Kandice Porter was born and raised in Denver. Porter attended East High School and continued on with college at Xavier University of Louisiana. Porter is the owner of Bonding to the Beat and a graduate of Rocky Mountain MicroFinance Institute (RMMFI)’s Business Launch Boot Camp Class #11. Today Porter teaches music to children ages 2-5 years old at The Children’s Center at Park Hill United Methodist Church, as well as at The Montessori Children’s House of Denver where she teaches at three out of their four campuses. Porter’s Bonding to the Beat music development program has been very effective, the children love it, the parents love the program for their children, and it has thrived and grown in the last couple of years.
"Kandice is an incredible and beautiful person in so many ways. Feeling uninspired, she left her corporate job, to pursue her passion of singing and music. She came to Boot Camp having put together a curriculum for parents and children (ages 5 and under) to bond through singing and music and she wanted to start a business that would allow her to do this full time. Like all the entrepreneurs who come to us, Kandice had a vision for her future and an incredible talent, but didn’t know how to get started and needed resources to turn her business idea into an income generating opportunity."

What follows is my interview today with this up-and-coming arts entrepreneur and woman to watch in Denver:

1. You’ve created this music development company, Bonding to the Beat. How did it all begin? What made you start singing?

When I was in college at Xavier University of Louisiana, I was involved with a program called “Early Birds.” It was a program made available for students who majored in music to earn a little extra cash. The Early Birds program was designed for children ages 5 and under and their caregivers. I was so amazed by the program and the response to the program by the families. I thought it was such a neat idea for parents to be able to sit in class with their little one, act silly, sing songs, and bond at the same time!

After I graduated from college with my degree in Music Liberal Arts, life happened. I got
married to my high school sweetheart (awww, LOL), we started a family, and I was STUCK (At least that is how I felt) in corporate America, working jobs just to make ends meet. I worked at Apria Healthcare, where I placed order for patients who were fed through feeding tubes. I listened to mothers and fathers order supply for their children, but the pain that was in some of their voices and the stories they shared with me either warmed or broke my heart. I just wanted an outlet for them. Because they sounded like they needed it, and fast.

Five years later, I was reminded about my love for seeing families partake in a musical experience through music, and how I wanted to expose families to this type of activity and have them take their experience into their homes. After some serious conversation with God, asking WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO!(I wasn’t necessarily yelling.... I was just frustrated). I received my answer after a long drive to work. Reignite the love for the program that you were introduced to in college. I followed the calling and thus, Bonding to the Beat was formed! That was 3 ½ years ago.

I began seriously singing at the age of 8 where I performed in my first talent show. I realized then that I had a deep love for singing and music in general. Throughout middle school, I joined various honor choirs which led me to become completely immersed in music when entering into high school. My passion for music intensified as my gift developed under the direction of my music teacher Mr. Taylor at East High School. I then pursued and obtained my bachelors in Music Liberal Arts. I have been teaching private voice and piano lessons as well as group music classes for four years and I thoroughly enjoy my chosen profession! Singing calms me, it centers me, it makes me happy, and it makes me utilize my creativity. I literally can’t go one single day without singing! I just don’t know what I would do with myself!

**2. What is Bonding to the Beat all about?**

Bonding to the Beat is 45 minutes of pure musical fun! It was my heart’s desire to share a musical experience with families who had a new little one that they were able to bond with. Parenthood is sometimes challenging, and sometimes parents need different ideas and different ways to connect with their little ones, especially first time parents, step parents, or parents who have adopted a child. We don’t know the ins and outs of what truly makes our child happy, so I think this is a great way to experiment with your little one, see what spikes their interest, and build from there. All that can definitely be achieved through music.

Bonding to the Beat allows families to be silly with their little ones, to think of different ways to do things, and to develop through music all at the same time. Not only that, children are able to bond with other children (social skill advancement), parents are able to bonding with other parents (community unity), and caregivers are able to bond with their little one(s) (family
What a winning combination!

3. Why is music development important?

Music development helps children in so many different ways. In the early developmental stages of life, it's important that children begin to learn and utilized certain skills. For instance, in music class, children are able to grab, hold, feel, tap, and shake instruments which are important in the development of their gross motor skills. Children are able to communicate and talk to (if they are able to talk) other children, they learn how to share, they learn how to engage and make eye contact through music. It helps them with speaking skills. Music is the master of imagination! I read that the use of imagination at an early age creates creative thinkers later on in life. It creates strong entrepreneurial minds. Studies also show that children who are actively involved in music are smarter than children who are not. Music uses both sides of the brain as opposed to just one side. Music helps with literacy! In my class I have a portion where we have a Story in Song portion, where we tell a story while singing. Children love that and they love being able to be creative, sing, and use their imagination at the same time.

4. What sets your music program apart from others?

What sets me apart from others is my style because it is truly my style! LOL! I write my own songs, designed my own curriculum, and I try to use music that parents can also enjoy! So you may hear an instrumental of “Uptown Funk”, by Bruno Mars, or we may have a shaker activity to “Shake it off” by Taylor Swift and when the grandparents attend class (I just LOVE when that happens), you may hear a little “Aquarius” by the 5th Dimension! Not only do I desire to make the children happy, I want to make the ones that are bringing them to class, the ones that are taking care of them, providing for them, and loving them unconditionally to walk away feeling like they have received something other than playing a couple of percussion instruments. This is why during the lullaby section of music class; I include words of advice for the caregivers. After all, I believe that some parents come into class, maybe after a hard morning trying to get their little one out of the door. And they barely made it, get to music class and say WHEW!! So my desire is for them to feel like there is something there for them as well. I eventually will move into more of a faith based setting because I would like an opportunity to pray for families upon dismissal of class. Families are hurting in this day and age. Some families walk in, they look like they have it all together, but deep down inside they are hurting, really bad. So I would like to create a spiritual atmosphere where we are able to reach out to families through music, assist in the developmental stages of their little ones lives, AND pray for them! Now that
sounds like a one stop shop to me!

5. Since graduating in December 2014 from Rocky Mountain MicroFinance Institute’s Business Launch Boot Camp program, I hear you’ve made some great strides. Tell me more about your website and other accomplishments in 2015.

I already knew this year would be great for me because I had worked so hard during the business boot camp the previous year, and I had obtain so much information regarding my business, that I knew with hard work and application, I had no chance of failure! I started my year out with obtaining a loan from RMMFI (which I am very grateful for), where I was able to participate in a huge Baby and Kids Expo that was wonderful for my exposure! Bonding to the Beat was by far the most happening booth there! I was able to get so many contacts from families and I was also able to meet other people in business which created a great networking opportunity as well. After The expo, I just wanted to know if my hard work and efforts really worked. When I checked the stats on the number of viewers to look at my website, I was delighted to see 756 took a peek at my website in one month! I was floored, inspired, and motivated to keep it going!

After 4 months, 7 demonstration classes, 3 birthday parties, 2 Trade Shows, and hard core persistence and dedication to marketing my business and getting my name out there, it has finally paid off! I currently have two classes in operation located in Park Hill and another in Washington Park. I still have a very long way to go, but I appreciate the journey even though it’s been hard! Very hard actually!!

6. What is ahead for you in the next year?

Next year, I really want to help families, inspire families and give them hope through my music program. I plan to double my number of classes and effectively take this city by storm with my inspirational structure and curriculum! I also desire to look into different streams of income regarding my business. I would love to sell some items such as CDs, shirts, and bracelets, just to name a few. I believe in what I do, I love giving families a very fun musical outlet with their little one(s), I love seeing caregivers interact and make music with their little ones, and I have faith that my business will one day give the big time music classes a RUN FOR THEIR MONEY!

7. What made 2014 the right time for you to start your own business and launch Bonding to the Beat? What was the most difficult obstacle you had to overcome to do it?

Well, I initially launched my business in May of 2012. At that time, my business was under the name of Toddler Timbre, then it because Mile High Mini Music. I found that there was a similar business to mine that was almost under the same name, so I knew that I needed to make a
name change, I just didn’t know what to name my business. Thank goodness for RMMF! My financial mentor Pete, out of all people, came up with a list of names for me, Bonding with the Beat was first, and then Bonding to the Beat was second. When I saw the name, I knew that was the one.

The most difficult obstacle that I had to overcome is just to know that this was my calling and that fear could not get in the way of that. I prayed for fear to be removed, it was. I walked into my boss’s office, and gave my two weeks’ notice.

8. What made you want to study at Xavier University of Louisiana?

I wanted to study at Xavier University because I was desperate for change. I wanted to go to a city where the culture was rich and so was the love of music. I fell in love with the city and even though the Music department was small in numbers, we made a huge impact on campus. I was given a scholarship as well so that helped with my decision, for sure. Attending Xavier University was such an amazing experience for me. I learned so much about who I was. Man... it sure helped mold me into the woman that I am today.

9. What questions or ideas have been raised for you as a woman entrepreneur? What was surprising or compelling in your view?

Would I be accepted? Would I have what it takes to win over my target audience? Will my program be chosen over another? What would make me stand out? Can I completely get out of my emotions in order to make this happen?

When I start thinking like this, I start to answer all the questions with YES! I can! Yes I will! GOOD BYE emotions! I learned just how strong I was... I learned that even if they don’t pick me, someone else will and they will value my service and what I have to offer. And I also had to remember that I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me. Truly I can.

10. In your role as a volunteer, with Aman Steam Academy, what kind of work do you do for the organization? What makes you passionate about the mission of this organization?

I volunteer with Aman Steam Academy. My friend is currently in the process of starting her own charter school in Aurora. I am currently on the community advisory board. I am passionate about the mission of this organization because she is another young woman in business who stepped out on faith, in order to follow her calling in her opening her own school. The mission is incredible. STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, (and) Music. You know I’m all for music! Being that music is constantly being phased out in our school systems, it excites me to know that there are people who see the importance of music in the lives of
children, and desire to make it a part of their daily curriculum. I encourage everyone to go and check her out because she is absolutely fantastic! Her name is Farrah Martin.

11. What do you think the biggest social justice issue is facing women today in our country and why?

I think one of the social injustices is lack of respect for women in a position of power. Society believes that a man can get the job done better than a woman can. I mean, don’t get me wrong, we need our men to take care of some of the things that we as women are just unable to. But with certain tasks, women are able to perform as well as or better than men. I think just as people, we all have our strengths and weaknesses no matter what gender you are. But respect should be distributed equally. Regardless.

About Rocky Mountain MicroFinance Institute

To learn more about Rocky Mountain MicroFinance Institute and how to apply to take part in its Business Launch Boot Camp Program, click here. There are also tremendous opportunities year-round to volunteer with RMMFI. A great way to meet some of their volunteers is to check out their next community event, the annual Sunday Fun Day, on July 19, 2015. Funds raised at Sunday Fun Day will be used to start new businesses, create local jobs, and activate our under-resourced neighbors into successful entrepreneurs. Tickets are $20 each.

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