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The sounds of success



Supriya Crocker

By [Sean Kolenko - North Shore Outlook](#)

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Bass players never seem to get the credit they deserve.

Stuck behind the always front-and-centre singer and solo-prone guitarists, the stringed half of a band's rhythm section is an integral component to any group, just not a flashy one.

And they can be sources of inspiration, too. Capilano University student Supriya Crocker, the recent winner of the Canadian Music Therapy Trust Fund Scholarship, knows this well.

In a band Crocker was playing in a few years ago in her hometown of Calgary, Alta., the bass player was a music therapist. In her practice, she used elements of music to help people having various difficulties in their lives. Crocker, a piano player who was also teaching music lessons in her home at the time, thought she could use some music therapy practices with her students.

It worked.

So, Crocker decided to enroll in Cap U's music therapy program, the oldest such program in Canada, and pursue the discipline as a career. The decision kicked off a busy four years as she juggled a full-time course load, a full-time job as a flight attendant and the recent birth of her first child, Lillie Saranya Crocker.

"It kind of validated the work I've been doing," said Crocker, of her scholarship victory.

"It's a nice pat on the back."

Crocker is the third Cap U music therapy student in as many years to be awarded the national scholarship. Stephen Williams, the music therapy program coordinator at Cap U, told The Outlook he was surprised a student from the school was chosen for the third straight time, as there are music therapy programs found across the country.

"I thought no way for a third year," he said.

"But we're so proud and excited for Supriya and proud of what our team is able to do year after year."

To qualify for Cap U's program, Williams said all students must be able to play an instrument "at a performance level." Typically, students come to the program as musicians first and learn the therapy aspect as they progress through the program.

The application of a music therapy education is varied. Williams said most music therapists in the Lower Mainland work in hospitals, while the second most popular avenue is private practice.

How music is used in the therapy sessions also varies. Williams said music therapy can be used as a tool to help others develop particular skills such as adolescents struggling with emotional changes or autistic children having difficulty learning how to take turns.

He's also worked with a female client in the past that, he said, wanted to make "angry music."

"We sat at the piano, she [client] wasn't musical and treated the piano like a drum," said Williams.

"To anyone listening it would have sounded chaotic but for her, she started to cry."