

VCC Music

Audition Requirements – Diploma



Classical Guitar

Applicants should be prepared to play two pieces of contrasting nature by different composers and give a brief example of their technical work.

The graded repertoire books of the Royal Conservatory of Music (Frederic Harris pub.) are an excellent source of material for this audition. The Guitar Foundation of America accepts them as the main graded repertoire throughout North America. A more advanced level of performance will be viewed favourably by the audition panel; however, well prepared and musically played works of Grade 4 or 5 level combined with reading at a Grade 2 or 3 level will be sufficient to give the panel an idea of the applicant's potential.

Applicants will also be asked to sight read a short musical passage.

Classical Keyboard

Applicants wishing to enter the VCC School of Music as classical keyboard majors should have a minimum performance level equal to the Grade Nine requirements of the Western Board or Royal Conservatory of Music in piano performance.

Audition requirements are performance of:

- two contrasting selections from the keyboard repertoire: a movement from a classical sonata or a Bach sinfonia, or prelude and fugue **AND** a romantic or 20th century work
- an etude or study piece demonstrating both technical and musical ability (minimum level Grade Nine Royal Conservatory or Western Board)
- scales, chords and arpeggios etc.
- sight reading of a short selection suitable to the applicant's level of performance

Applicants will also be asked to submit:

- a brief resume stating their musical education
- a list of their major performance repertoire
- a letter stating their future career goals and expectations

Classical Voice

Applicants will be asked to present themselves as potential vocal soloists according to the traditions of the recital art form.

Therefore, students must be prepared to:

- perform from memory two songs of contrasting style (early music, baroque, classical, romantic)
- sing one song in English and one in a foreign language
- bring extra copies of the music to be performed
- discuss their previous musical studies and performance experience as well as their future career goals

Applicants should demonstrate the basic elements of musicality such as intonation, phrasing, secure rhythm and dynamic variation according to the expression of the text.

Bring either a recorded accompaniment or an accompanist to your audition.

Composition

Students planning to audition as composition majors must submit:

- a selection of several contrasting works with scores/lead sheets
- recordings and/or performance of the selections chosen above
- an up to date resume listing musical background and previous education, including a list of compositions
- a short statement outlining education and career plans

Please note that any music presented in the audition must be the sole work of the composer. The audition committee cannot assess collaborative work. As well, compositions must have been written in the past six months.

Usually, successful applicants will demonstrate creativity and originality in their work, combined with relevant support skills (including keyboard and/or electronic abilities).

While a strong background in theory is unquestionably an asset in composition, an aptitude for theory/solfège (as demonstrated on the placement examinations) is more significant than any specific level of achievement in traditional "conservatory style" theory.

Double Bass

The applicant should be prepared to perform the following:

- a prepared piece (e.g. an etude from Storch-Hrabe, Simandl etc.)
- major and minor scales in two octaves
- arpeggios of major and minor triads

The applicant will also be asked to sight read a short passage.

Drums

Prepared Snare Drum Piece

Applicants must perform any snare drum etude, rudimental solo or orchestral excerpt appropriate to demonstrate technical ability and musical interpretation. In addition, a written piece for drum set or drum solo transcription may be performed (optional).

Snare Drum Rudiments

You may be asked to demonstrate some rudiments taken from the NARD list of 26 rudiments.

Styles, Feels, Tempos and Meters

Please be prepared to play time (a beat/pattern/groove) in some of the following styles: 4/4 swing (slow, medium and up), jazz waltz, jazz ballad, rock, bossa nova, samba, funk and afro-cuban. You may be asked to try soloing one of the above feels, or to interpret one in an odd time signature (e.g. 5/4, 7/4, 7/8).

Sight reading

You will be asked to sight read a piece of music, either for snare drum or for drum set. The drum set sight reading chart will be in a big band style of writing, and will require understanding of rhythmic notation, form (road map), styles/feels and interpretation of rhythmic figures (reading "shots").

Drummers are required to bring their own cymbals, sticks and brushes, as well as extra copies of the sheet music for their prepared piece.

Electric Bass

The applicant should be prepared to perform the following:

- a walking bass line over a standard jazz form like a 12-bar blues or "I Got Rhythm" changes, or another typical jazz tune. Playing the melody or an improvised solo will be regarded favourably. Playing from memory or using sheet music is acceptable. Keeping a good time feel and outlining the chord changes clearly is much better than flashy or fast playing.
- a second bass line that contrasts with the first piece (an example might be a cumbia, bossa nova, rock, funk, early jazz or "Dixie", reggae, jazz fusion, jazz waltz, "2-feel", ballad, samba, or other style)
- major, minor, harmonic minor and melodic minor scales. Two octaves are preferred, but one octave is acceptable. Prepare several different keys. The scales should be played as 8th notes, at a tempo close to quarter note = 60 beats per minute.
- major and minor triad arpeggios within an octave, including root position, 1st and 2nd inversions in a few different keys (for example, a G major triad in 1st inversion, and an Eb minor triad in 2nd inversion).

Familiarity with modes like Dorian, Mixolydian, Lydian etc. will be viewed favourably.

Material for the two pieces could be learned by ear, or taken from books like "The Improviser's Bass Method" by Chuck Sher, "The Evolving Bassist" by Rufus Reid, "The Jazz Bass Book" by John Goldsby, "Standing in the Shadows of Motown" by Alan Slutsky, or "Essential Styles for Drums and Bass" by Haughton/Warrington.

The applicant will be expected to sight read a short passage.
Amplifiers will be provided for you, but you must bring your own patch cord.

Jazz & Contemporary Guitar

Technique

Be prepared to play as many major scale fingerings as you currently know. Scales should be played using alternate picking (if using a plectrum) in 8th notes at a tempo that allows you to play cleanly and evenly. Accurate execution is more important to the audition committee than speed. You should be prepared to play major scales in a few different keys, such as G, C, F, B flat.

For extra consideration, applicants may also demonstrate major scale modes, the harmonic minor scale, melodic minor scales (jazz melodic minor), and/or arpeggios (major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th and minor 7 flat5).

Chord Knowledge

You will be asked to play the following basic chords with the root located on the lowest string as well as the second lowest string: C major 7, C minor 7, C dominant 7, C minor 7 flat 5

For extra consideration, applicants may also demonstrate the following chord voicings:

Root on lowest string: C13, C7#5, C7 flat 5, C6, Cm6, CmMaj7, Cdim7

Root on second lowest string: C9, Cm9, C6, C6/9, Cm6, Cm6/9, C7sus4, C7 # 9, C7 flat 9

Pieces

Prepare two unaccompanied pieces. These should be played as a single note melody of a jazz standard or jazz blues followed by a chorus of playing the chords for the tune. If you can perform a chord melody of a jazz standard and/or chord solo that would be ideal. Try to choose pieces of contrasting styles (e.g. swing, Latin). One (only) of the pieces could be a quality pop, rock or funk piece. Pieces should be well prepared and musically played. One (only) of the pieces could also be a classical guitar piece.

Sight-reading

You will be required to read a piece of written music.

An amplifier will be provided, but applicants need to bring their own patch cords and guitars.

Jazz & Contemporary Keyboard

Applicants wishing to enter the VCC School of Music as jazz & contemporary keyboard majors should have an understanding of basic scales and modes, and should be familiar with all chord types.

Audition requirements for a jazz & contemporary keyboard major are:

- performance of two contrasting contemporary pieces, including improvisation (jazz/pop idiom), by memory if possible
- performance of scales, modes and chords (arpeggios and solid inversions)
- knowledge of all types of 7th chords (dominant 7th, major 7th, minor 7th, “half” diminished 7th, “full” diminished 7th)
- sight reading of a short selection
- be able to understand chord symbols and play a melody with “comping”

Original compositions in contrasting styles are acceptable (i.e. swing, be-bop, bossa nova, samba, ballad).

Jazz & Contemporary Voice

Prepared Pieces

Applicants are asked to perform a song from the jazz standard repertoire using a “swing” style, such as “All the Things You Are”, “Stella by Starlight”, “Autumn Leaves” etc.

Also required is a second song from jazz or non-jazz repertoire (i.e. music theatre, folk song, contemporary ballad).

Extra consideration will be given for improv ability (e.g. scat solos).

Try to use contrasting types of songs (i.e. up-tempo and slow) so that you can show as much of your scope as possible. Bring either a recorded accompaniment or an accompanist to your audition.

Scales

Sing the major and natural, harmonic and melodic minor scales at any pitch using numbers as indicated on the Jazz & Contemporary Voice scales and etudes pdf file (e.g. one, two, flat three etc.).

Etudes

Be able to perform assigned etudes from the Jazz & Contemporary Voice scales and etudes pdf file in both swing and Latin styles at a variety of tempos with scat syllables of your choice.

If you cannot locate the scales and etudes pdf, please contact music@vcc.ca.

Ear Training & Sight-singing

You will be asked to match pitches and intervals, as well as clap rhythms and sight-sing.

Latin Percussion

Applicants should be able to demonstrate a working knowledge of the various specific techniques particular to playing conga drums, including:

- open tones
- slap tones
- bass tones
- heel-finger hand rocking
- muffled tones

In addition, students must be prepared to perform a series of rhythmic patterns in 4/4, 2/4 and 6/8 meter at varying tempos. Any familiarity with the basic concepts of clave is a definite asset.

Applicants will be asked to demonstrate any knowledge of timbale stick technique or drum set stick technique.

Some applicants will have had some experience performing on other types of hand drums, such as the djembe, ashiko or other traditional hand drums. Where this is the case, the applicant will be asked for a demonstration of the technique specific to those other instruments in order to assess the extent to which the applicant may be able to carry over basic sound production techniques.

While soloing and improvisation are key elements to many aspects of Latin American percussion, it is desirable, but not essential, to demonstrate any abilities in this area during the audition.

Strings

Applicants should be prepared to play:

- two pieces of a contrasting nature - either two movements of a concerto or two pieces from different style periods
- three major and three melodic minor scales and arpeggios of the applicant's choice
- a piece of sight reading appropriate to the applicant's abilities

Wind and Brass

Applicants should come prepared to perform two selections of their own choosing. These selections should be contrasting but need not be any specific style. A classical etude or piece will help the committee evaluate the applicant's instrumental skill. The applicant should think carefully about the selections to make sure they are familiar and well prepared.

Certain elements of technique will also be requested: scales (slurred or with articulations), arpeggios and range demonstration (for brass players). Sight reading a short selection, (e.g. a part from a big band chart), will also be required.

Accompanists are not provided nor are they required. Applicants may bring an accompanist if they wish. Play along tapes or discs are also fine. You will not be required to improvise at the audition but are encouraged to do so.