalf of your accountability and/or character (i.e. staff at an organization you volunteer for, youth minister, coach, etc.). This recommender is not directly asked about your artistic skill or potential.

2. Teacher Recommendation Form: in this form we ask the recommender about your abilities as a student and young artist. As such, we encourage you to select a teacher who instructs you in your artform, if possible. We understand not everyone has a teacher in their artform, in which case you may select a teacher in another subject who knows you well. The person completing this form can teach any subject and may be someone who teaches you privately and/or outside of school (if they are not a family member). If you are homeschooled and taught only by family members, you may select a recommender who fits the profile referenced in the school administrator section.

You will enter the names and email addresses of each recommender in your online application, and those individuals will receive emails instructing them on how to complete the recommendation form, which will take about five minutes.

Before submitting your recommenders' information, we strongly encourage the following:

1. Inform them you are applying for GSA and would like to list them as a recommender. Tell them they will complete a short form via email, and that their responses are confidential (you will not have access to them). Ask if they have any questions about GSA and/or your desire to apply.
2. Confirm what email address you should list for them; double check that you have the correct spelling.

Submit your recommenders' information as soon as possible so they have plenty of time to complete the forms prior to January 10th. After you have submitted their information, we strongly encourage the following:

1. Tell your recommenders to check their email. The email will come from Acceptd (not GSA) with a subject line that begins with "Documentation Request."
2. Ask them to confirm with you when they have submitted the form – and then tell them thank you! If they have not received the form, ask them to check their junk folder and ensure you entered their email address correctly in the application. Contact GSA if you need to correct an email address.

Note: Once you submit your recommenders' information, you will have to click back into your profile to access the remainder of the application ; Acceptd will refer to this next section as "Application Part 2."

Additional information about recommendations:

- No letters of recommendation are needed, nor should you submit any. Recommenders simply need to complete the form they receive via email.
- Applicants are not be able to review the contents of their recommendations.
- Applicants' parents/immediate family may not fill out their recommendation forms.
- While we encourage you to secure the best recommenders possible within the guidelines listed, know that we rely on your personal application materials (essays, artistic work, etc.) as the primary tools to assess your fit for GSA. Recommenders have the option to choose "unknown" if they are not aware of the answer to a question, and this will not be held against you as an applicant.
- If you are applying for two artforms and using the same recommender(s), they must complete two forms (one for each artform), even if their answers are identical.
- Recommendation forms include your name, but not the artform you are applying for. Ensure your teacher recommender understands your area of interest. If you are applying in two artforms AND using the same person for the teacher recommendation in both applications, keep track of which artform application you fill out first so the recommender knows which email is for which artform (the first email they receive will be for the first artform application in which you listed their info).

b. Personal Short Essay (250-word max)

Provide an answer to the following question in essay form:

Describe your personal connection to your artform or creative practice. Why and how is it important to you on a personal level?

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:

Describe your vision for how your individual artistic work/creative practice can impact others. How do you want to affect others through art, and/or what response do you hope others have to your work?

- 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. Artform-Specific Questions

Applicants will be asked questions about their specific interests in their artform and their level of access to training/classes/lessons in their artform. Applicants can review the specific questions for their artform once they have submitted their recommender information. There are no right or wrong answers for these questions, nor are we looking for one profile of a student over another – rather, we ask these questions to understand the applicant in the fullest context possible.

e. 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 a Musical Theatre selection from a show written prior to 1970. If you are unsure of what to sing, ask a choir director, musician from a house of worship, or seek out a GSA vocal music alumnus from your area.
- Certain musical styles and genres do not provide adjudicators with an ideal opportunity to hear your natural vocal/singing quality; as such, we strongly suggest you not choose a solo piece that includes vocal percussion, rapping, excessive belting, etc.

Song Accompaniment

Record your solo with live piano accompaniment if possible. If it is not possible to work with a live accompanist due to COVID-19, or if you do not otherwise have access to a live accompanist, you may use pre-recorded piano accompaniment (no synthesized orchestra tracks), self-accompany, or not use accompaniment.

Consider if you can ask a pianist to record an audio track for you to sing along to in your video. 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 (or contact GSA and we will try to connect you with an accompanist who can record a track for you). You can also research programs that provide pre-recorded accompaniment, such as *Appcompanionist* and *Acapella Maker*.

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.

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 artform, 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 Artform, Growth, and Community

An ideal applicant demonstrates a commitment to and passion for their artform, 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. There are many online resources for practicing sight singing that you can find through a google search.
- 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. Application Timeline/Deadlines

January 10, 2021 - GSA Application Due

All applicant materials must be submitted via Acceptd by 11:59 p.m. We encourage you to submit early and not to wait until the last minute, as the application portal runs slowly when many people try to upload at once.

February 19, 2021 – GSA Finalists Announced

All applicants will be notified of whether they have advanced to the final round of adjudication.

March 19 & 20, 2021 – Final Round Auditions/Reviews

All finalists attend an in-person audition/review at the University of Kentucky in Lexington (if health guidelines allow). If auditions must shift to a virtual model, more information will be sent to applicants.

Friday, April 16, 2021 – Announcement of GSA 2021 Accepted Students and Alternates

All Finalists will be notified of whether they have been accepted into the summer program. A list of alternates will also be announced.

June 27 – July 17, 2021 – GSA 2021 Summer Program

For technical support with the application, contact Acceptd

Email: 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 (preferred): gsainfo@kentuckyperformingarts.org

Phone: 502.566.5192