Youth Artist Spotlight

Mikayla Fry

KCME and Jazz 93.5 are excited to expand our Youth Artist series with our first collegiate feature! To dive deeper into the incredible talent in our community, moving forward, our featured artists will receive an expanded, three-part showcase on the air.

Our May Youth Artist is Mikayla Fry, a UCCS student studying classical voice and trumpet. While you can read her full interview right now, Part One of her feature airs on the radio this month! Read along as she reflects on her musical journey.

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 currently go to UCCS and I'm a music major. I'm studying classical voice and classical trumpet. I'm taking a little bit of a break from trumpet this semester since my teacher is on sabbatical. However, I'm playing the trumpet in the UCCS Mariachi, which is super exciting. I also teach voice and trumpet lessons both through a music school and freelance. I got my start singing musical theatre, and I love theatre. I also assist with teaching a show choir through a homeschool musical theatre company in Monument, and it's my dream to teach music full-time once I graduate.

What instrument do you play and how did you get started? *How old were you when you first began learning music? What made you choose your instrument or decide to sing?*

I started playing the trumpet back in fifth grade, and I was self-taught until I was able to participate in a band in sixth

grade. My mom, grandpa, and great grandpa all played the trumpet. A lot of people in my family sing, too. I've loved singing all my life and started studying with my current voice teacher, Solveig Olsen, when I started college a few years ago. I continued playing trumpet in college because of a lot of great teachers who were really encouraging and encouraged me to keep playing. The same thing happened with singing. A few people here and there told me to continue to pursue singing and told me I had potential in vocal performance. I'm so glad I listened to those people!

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.*

I had a really exciting moment when I joined my high school's marching band my senior year and we performed in a competition for the first time. I realized how much I loved the feeling of performing with others and presenting a product that had so much hard work poured into it. I don't think I'd ever musically collaborated with others at that level up to that point. It was absolutely thrilling.

Also, I feel like I was able to experience the feeling at some point in the last few years of performing and not being really focused on being nervous. I get bad performance anxiety that can be debilitating, but I think that I've now performed so often and gotten so much more adept at performing (because performing is a skill in itself) that I can truly enjoy being onstage and sharing music with the audience. It is VERY exciting to experience that feeling.

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.*

I can't just choose one person, because I've had so many people inspire me. I would say the first person was my middle school band director, Mrs. Blake, who was the first to inspire me. She was tough, but she made music incredibly fun. In high school, I had a wonderful director named Mr. Acuncius who really pushed me and just went above and beyond as a teacher. If I had to choose, I would say he helped and inspired me the most. He really pushed me to audition and apply for things, and this led to me winning a grant of a thousand dollars. Then, he helped me find a new trumpet (since mine was in bad shape) and he helped me purchase the trumpet from the seller using the grant money. He would also coach me, which he didn't have to do but was so important for me,

and he let me play with the professional group he was a part of. I don't think I was grateful enough at the time, but looking back, I feel really blessed by that teacher. All my current university instructors are also lovely and kind people who really push me and inspire me and support me, so I feel super lucky!

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.*

During high school I participated in concert bands, big jazz bands, chamber groups, marching band, and pit orchestras. In college I was able to expand, working on being a soloist, which is something I had very little experience with and underestimated the difficulty of. But I've enjoyed it. I've continued playing in orchestras with UCCS and with community bands, I took our jazz band class for a semester and had some experience being part of a combo, and I participated in Mariachi and really loved it. I participate in choir, and I've been a part of many musicals where I had to sing as part of an ensemble. Similarly to trumpet, I've expanded my singing to include solo work, which has been amazing. I've done many recitals and a couple of solo gigs for different events.

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.*

I feel like I've had so many really cool musical experiences that it's difficult to pick one out. Though, to name a recent performance, the other day, I performed a role in my friend's musical that she wrote. The musical is called The Seven Deadly Elements. It was such a cool feeling to know that I was performing in something that had never been performed before. It was the world premiere of that musical!

In general, I really love collaborating musically with other people and I think it creates a special bond.

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 took a class this semester about apocalypses and this piece was mentioned due to its apocalyptic themes. I recently heard the piece in a concert. I'm also writing a research paper about this piece. It's "Quartet for the End of Time" by Olivier Messiaen. I've been loving the

opera Carmen, so I've been listening to Carmen a lot. I did an aria from Carmen for my junior recital, I recently performed a piece from Carmen in English as part of an opera scenes concert, and I'm learning lots of music for my next recital, which will include another aria from Carmen. So, I've been on a big Carmen kick lately. I've also been really enjoying learning about new styles of music, like Mariachi. I have been captivated by barbershop music lately, and I really want to start a women's barbershop quartet. We've been learning about atonal music in my music theory class and I really enjoy that, too.

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?*

I'm a runner and I started out at my university as an exercise science major before deciding that I wanted to switch gears and pursue music as a career. But I am very interested in the science of exercise, and I think that knowing the concepts that we associate with the science fields are really important in music, especially for singing. Knowing anatomy and how your muscles all coordinate when you sing is incredibly helpful. Breath support is such a huge thing as a singer and trumpet player, and running is very beneficial for developing breath support. I love hiking too and just being outside.

One of my favorite things is theatre, and I recently participated in the UCCS production of the Ghost Sonata. I've found it very interesting to see how theatre and music are similar and work together.

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?*

My dream is to be able to teach music full time. I would love to teach choir at the high school or middle school level; if I can make a career where I get to teach music, I'll be overjoyed. I love teaching lessons too and want to expand my business. I also would like to perform professionally or recreationally in any way that I can, since I love performing and it's so fulfilling to me. I'm not exactly sure of the path that my life will take, but I'm excited for the future.

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Catch the interview broadcast on KCME, Sunday, May 24th at 1:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 27th at 7:00 a.m., Friday, May 29th at 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, June 2nd at 2:00 p.m., Thursday, June 4th at 7:00 p.m., and Saturday, June 6th at 10:00 a.m.

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