

GSA 2024 APPLICANT GUIDE

Vocal Music



I. Program Description

The **Vocal Music** program at GSA is designed to develop each student's fundamental vocal musicianship and to encourage healthy and natural tone production. Students participate in private voice 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 may 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.

[*Click here to view the Vocal Music program photos from GSA 2023*](#)

II. Preliminary Round Application Requirements (due January 14th @ 11:59 p.m. EST/10:59 p.m. CST)

*Submit the materials in this section through the online platform [Acceptd](#) no later than **January 14th**.*

NOTE: *Applicants will be prompted to pay a \$35 application fee when submitting their materials (or \$50 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. Two Recommendation Forms (do this first!)

Identify two people who will complete recommendation forms in support of your GSA application (*each person will complete the same form separately*):

NOTE: *previous GSA application cycles have required recommendations from a teacher and a school administrator. The recommendation guidelines have changed in recent years to broaden the scope of who may complete these forms. Please review the new guidelines below.*

The recommendation form includes questions about your artistic abilities/potential, how you contribute to your learning environment/community, and your overall fit for GSA. If you can select two recommenders who can speak to your artistic abilities, we encourage you to do so. However, we understand not every applicant will have one or two recommenders who have experienced the

student's artistry. In this case, select recommenders who can speak to your character, accountability, and/or work ethic. Recommenders can be teachers (from inside or outside of your school and in any subject), school administrators (i.e., guidance counselor), mentors, or other people involved in your personal or artistic development such as a coach, youth minister, or staff at an organization for which you volunteer.

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 14th. After you have submitted their information, we strongly encourage the following:

1. **Tell your recommenders to check their email.** The email will come from do-not-reply@getacceptd.com and be titled "Documentation Request from {{your name}} for Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts."
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 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.

b. Personal Short Essay (250-word max)

Provide an answer to the following question in essay form:

How can/why should the artform you are applying in be of importance to your community or society as a whole? *Provide an answer that is specific to the artform you are applying for.*

- **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:

Why is the artform you are applying in important to you? What are your goals for yourself as an artist in this artform? *Provide an answer that is specific to the artform you are applying for.*

- **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.
- **Begin your video by stating “Hello, my name is (first/last name).”** 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, 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. All applicants will be notified on February 16th of whether they are invited to the Final Round. **The final round auditions/reviews for Vocal Music on March 15th and 16th will be in-person at the University of Kentucky.***

The Final Round for Vocal Music will include:

- a. Pre-Review Questionnaire (see below for more information)
- b. Prepared Solo
- c. Sight-Singing & Pitch Memory Exercises
- d. Interview

a. Pre-Review Questionnaire (due via *Acceptd*)

Applicants who advance to the final round will be forwarded to a new section of their application in *Acceptd* (called “Application Part 3” in *Acceptd*). This new part of the application will include a short 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 (on March 15th or 16th)

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 adjudicators.

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 the adjudicators and 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 (on March 15th or 16th)

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 (on March 15th or 16th)

There will also be a short interview with the adjudicators.

Finalists will receive the time/date for their audition/interview. This will be sent through Accepted's messaging system.

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.
- **Remember the adjudicators are very excited to see your work and they want you to do well!** We know it takes hard work to submit this application, and that it can be scary to “put yourself out there.” We have faith in you, so put your best foot forward and don’t be afraid to show us the wonderful artist you are. You prove a level of dedication just by submitting your application, and you should be proud of yourself.

VI. Application Timeline/Deadlines

January 14th, 2024 - GSA Application Due

All applicant materials must be submitted via *Acceptd* by **11:59 p.m. EST/10:59 p.m. CST**. 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 16th, 2024 – GSA Finalists Announced

All applicants will be notified of whether they have advanced to the final round of adjudication. Those who've advanced to the final round will also be given instructions on how to complete "Application Part 3" via *Acceptd*.

March 15th & 16th, 2024 – Final Round Auditions/Reviews

All Finalists will attend an audition/review. Some artforms will hold their auditions & reviews in-person at the University of Kentucky, while others will be held virtually. Friday and Saturday auditions/reviews run from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST.

Friday, April 12th, 2024 – Announcement of GSA 2024 Accepted Students and Alternates

All Finalists will be notified of whether they have been accepted into the summer program. Alternates will also be listed. In addition, accepted students will be sent their assigned summer session.

Sunday, June 9th, 2024, to Saturday, June 29th, 2024 – Session One of GSA Summer Program

- *Design* will be held in Session One only

Sunday, July 7th, 2024, to Saturday, July 27th, 2024 – Session Two of GSA Summer Program

- *Dance* will be held in Session Two only
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For technical support with the application, contact *Acceptd*:

***Acceptd* Email:** support@getacceptd.com

***Acceptd* Phone:** 1(888) 725-2122, *press 2*

For questions about the content and/or requirements of the application, please contact GSA:

GSA Office Hours – Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST

GSA Info Box (Email) – gsainfo@kentuckyperformingarts.org

GSA Helpline (Phone) – (502) 566-5192