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Music shapes PhD student's life and research

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Despite the high demands of his academic career, Jay Jantz finds time to pursue one of his lifelong passions – music.

“Balancing my music and research is a fun problem,” says the Vanier Scholar and neuroscience doctoral student. “I look forward to taking the skills I learn from each aspect of my life and integrating them together.”

Mr. Jantz, who is also a professional performer and music coordinator of the local theatre group [Blue Canoe Theatrical Productions](#), began playing saxophone in Grade 3, when he was just big enough to hold the instrument. Over the years, he has developed his singing voice while also learning to play the keyboard, clarinet and flute.

When Mr. Jantz’s high school friend Michael Sheppard wanted to start up a theatre school seven years ago, he sought the help of the multi-instrumentalist. Mr. Jantz agreed and became the music coordinator for Blue Canoe, assisting the vocal directors and vocal coaches as needed and with music selection for each production. He has also served as the music director for many of the company’s productions.

Mr. Jantz says his research in Doug Munoz’s laboratory and his budding music career overlap more often than people might think.

“When it comes to presenting my research or leading a seminar as a teaching assistant, I rely in great part on the performance and public speaking skills learned while on-stage,” he says.



Jay Jantz, a Vanier Scholar, began playing saxophone in Grade 3.

Music actually figures into one aspect of his research into Parkinson's disease. He is interested in whether rhythmic cues can excite the neural pathways that may improve Parkinson's disease symptoms.

Mr. Jantz received the [Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship](#) in 2012. The scholarships are designed to attract and retain world-class doctoral students. His research focuses on understanding the basal ganglia regions of the brain, with the goal of improving Parkinson's treatments.

[More information about Mr. Jantz's research and music](#)

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