

A SPIRIT THAT IS NOT AFRAID



The Auburn Plainsman

DONATE

SUBMIT A TIP

SUBSCRIBE

[LIFESTYLE](#)

'The Golden Years' of UPC's fall concerts: Joshua Bassett performs acoustic set



Joshua Bassett performs during the UPC Fall Concert at the Jay and Susie Gogue Performing Arts Center at Auburn University on Aug. 23, 2025. Photo by [Estela Munoz](#) | [Assistant Photo Editor](#) | The Auburn Plainsman

By [Ella Walton](#) | [Newsletter Editor](#) and [Jennifer Santiago](#) | [Newsletter Editor](#)

August 24, 2025 | 9:18am CDT

It's no [secret](#) that Auburn University's University Program Council goes all out for their [First 56](#) concerts — with big names like The Driver Era, Maddie and Tae, Dayglow and The Brook and The Bluff performing in previous years. The fall concert on Saturday, Aug. 23, was no exception as Joshua Bassett made the stage at [the Jay and Susie Gogue Performing Arts Center](#) his own.

Bassett's film career began in 2017, his stardom heightened with his role as Ricky Bowen in the Disney+ series *High School: The Musical: The Series* alongside acclaimed actress and singer-songwriter Olivia Rodrigo. In 2023, Bassett won an Emmy Award for co-writing "Finally Free," in the "Outstanding Original Song" category.

UPC President Rachel Robertson said their special events committee searched for another Disney star following last fall concert's notable attendance for The Driver Era, leading to their selection of Joshua Bassett. Preparation for this year's performance began immediately after last year's concert ended.

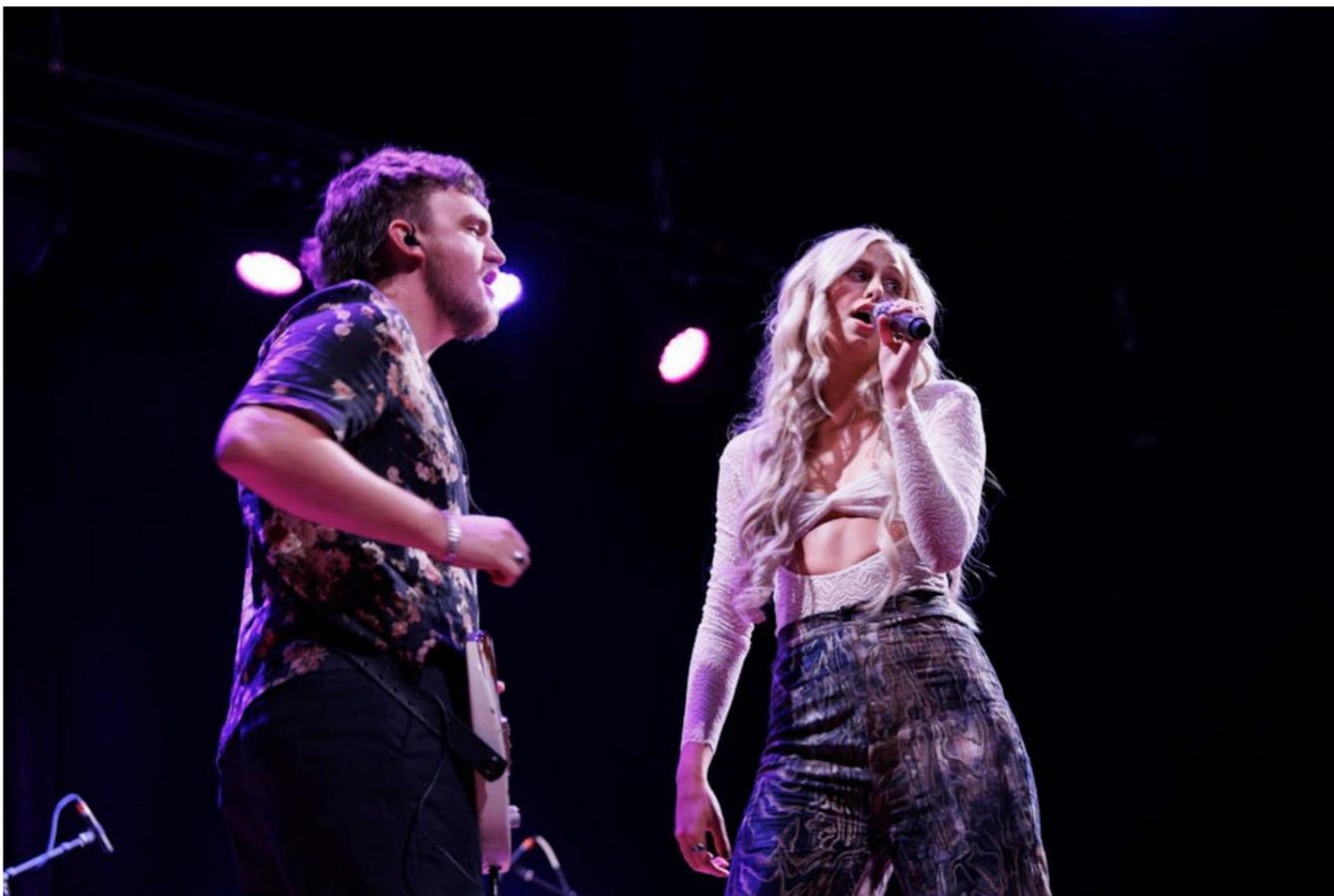
"Getting just to see all of this come to life has been, honestly, the best part of all of it. I'm excited for the pre-party part," Robertson said. "Just kind of getting to see everyone hang out and enjoy all the things, all the hard work that we've planned and put into it."

Admission to the concert was free for Auburn University students, as were the food trucks for the concert-goers upon entering UPC's "pre-party." Toblem's Table, O Town Ice Cream, Butcher Paper BBQ and Las Latinas Kitchen were among the six options available.

Carter Stremmel, UPC's vice president of finance, cited last year's fall concert as their largest concert, and as such, have been increasing the yearly concert's budget due to the event's popularity. Next year, the Gogue will gain an outdoor venue, which could allow for the admission of more attendees.

"[The fall concert] is something that Student Involvement kind of prioritizes for us, so they really want us to prioritize our time here," Stremmel said. "And they really like this event and wanted to bring in a lot of people and give people that experience that they wouldn't otherwise have for free."

At 7 p.m., opener and former American Idol contestant Haven Madison seemingly stole the hearts of the audience — if the swaying hands and rapturous applause were any indication. Madison was accompanied onstage by her brother and drummer Avery, guitarist Austin Appling and keyboardist Steven Stewart.



[Estela Munoz](#) | Assistant Photo Editor

Haven Madison opens for Joshua Bassett during the UPC Fall concert with her guitarist at the Jay and Susie Gogue Performing Arts Center at Auburn University on Aug. 23, 2025.

Madison's vulnerability embedded in each of her song introductions charmed the audience out of their seats. Showing up, letting herself be seen and "laying herself bare before the masses" is a scary feeling for Madison, but having fans understand and respond back to her lyrics is validating.

Her song "Why Do The Pills Work" centers on her own struggles with anxiety.

"I just want you to know I see you. I know there's these big lights in my face, but I can actually see every single one of your faces and think you're all beautiful. And it does get better. And probably every single person in this room struggles, even if they don't show it," Madison said.

According to Madison, the UPC concert was one of her favorite performances. Singing for an audience the same age as her “felt right,” because she felt they could better connect with her music.

“It’s so rewarding, being on that stage and feeling that connection [with the fans],” Madison told *The Plainsman*. “To see other people be like, ‘Oh my gosh, me too,’ or to see people crying — it, no pun intended, feels like a safe haven.”

Fans were allotted a 20 minute intermission to use the restroom, visit the artists’ merchandise tables and enjoy refreshments leftover from the pre-party. As students trickled back into their seats, UPC members handed out foam glowsticks in anticipation of Bassett’s set.

The crowd roared and jumped out of their seats again as Joshua Bassett and guitarist João Perrusi entered the stage. After opening his acoustic set with his hit song “The Golden Years,” Bassett performed an alternative version of “Secret” and “Cherry Blossom.”

Between songs, Bassett discussed his inspirations behind each piece and interacted with the crowd through [We're Not Really Strangers](#), a card game that encourages meaningful connections through purposeful, deeper-level prompts.



[Estela Munoz](#) | [Assistant Photo Editor](#)

Part way through his show, Joshua Bassett, leaves the stage to interact with the audience and plays the game *We're not Really Strangers* during UPC's Fall Concert at the Jay and Susie Gogue Performing Arts Center at Auburn University on Aug. 23, 2025.

“I just like to talk about how words really do matter, and they really can have an effect on the world. I was trying to write [“Biting My Tongue,”] not sure how to say what I wanted to say without hurting anybody's feelings,” Bassett said. “But the reality is that the power of life and death is in the tongue, and we have to be very careful with what we say, because what you say can really curse or bless someone in a great way.”

Bassett’s set also included the songs “Mirror,” “Lifeline,” “Smoke Slow,” “Different,” “Wildfire” and “Just Love.”

“I saw a lot of places, and I found a whole lot of nothing, until one day I had an encounter with Jesus Christ. I experienced peace for the first time, and love, and I thought that I wasn't loved. I genuinely believed I wasn't lovable [...] I experienced the love of God, and it radically changed everything,” said Bassett, when discussing his song “Just Love.” “The biggest issue we have, truly, is a love deficiency.”

Crowd interaction was a central piece of the performance as Bassett ran through the aisles, singing to fans and inviting attendees on stage to play a game of musical chairs for free merch.



[Estela Munoz | Assistant Photo Editor](#)

Joshua Bassett invites fans from the audience on to stage to play a game of musical chairs during his show at the UPC Fall Concert at the Jay and Susie Gogue Performing Arts Center at Auburn University on Aug. 23, 2025.

Bassett performed two song requests, “Do It All Again” and “Only a Matter of Time” before closing his performance at 9:10 p.m. with “Set Me Free.”

Ainsley Braswell, senior in political science, attended the concert with her friend Madeline Schlaman, graduate student in elementary education. Both described the performance as raw and intimate.

“It was so fun. I loved how relatable both of the artists were, even though they are clearly on different life paths than I am, and they're stars,” Braswell said. “I felt like they were sharing stories that I could relate to, and they were coming into the audience and just making us feel seen. I really had a good time.”



[Estela Munoz | Assistant Photo Editor](#)

Joshua Bassett performs at the UPC Fall Concert at the Jay and Susie Gogue Performing Arts Center at Auburn University on Aug. 23, 2025.

Maclaine Montgomery, freshman in psychology, only knew one song of Bassett's going into tonight's performance, but she was overjoyed to hear him perform live.

“It's really good. I've been super homesick,” Montgomery said. “This brought the vibes back up. I'm feeling good. I'm feeling happy, and I'm really excited for the rest of the year and the First 56.”

Brooke Gordon, a senior double majoring in music education and communications, has been a fan of Bassett's since his first EP was released. Gordon briefly dueted with Bassett during the performance, and she later described the moment as unreal.

"That feeling when you walk out of the movie theater and you feel like you could, like, take on the world, is kind of how I feel right now," Gordon said. "Getting to sing with one of my favorite artists on the planet was kind of like a dream come true."

On Monday, UPC had announced via [their Instagram](#) that they would be giving out a select number of meet and greet passes to those who completed an impromptu selfie challenge with a statue on campus. The meet and greet winners met Bassett backstage after the concert for pictures, autographs and a Q and A.

During the Q and A, Bassett talked about everything from his love for ice skating to his musical heroes: Norah Jones and Paul McCartney.

Gordon's luck continued on into the meet and greet, where Bassett grabbed his guitar so they could sing "The Best Part" together.

Joshua Bassett performs a duet of "The Best Part" with Auburn University senior Brooke Gordon at UPC's fall 2025 concert meet and greet. [Ella Walton | Newsletter Editor](#)

“For his music to be what I [listened] to crying in the shower freshman year, to getting to hear it live in the audience and sing along with him at the end of my college experience is such a full circle moment,” Gordon said. “And just shows that if you love Auburn, they will find a way to love you back, every single time.”

Do you like this story? The Plainsman doesn't accept money from tuition or student fees, and we don't charge a subscription fee. But you can donate to support The Plainsman.

Support The Plainsman

Ella Walton | Newsletter Editor

Ella Walton, majoring in English literature with a minor in creative writing, currently serves as the Newsletter Editor at The Auburn Plainsman. Formerly the Culture Editor, Walton has been with The Auburn Plainsman since the fall of 2023.



Jennifer Santiago | Newsletter Editor

Jennifer Santiago, sophomore double majoring in political science and history, currently serves as the Newsletter Editor for The Auburn Plainsman. Since joining The Plainsman in the fall of 2024, she has previously served as a news writer and the Lifestyle Editor.

[ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#) [CORRECTIONS](#) [SEARCH](#) [ADVERTISE](#) [LETTERS](#)



All rights reserved

© 2025 The Auburn Plainsman

Powered by

Solutions by The State News