



## Youth Artist Spotlight

Autumn Choate

*Join us as we dive into our community's talented youth! With a new airing schedule, you have more opportunities to hear our latest interview. Tune in to KCME every Thursday at 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.!*



*Meet Autumn Choate Johnson, a talented tuba player, and a senior at UCCS, pursuing her bachelor's degree in music. While you can read her full interview right now, catch part one of her feature on air this September!*

### Part 1: Getting to Know the Artist

**Tell us a little about yourself.** *Where do you go to school right now, and what are you studying or involved in musically? We'd love to hear about your background and how music fits into your life.*

I am currently a senior at UCCS and am about to graduate with my Bachelor of Arts in Music. I began in the Colorado Springs Children's Chorale in elementary school, transitioned over to band in middle school, and continued to join my high school's marching band, jazz ensemble, and symphonic band. After graduating, I joined the Woodland Park Wind Symphony until I enrolled at UCCS, where I have been part of multiple ensembles, including our orchestra, brass ensemble, and creative music ensemble. It is also at UCCS that I found my love for composing, and I have been writing my own original musical since. Music is my lifeblood and is the only thing that has felt right my entire life, so I aim to envelop myself within it in any way I can.

**What instrument do you play and how did you get started?** *How old were you*

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*when you first began learning music? What made you choose your instrument or decide to sing?*

I began tuba at eleven years old after hearing the Mouse Battle scene from *The Nutcracker*. In the Children's Chorale, we sang *Waltz of the Snowflake* at the Pikes Peak Center every year, and my favorite part was right before we sang, where I could see down into the pit and watch the tuba player. When deciding to start band in middle school, I confidently knew that the only instrument I wanted to play was the tuba. On top of that, I wanted to prove everyone wrong who thought a girl could not play the tuba.

Composing, on the other hand, isn't something that I picked up until college. I dabbled in it lightly during my junior year of high school, but my freshman year at UCCS really solidified my love and passion for it. I'm not sure if I even really know why or how I got back into it, but I was immediately invigorated to learn and write as much as possible as soon as possible.

**Do you remember a moment when music really became exciting or meaningful for you?** *Maybe it was a concert you heard, a piece you performed, or a teacher who inspired you.*

In 2022, I flew out to New York City to see *The Phantom of the Opera* before it closed on Broadway and was engulfed with emotion the entire time. Not only

was this a show that I had spent the entirety of my life loving and re-watching, but the pure, unfiltered power of music and lyrics interacting together ignited a part of me that had become lost for far too many years. This performance of *The Phantom of the Opera* was the first source of dual-processed creative input I had ever experienced, and I walked out of the theatre that afternoon knowing exactly what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. It truly engrained in me a never-ending passion for musical theatre, a love for storytelling, and an emotional connection to music that inspires an endless rediscovery of my passion.

## **Part 2: Your Musical Journey**

**Who has helped, inspired, or influenced you the most in music so far?** *This could be a teacher, band director, mentor, or a musician you admire.*

Tim Hoffman, my tuba instructor, has been my absolute rock during these past three years. Not only is he amazing at tuba, but he goes out of his way to make me feel welcome in his home, in his family, and with myself. So much of our work together has been focused on my mental journey with tuba and how I can turn that intentionality and calm into beautiful music. He is truly one of the

only reasons I've made it this far in my musical journey.

**What ensembles or groups do you play or sing with?** *Tell us about your jazz band, combo, school groups, or any other ensembles you play with and what you enjoy about them.*

I am currently not in any ensembles, purely because I wanted to give myself enough time this semester to prepare for my senior recitals. I was part of the UCCS Brass Ensemble for five semesters, the UCCS orchestra for two, and have been involved with city groups like The Pikes Peak Philharmonic and The First United Methodist Church Chamber Orchestra. Moving forward, my hope is to find an orchestra or small group to settle into and become a regular player in.

**What was one of your favorite or most memorable musical experiences so far?** *Describe a concert, recital, or musical experience that stands out to you.*

Last spring, I had the honor of putting on my junior recital, which consisted of a scene and three songs from my original musical, *The Seven Deadly Elements*. It was performed by nine amazing actors, singers, and musicians. The recital itself was the largest cross-specialization collaboration I have ever been a part of, which elevated the experience into a larger realization of my work. The community and connections that I have built because of the recital have greatly

outweighed the importance of any physical showcase during my creative career, but it was such a wonderful experience as a newer composer to see my music come to life as well.

### **Part 3: Inspiration & Looking Ahead**

**Are there any composers, performers, or pieces you especially enjoy?** *What music are you listening to or practicing lately?*

I listen to basically every genre under the sun, but recently I've been obsessed with *Pity the Child* and 1956, *Budapest is Rising* from *CHESS the Musical*. One of my favorite parts about musical theatre songs is how relatable and deep they can be. For the character, it's their backstory and motivation, but for me, these songs are reflections of my own life stories. Something about the way the singers and lyrics interact with the 80s-style music also just tickles my brain in the right way. There's such a good mix of emotional, ballad type songs and groovy, dance songs within the album.

**What do you like to do when you're not making music?** *How do these other activities influence your creativity, balance, or perspective as a musician?*

My biggest hobby is watching live theatre, no doubt. I take multiple trips out to NYC each year, if my finances let

me, and travel up to Denver all the time specifically to see musicals that inspire me. It's an activity that always reignites the spark in me, especially when I'm in a writer's block.

Outside of theatre, I'm also in a car club for Chevrolet Berettas. Funnily enough, this club has also been a lifelong commitment and honestly is more like a family than a club. It is always revitalizing to meet up with everyone and rediscover the community, which in turn gives me creative inspiration.

**How do you see music being part of your future?** *Do you hope to keep performing, study music further, or simply continue playing for fun?*

I am set to attend Berklee NYC's Writing and Production for Musical Theatre Master's program in the Fall, where I am very excited to learn, create, and write more of my original musicals. Past that point, my hope is truly to just continue to fall in love with music and musical theatre however I can. It is so easy for musicians and creatives to fall into a pit of not feeling successful enough, so my aim is to foster this passion and love for music regardless of where I am and what it takes.



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