

## **Music Compound targets local musicians looking for a hangout, and wannanabe musicians looking to learn**

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As soon as you walk into Music Compound, the music school just off Cattlemen Road east of downtown Sarasota, you may hear the distinguished sound of a violin or the stimulating strum of the electric guitar. You will be greeted by the smiling faces of one or more of the staff, and when you look around, you will see the smiling faces of children as they eagerly wait for their chance to for a lesson on one or more of an array of instruments such as piano or guitar, or for voice.

Music Compound was founded by Jenny Townsend, a fifth-generation Sarasota native. While growing up she attended St. Martha Catholic School and Cardinal Mooney High School. From a young age she was involved in educational programs and developed her leadership skills by signing up for every after-school activity, such as her school's stamp club and 4-H. Despite all these activities, Townsend says she "was not a performer by any means" and that she "did not grow doing anything music-related or dance-related."

The idea came when she was waiting tables as a student at the University of South Florida. "I realized a lot of musicians did not really have anywhere to go and jam or hang out after work, which was like 11 or 12 o'clock at night," she said. "My last semester they had us create a business plan utilizing all the classes like marketing, finance, management, etc., and I decided to take this idea of musicians needing a place to jam as the business plan. So I started thinking how can we generate revenue and how can we pay for this space, and that's when I thought of after-school programs."

At Music Compound, there are numerous opportunities for children and adults to learn, grow and explore. Townsend also seeks to ensure a pleasant environment for the students.

“At the end of the day, it is about the experience and making sure each person is progressing. Our goal is for them to have fun and for them to be inspired,” she said.

Recently, the business held a Sarasota’s Got Talent competition, with more than 50 people auditioning in May. Three winners were chosen. Music Compound also holds nearly weekly open-mic events, with many students taking advantage of these opportunities, including Rickey Tedesco, 17, who placed third in the Sarasota’s Got Talent competition. “Ever since I was little, since I could speak, I loved to sing. I loved music. It’s something that has always been a part of me. This place has provided me with so much experience. I have grown so much as an artist,” he said.

When Music Compound opened on Jan. 4, 2016, it occupied 1,800 square feet and had four studios. Now it occupies 6,500 square feet with eight studios. There are more than 105 active members, ranging in age from 6 months to 87. Local students say they have been able to develop their artistry and are given opportunities to travel and meet with different performers and musicians. Workshops are held to help students with auditions for those interested in talent competitions such as The Voice, America’s Got Talent, or to prepare them for college.

Townsend said she and her staff seek to fulfill their mission “to inspire, collaborate and educate children and adults in pursuit of their love of music.”

Her vision is to expand Music Compound from the Sarasota market and “to have five locations by 2021 and to have a nonprofit sector.”