

The Singer and Her House-Sitting Friends

By Sarah Groh

Most of us have met actors who also wait tables. Or visual artists who create graphic design during the day and paint at night. Or how about a bass player who works in IT and gigs on the weekend? But what about a singer who walks dogs and house sits? Yep! That's me! My weeks consist of dog walks each morning (either my own dog or a client dog), teaching, prepping for a jazz gig, a dog walk in the evening, and settling in with dinner and a Netflix show in someone else's house. A long-term goal of mine is to travel throughout the country housesitting, singing in the evening, and enjoying some travel as a happy way of life.

I have consistently lived a "gig life" as a singer, choir member, church music director, and studio voice teacher. In 2007, I created my studio, Groh Music and registered it with the state of Colorado as an LLC. I base my teaching philosophy off of a book titled, "The Naked Voice," by professor W. Stephen Smith of Northwestern University. "The Naked Voice" showed me the natural approach to singing and could possibly be considered the American approach to vocal technique.

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I created policies, pricing, and a system for auditions and pedagogy from the business insight of "How I Made \$100,000 My First Year as a Piano Teacher" by Kristin K. Yost, the founder of Centre for Musical Minds. The book introduced me to a systematic, demographic-based structure of branding that can build a thriving successful studio business. Having both a pedagogy and a business format in my studio structure helped me believe in my teaching and my business acumen.



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In 2022, I decided I needed to explore new avenues of income and connection. I needed space and wanted to spend time contemplating career, life, and relationship choices. So, I joined an international housesitting company and began a side hustle in house and pet sitting. I completed 24 sits and met many new families. Most of my house sitting clients have become repeat customers and I am proud to say, no pets have died on my watch. But I did have a Vizsla (Hungarian hunting dog) swallow an entire rotisserie chicken in 45 seconds, bones and all! Along with enjoying different spaces and pet personalities, I

began to implement self-care in the form of food, shopping, travel, and beauty product choices. I formed my house sitting philosophy as I interacted with each customer and decided what kind of homes, beds, and showers I prefer. To document my stories about my sits, I started writing a small book about the dogs, cats, fish, and bunnies I cared for. I also started a TikTok channel, Housesitter Self Care ([@housesitterselfcare](https://www.tiktok.com/@housesitterselfcare)), to tell funny stories and impart practical tips about caring for customers' homes and pets. These pets I sit for are always loving, fun, and great to be with. The people I serve are also very accommodating and thankful for my service. Some clients are very particular on the care they want for their pets and others leave a key under the mat trusting I will do a great job. Many of the pet owners have come to see me perform with my jazz quartet. Others have suggested my sitting services to their friends, and a few have signed up for voice lessons.

It is an odd combination, a professional singer watching and walking dogs, but the unconditional love I receive from the pets keeps me calm and grateful. Walking dogs and cleaning up poop, keeps me humble and real. Getting paid for doing this, helps me make a living. And meeting the owners keeps a steady flow of connection, service, and friendship in my life. Colorado is a "dog state," so my service and expertise is a valuable commodity here.



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Sarah Groh and Bandit

In 2023, I opened my schedule to more house sits and dog walking. I have policies and pricing, much like those that support my voice studio. I named the business, *Sarah Sit & Play*. Look for me on Facebook and Instagram, as well as TikTok.

A life transformed through singing, teaching, and house sitting has given me a new outlook on life. I don't worry about this strange combination of interests because it deeply feeds my life and spirit. I am hoping in the years to come that I can sing, and house sit in different cities, expanding both parts of my career.

Someday, you may decide you need a side hustle for money, mental health, or love and connection. Don't worry about any combination of gigs and jobs that you feel helps create a beautiful life. Let me be the first to encourage you and give you

the permission you need. To me, a beautiful song sung well, and the companionship of a dog are both sweet music, and the presence of God in my life.

Sarah Groh has a vast work experience that includes church music direction, music teaching, leadership and management, and small business setup and administration. Currently, she teaches private voice, house sits, walks dogs, and is employed by St Michael's Episcopal Church as the communications coordinator. Groh has created arts programs collaborating with non-profits, school districts, for-profits, and military organizations. She has written studio business systems that detail marketing plans, teacher training, and enrollment processes for how to run a small studio business. She leads the Sarah Groh Quartet, a jazz group with a regular gig schedule in Colorado Springs, Colorado.



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