



TAHN E41

Balancing Work and Fun: Finding Time for Your Passions Transcript

Heather Welcome to That's a Hard No, the podcast about learning to say no and set boundaries to live our best lives. I'm your host, Heather Drago. You may think because of this podcast that I'm a boundary setting expert, but I'm not. I'm an expert at struggling to set boundaries, but you know what? I'm working on it and it is getting easier. Follow along with me as I learn from fellow strugglers and experts so that you too can start saying no without feeling fear, guilt, or FOMO. My guest today is Sarah Becker, musician, entrepreneur, and co-founder of City Six String, a group of 30 plus classically trained musicians who perform at hundreds of events per year throughout Ohio. Sarah is also the host of the Serapi podcast. Hi, Sarah. Hello. Thanks so much for coming on.

Sarah Thank you for having me.

Heather I'm so excited. It's a delight to have you on. So you're not busy at all.

Sarah I've got a couple things going on. Yeah, you're reading it. And I'm like, oh, wow, that is a lot. You do a lot. No wonder I'm always busy. Yeah.

Heather So I'm fascinated about this little company you started with all these musicians. Tell me about it and how it came to be.

Sarah Yeah, for sure. So we started, my business partner and I, McKinley Glasser, she plays cello. She is absolutely amazing. So her and I started it in 2020. It was like the middle of COVID, I guess the beginning of COVID, like yeah, 2020. and we obviously some of the events were kind of on a little bit of a pause and everything was being rebooked like all of the weddings were being moved to 2021 2022 and I found myself in

a situation where I was getting double booked a lot like oh I'm like three different inquiries for weddings this day, like I can't be all these places at once. And so I did a lot of like, hey, talk to my, I referred people a lot to like, oh, talk to this person, they play violin. And so I was doing a lot of recommending that way. And I was like, you know, I think I should like be getting paid for this instead of just like always supplying people with names and like and so yeah so we ended up starting City Six Strings and that way we could book you know eight weddings for October of next year and not panic like oh are they going to all work out on time. And so yeah, so that's how it got started is just like, let's be able to book a couple weddings on one day instead of just one. And then yeah, then it kind of snowballed and obviously 2020 was a perfect time to start booking events far out because everything was being rescheduled. And so yeah, and so then it just kept going and we just had our three year anniversary. Wow, congratulations. Yeah, and we do all sorts of events. It kind of like really started out as weddings, but now we do private events, public events, parties, proposals, whatever you can think of. Yeah, and it's mostly strings. So we specialize in string duos, string trios, string quartets, but we also work with pianists, vocalists, and we are ever expanding. We want to cover, you know, we'd love to cover all the instruments at some point, but yeah, so that's kind of how I got started.

Heather So interesting. So I have a client that's in the wedding industry. I have a friend who had to reschedule their wedding like three times. I mean, it was such a chaotic time in the whole thing. So it's interesting to me, like, In a way, your business was designed to control chaos. Yeah. I mean, honestly, this is a mess. We got to find a better way to do this. Yes.

Sarah Yeah. Yeah, for sure. So that was definitely it was designed to control chaos. I guess I actually did it that way to control chaos in my own life. because there would be so many events on one day. And I was like, I just can't do this. But then it actually ended up controlling chaos on a larger scale, I guess. Yeah, it's nice now to be able to like, now we have the system set up with like, OK, someone wants to book. Here's your contract. Here's everything you need. And I didn't realize how much that level of organization was missing in my business when it was just me trying to book everything on my own calendar. Yeah, so it was created to control chaos in my individual life, but then it has, you know, now we can do that for all the people that we employ, too, and all the people we contract. So it's been nice to have that on a large scale.

Heather Yeah, once you have systems and structures in place, then you can scale. Hot take!

Sarah Organization is a great skill.

Heather Yeah. Yeah. You kind of remind me of me when I was younger. in that I dropped out of school. You dropped out of school. I sure did. Tell me about that.

Sarah Yeah. So, well, my education background, I did my undergrad at Cleveland State University.

SPEAKER00 Shout out.

Sarah Yes, we love CSU. And then I moved to Cincinnati for my master's and I completed that degree in... 2022. And then I started another degree. I started what's called an artist diploma. It's kind of, I'm not sure how well this translates to other areas of study, but it's honestly, I'm just going to say a pointless degree in the sense that like you don't use it for like, oh, I have my artist diploma now. Now I can go join this orchestra. Like it's for the sole purpose of like getting performance experience and that type of thing. So it's basically like you'll play in ensembles. You will give a bunch of recitals. So I was going to have that degree to basically just get better as a musician. So I started that degree. It was going to be two years. I did one semester and one week, a whopping one semester and one week of that degree. And I just, yeah, I found that my educational duties and my responsibilities that I had to the school and to some of the instructors there were getting in the way of me actually trying to start my own career and live my life. I guess, and I felt that there was a lot of competition between my education and my career, if that makes sense. So I was getting a lot of opportunities to perform here, do this, and I had to keep saying no because of school. And I was like, okay, school is keeping me, the thing that I'm actually going to school to do is getting in the way of the thing that I'm supposed to be doing. And so I ended up in like a lot of conflict and then eventually made the decision, yeah, I care more about like these opportunities.

Heather So yeah. Sounds like it just wasn't serving.

Sarah Yeah, it wasn't serving me anymore. I felt like I constantly had to make choices about what was best for me and for my future versus what was best for the school and the education system. But the school, CCM, it's a great school. I think it's wonderful. I just, I think everybody gets to the point in their education or their career where they have to choose like, okay, am I ready to, it sounds cheesy, but spread my wings and fly, you know? And that's different for everybody, but for me, like, it was time for me to like be, to just be like Sarah and be an entrepreneur and not just be like a student anymore.

Heather So, yeah. What surprised you about becoming an entrepreneur? I'm sure you had

a vision of what it would be like, and then what was the reality?

Sarah That's such a great question. I think that what surprised me was how much I loved my freedom. The main reason that I stayed in You know, I stayed in school for over six years. And I always had this fear of like, if I am left to my own devices, basically, if I have my own schedule, like, and I'm making work for myself. Like, I don't trust myself that I'm going to keep getting better and keep getting gigs and further my business. I'm scared that if I don't have a structure that's imposed on me, that the structure that I create for myself is going to be lacking in comparison. And so I was really afraid that not having that anymore would put me in a position where I was underperforming. or i wasn't you know living up to my potential and i really found that it was like the complete opposite i found that like when i didn't have like what basically when i made my schedule for myself like i loved it because i filled it up with things that like i love to do and in that way i actually was like more successful when I had my freedom. So I think that's what like surprised me the most is the fact that like it actually like I was better for it. Like I was better when I like when I could make my own business because I was doing stuff that like I loved so much. So yeah.

Heather It's almost like you had to learn to trust yourself. I don't want to use the word imposter syndrome because I think it's overused, but I know that in my business, we're coming on eight years. I just realized that. Yeah. I kind of felt a little unsure of myself. I would walk in meeting a new client and I would think, you know, I'm not really sure I'm up to this, you know, and then, and then I would do the work and then I'd be like, well, look what I know. And so it's almost like you have to prove to yourself that you are capable. You are grown up. You know, you can, you can set your own rules and, you know,

Sarah And I think we all have this like, I am not unique in this sense, I think we all have this fear of like, okay, I have to be completely ready before I do this thing. Like I have to with school, it's like, oh, I have to have this number of degrees, or I have to have all of these qualifications before I can like, jump in and do the thing. And that is just such a lie because, like, you are never going to be, like, totally prepared for whatever you're going to jump into. Like, if you had told me all of the work that, like, my business was gonna be, I would have been, like, scared. I would have been, like, I have no idea how I'm gonna do that. Like, there's absolutely no way for you to be prepared. Like, the preparation that you can do, like, could do is in the process. Do you know what I mean? So like, that's one thing that I've had to, that I try to train myself to do is like, okay, be prepared as you can. Like always be prepared as you can for things, but know that like, there's also no way to be fully prepared and you're gonna have to like learn how to do it once you jump in. And that's, that's like you were saying, part of like trusting yourself and like just getting more

used to that process.

Heather Yeah, when I started my business, there was no plan. There was no business plan. I was like, you know, I'm doing this for other people. I want to do this for myself now. And I, you know, filled out the paperwork with the state. Like, okay, it's official. Got my business checking account now. And I remember at one point I spoke with a mentor, a woman who's very well known in the marketing world and who's kind of famous for branding. I said to her, you know, like, I don't have a business plan. And she's like, well, why, why, why would you need one? Yeah. And I was like, well, she's like, do you need to go get a bank loan or something? And I was like, no. And she's like, well, you're profitable, right? And I was like, yeah. And you know what you're doing, right? Yeah. OK, well, don't worry about it. I was like, really? This woman worked for major, major companies. And I was like, OK.

Sarah You're like, well, if she doesn't have a plan, then I guess I'm OK. Yeah, I mean, I don't know if she did or not.

Heather But I just was kind of like, OK. And, you know, sure, I've gotten some professional help in terms of like business coaching and stuff and like, you know, accountants and things like that. But, yeah, it's like I had to just learn by doing and trust myself.

Sarah And so, yeah, the reality of the situation, though, is like if I or you or whoever starts a business and like you don't like it or it's not the right fit for you, do something else. It's never going to be a waste of time because when you do it, you're going to learn things that you like about it, things that you hate about it. You're going to learn things within the venture or the business or whatever it is that are going to help you, even if that's not the thing. 100%. I can totally testify to this.

Heather So way back when I founded a nonprofit. Did I have a nonprofit degree or experience? No. And we were trying to save an old building and turn it into an art center and all this stuff. I spent five years full-time volunteer trying to do this. I went around the state. I met people who ran centers all over the state. I met the governor. I asked for money. I got money. I did all this cool stuff. And then the housing bubble burst. And then no one was giving money to art centers for capital or anything like that. And everything just kind of fell apart. And I felt like a total failure. So much so that in my community where everybody knew me for doing this thing, I kind of like hid from everyone. everybody for years. I was so, I felt like such a failure. I felt like I'd let everybody down. And then as time went on, there was a person I was working with who was an architect who I became friends with and he was helping us figure out how to repurpose this building and stuff. And at one point we were working on this big study and we were walking up to his big

official downtown office and everything and he said, I don't know how this is gonna work, but someday people are gonna start paying you just to tell them what to do. And he's like, I don't know what that looks like, but that's what's gonna happen to you. You're gonna be paid to tell people what to do. And I was like, okay, buddy. And so then after this whole thing fell apart, I realized I'd learned how to make a website. I learned how to research. I learned how to do public speaking in front of large audiences. I learned how to do all these things that I had never had the skill set to do before. And then when I turned back to my marketing career, I could apply all those things and then become a business owner. So it was like something that I totally felt bad about. And then when I realized all the things I had learned and done in that time, I was able to apply it.

Sarah Yeah, if I can piggyback off that a little. One thing that I've realized being in music and now I'm obviously doing a podcast and I have a lot of varied interests is how universal skill sets are that you learn as an entrepreneur in particular. I think any skills you learn in whatever you can apply to anything, but I've just realized, oh, I had to learn to do this in music. I had to learn to, I don't know, analyze this thing or listen back to this thing and figure out how I can improve. Okay, I have to do that in my podcast too. Now I have to listen back to my podcast and hear, How can I improve? So whenever I'm dabbling in something, in some kind of skill, and my mind plays tricks on me and is like, oh, you're not gonna like, this might not be worth your time. This might not be worthwhile. I remind myself that this skills can always be applied to another skill set. That's one thing that I've learned is the, how do I say this? The universality. Is that a word? Yeah. The universal application of like skills that you learn. Absolutely. Yeah.

Heather Absolutely. Yeah. So speaking of varied interests. Yes. A little birdie told me that you recently joined a heavy metal band. I sure did. Okay. So tell me how that works with this classical violinist. Okay.

Sarah Yes. So So I'm classically trained. I've played in, since I was, I started when I was five playing violin. Yeah, and it's always been orchestras. I dabbled in like, I used to play in like worship bands and church and stuff, but it's always been primarily orchestra, a lot of that. you know with orchestra there's a lot of rules that come with that and things that you have to follow and it's you know sometimes can be a little um stuffy for lack of a better way of putting it. Formal. A little yes that's a way better word than stuffy but yeah so I've always but I love it though obviously I love the classical field or I wouldn't be in it um but recently in earlier this year actually I got a DM from Rome Music, shout out, R-O-M-E Music, and he basically just asked me, Rome is the lead singer, and he asked me like, hey, would you be interested, long story short, hey, would you be interested in like flying here to Texas, the band is based in Texas, and auditioning for this band. We're doing this music

video, we don't have a violinist right now, and I was like, I definitely thought about it a lot, like, is this something, this is obviously something I've never done, I have never held my violin while, like, headbanging, I have never, like, danced. Out of your comfort zone. Yeah, this is a little bit crazy for me, but I was like, you know, I'm out of school. I'm like, I have the freedom to do something like this. I have the opportunity to be in a music video, like that's cool. So yeah, so I ended up flying there and being in their music video and working with them. And it was honestly just one of the most refreshing, liberating experiences that I had ever had as a musician because there were no rules that you have with like classical music. It was just very like, it was very fun. It was a lot about just like expression through movement and like experimenting with sounds that I feel like sometimes you lack, that lacks in like an orchestra where you're trying to sound like uniform more and everything's very kind of, you want to sound the same. Um, and yeah, and so I had a really great experience there and, um, it really opened my mind to the need for, um, for classical music and stringed music within like a broad range of genres because As much as you might not put together violin and a metal band, it has its place and it elevates the sound. Actually, if you look in the YouTube comments on the video, a lot of people are like, wow, the violin sounds dope. So yeah, that's what it really did for me is just opened my mind to how much better music can be when you collaborate genres and when you take people that wouldn't normally make music together and put them together. And so yeah, so that was in May, I believe that happened. And then shortly after that, they asked me to join the band, which was really cool. And yeah, so right now we're kind of in the building stage. We're shooting videos and trying to get songs out there. And it's not for sure like where it's going to go, but it's been like a really incredible experience. And it's like I said, it's just been eye opening to me, like putting putting different genres together that you normally wouldn't.

Heather So, yeah. Yeah. OK, so we'll be right back. OK. And we're back. Hello. So you are a very busy person. Somewhat. And you're flying to Texas and you're running this thing all over the state. I think you're traveling up and down the state. Yeah. Multiple times. And you're, you know, performing. Yeah. So tell me about time management. Yeah. And stress and boundaries. And how are you doing all this?

Sarah Well, to be honest, this is probably where I struggle the most. Time management is, I think, the hardest thing for me. I do have, like, a type B personality. I'm very, like, I'm usually, if it were up to me, I would not be that structured, but I have to be. I have to be or, like, all of my stuff will not get done. So what I've started telling myself, because I do like to just like kind of be all over the place to be honest, but what I have started telling myself is, Sarah, if you plan this out, if you are more strategic and do planning, you can enjoy when you're there more. you know that's a good point yeah yeah so the more i like do put everything on a schedule the more i feel like in those moments okay i can relax and i can

just like kind of let loose more because it's in my calendar you can be present yeah i'm not worried Yes, because I don't have to worry about like the next thing it's already in my calendar Like I'll get to it when I get to it and like I'm saying all this like I'm a pro at it But I'm not oh, no, it's definitely the podcast about boundaries and I have trouble setting them. Yes. Oh Yeah, like me talking about it is also saying like I have a really big problem with it. But you know, it's been one thing that I think I'm learning the most right now in my life is how much time should I allot to my job and the things where I'm actually making money? And then how much things can I allot to things where I'm not making money, but I'm having a blast, like my podcast. cast right now. Like, you know, sometimes that's just hanging out with my friends. And I found that, like I said, the more like intentional I am and the more I plan it out, the more fun I can have. One thing that I really like that I'm kind of do sometimes I'm in the process of doing I stole it from another podcast is based Yeah, I heard about it on another podcast is basically like color coordinating your calendar And putting like the things that you really love in like yellow or something or some everybody hates the color yellow But I like it So like putting like the things you love in yellow and then looking at your calendar and if you look at October and like there's no yellow, then that's a problem. Then like you need to find a way to get more fun in your calendar while still accomplishing like everything else. That's one thing that I've tried to do is like have the stuff in my calendar where I can like have fun and enjoy myself.

Heather That is, can I just interrupt you there? I love that. If you look at my calendar, it is a rainbow. It is just, and people look at it, you know, on my team and they're like, holy crap. And there's like, blue is for the podcast and purple is, you know, focus time. But I never thought about color coding for fun. That is a great topic or a great idea. I love it. I love it because I do see there are the family things, there are the internal meetings, there are the client things. It's all stuff other people need.

Sarah It's not what I need. That's so cool. Yeah, so I kind of like put things into, like, the way I kind of categorize things now is like, there's kind of four different things I do. Like, one is where am I, like, working and making money remotely? Like, for City Six Strings, a lot of what I do is contracting. And that's at my computer, you know, I'm sending contracts, I'm sending gig offers to people to play things. So that's like my remote work. And that's what I do when I what I want to do more and more of. And then the second thing is like performing and like, where am I making money, but I actually have to be there. Like and that's like I said, orchestras, that's when I'm when I'm in Texas, like in the studio. And then the next thing is where, like what am I doing where I'm not making money yet, but like it's something that I enjoy that I eventually want to start making money with. And that's right now, that's the podcast for me. That's social media. Like I

want to get more like social media deals and stuff like, call it an influencer or whatever you want. But I want to have like brand deals and stuff, but I don't really have that yet. So that's like the third category is like, where am I having fun and not making money yet? And then the next thing is just like, where am I just like, Living my life basically, you know, like enjoying myself or whatever it may be and those four categories like they go up and down like all the time and Sometimes one will be like maybe sometimes I'm doing way like a lot of work in the podcast and I'm having a blast but like I'm not making as much money like in my job where I'm contracting. So those I try to look at it like that and I try to kind of keep them like equal more or less and it's just something I'm like working on all the time yeah is finding like how much should I do of each thing.

Heather Have you found in order to balance and have all those things you've had to say no to some things that were that made you feel guilty or bad or not so bad or empowered?

Sarah Yeah, I think so, absolutely. I was actually reading, I don't know if you've read the book, it's called *The Obstacle is the Way*. Oh, no. Ryan Holiday, I think it's by. But I was actually reading it this morning, and he was talking about how when you have to say no to a business opportunity, It's not the end of the world. There is going to be another one. He compared it to like a train. If you miss this train, the next train's coming. Like it's okay, there is going to be something that comes along next time. And that's kind of what I had to do. Like actually, next week I got asked to play in this orchestra, Star Wars. They were doing the Star Wars soundtrack and then the orchestra was gonna play and I was like, Oh, well, that's freaking cool, right? I want to do that, but I couldn't do it because I had a wedding I was going to I had to do stuff for my business and like in those moments It's easy for me to be like, oh my goodness Like I can't do all these things I want to do and I have just had to tell myself like Sarah your life is long and like you are going to get to there's going to be another opportunity that that comes along the way and you're going to have to like say no to stuff that does seem like you know like in that moment it feels like the end of the world to say no to it right in that moment it's like this will never happen again

Heather Or the thing I do in my head is, I'll just power through. I'll just do all of it. And then, and instead of saying to yourself, you know, there's only so much energy in so many hours in the day. And, you know, and so I'm learning to be like, I have to protect my physical health and energy.

Sarah Yeah, well that's been a big thing with me is like I force myself to prioritize healthy habits because like it can be hard, they do take time. I try to go to the gym like five times a

week or I try to do some form of exercise five times a week and like it's easy for me when I have so many things I could do in a week to be like I don't need to go to the gym. It's not a necessity, but it turns out when I'm not doing those things that ground me and make me feel really good, I show up poorly to all the other stuff. And so it actually does end up being important. So that's one thing I've had to do is tell like prioritize those things that they might not seem important like just day to day but over time if I skip them for a long time I'm not even myself I'm like a deflated like not less energetic version of myself you know so yeah that's one thing I found to be like a non-negotiable that I'm still working on but yeah yeah

Heather Well, it's always a work in progress, right? Yes. So tell me about, let's go back to entrepreneurship. Um, so I'm assuming you have a team of people, you have your partner and yeah. So what are some boundaries you've had to set within your business as a small business owner? Are there any you've had to set that are surprising or, or that you are afraid to set and have learned to set?

Sarah Yeah, that's a really great question. I think I have learned to, one of the biggest things I've had to do is to set a boundary of like, I am going to have to do things like for my business that no one else is going to understand. And I can't spend all day explaining why I do something. I can't spend all this time trying to help somebody understand that I might do something that doesn't make sense to them because they're not in my shoes. For example, sometimes a gig, someone will drop out last minute. There's a wedding on Saturday and somebody drops out two days before and I'm like, my goodness, like I don't have a viola player for this wedding that this person contracted a violist for like two years ago, you know? And what I have to do sometimes is send out like texts to like a bunch of people like, hey, can you play this? Can you play this? I send it to 10 people because my job in that moment is to get it covered. Like I have to get it covered for the good of the business and I'll have people get upset with me because somebody will then take the gig and then nobody else can have it. And people get kind of annoyed with me like, oh, well then why did you ask me to play it if then like now it's covered? And, but for me, like the most important thing is getting it covered. And then like, so that my business has a good standing so that in the future I can offer you more gigs. And like, I just, I hate like letting people down. I hate when people feel like I, you know, like I'm not doing things for them. And if it were up to me, I would spend a lot of time, well, if it were up to kind of like the part of me that's a people pleaser. I would spend a lot of time being like, oh, I'm so sorry. Like I had to do this for this reason. And like, just a lot of explaining myself and a boundary I've had to set is like, Sarah, you can't explain yourself to every single person. Like if you spend time doing that, especially with like as many people as I have to work with, like I won't get anything done. I can't, it's not gonna make sense to somebody that's

not in my shoes, why I do things. And like, It's been a boundary and also like a balance of like, I want to do things in a nice way. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. Like I'm trying, I created this business, like a big part to help people, but also like boundary. I can't spend all my time explaining like why I had to do something and it didn't work out in like your favor this one time. So yeah, I would say another big area that's been boundary setting for me has been with the clients. Because like I said, I love to, me and my business partner, we love to make people happy. We're in the wedding business. That's supposed to be the best day of your life. We want to pander to you. We wanna say, yes, we'll do that. Yes, yes, yes. But if we do that for every single client, if for every single client we make exceptions and we have hundreds of weddings in a year, we're gonna be exhausted. it's going to, we're going to be burnt out. We won't be able to like fully deliver to every person. So what we've tried to do is set those boundaries early, like put them in the contract. You can request this number of songs. Like we will not play if it's below 55 degrees. Like we try to put all the boundaries in the contract so that we eliminate as much boundary setting, um, that we would have to do like later on in the process as much as we can. That's been a big one with the clients because I love them. We build relationships with them. We want to jump through hoops for them, but we can't do it with everybody.

Heather Yeah, as a business owner, I had to learn that. And every time a problem would come up, I'd be like, let's add that to the terms and conditions. It was just things you never think about. come up and you're like, what? That is bizarre. Don't text me at 7am. I'm not going to answer your text at 7am. So that's one thing. And then speaking, you were talking earlier about your, your, um, musicians and stuff. Like I had to get over the mindset of, it was my responsibility to make sure these people had, um, money.

SPEAKER00 Like, you know what I mean?

Heather Like I'm not an employment agency. I'm, I'm a business and it's a mutual thing and it's, you know, I, uh, Early on, I got myself in trouble taking on business I really didn't want to take on because I was so worried about keeping everybody else happy in my business. And, you know, that's kind of where my breaking point happened at the end of 2018 when I was like, OK, I made a ton of money. Well, I didn't make a ton of money. Everyone else made a ton of money, but I didn't. So, yeah, you have to keep that business owner mindset and know why you're doing things and set those boundaries.

Sarah yeah and for like on the client side of the other thing that's like so important with boundary setting like with the clients is because i'm setting boundaries for like a team of people right like within the event contracts like i me and mckinley my business owner we do not play all the events like i play all these Yeah, I play what I can. It's usually

people showing up for me. And a lot of them are a lot like, this is fine, but a lot of them are a lot more particular than me. Like a lot of them, you know, they'll do things. They won't want to do things that maybe I'd be like, okay, it's fine. Like, and so I have to set boundaries for like a wide umbrella of people. So that's what, cause I do get texts like, oh, this client, I showed up and they want me to, it's 58, it's, you know, 48 degrees out and they want me to play outside. Like, so, and that, so that's something that like, that's another reason it's so important is cause I have to make sure it's, it's boundaries for everybody. Like the more people that are working under you or with you or whatever it is, you have to try to make a bigger umbrella in that sense. Yeah.

Heather Yeah. So I'm going to ask a dumb question. Oh, go for it. I'm a music nerd. So what are your no's when it comes to music? What music do you like and not like? To play or to listen to or?

Sarah It's such a great question. I will preface my answer by saying that, like, I feel a duty and an obligation to find something that I love and can enjoy about, like, all music. I feel like everything has its place. I feel like I can find, like, elements to appreciate in everything. Like, that's something I just, I take really seriously as I try, like, I try to respect, like, just every genre because there is, there's always, like, something I like about it, you know? So, as far as playing goes, um, Okay, I'm trying to think, like, I'm trying to think if there's music I really don't like. I'm not a huge country girl. I was, I did have, like, a period of time when, like, in my life when that's, like, all I listened to was, like, country, country, country. And so I think, like, now it's not, I got, like, over immersed in it. So I'm not a big country person. That being said, I can play some fiddle. If you need some fiddle in your songs, don't hesitate. I can do that. I really like, yeah, I don't know. There's actually not a ton of music I don't like. I wish I had a better answer for that, but I just.

Heather I think for me, it's about craftsmanship. I can appreciate really good craftsmanship. here's some sort of bubblegum pop schlocky boy band-y stuff that somebody wrote in a conference room, I'm not interested. But if there's any kind of genre and the musicians or the writer, whatever, really bring some artistry to it, then I can appreciate it.

Sarah I will say there's a stigma with a lot of classical musicians where we don't like pop music, we don't like to play popular covers, we don't like to play this and that because we're classical musicians and everything has to be a certain way. And I think that stigma has made me go really far the other way because I just have a really strong belief that if we, even as classical musicians, if we want that field to excel, it is our job to make it more accessible. Like, that's a big reason why I'm passionate about, like, City Six Strings

does, like, a lot of pop covers and, like, will play a string quartet of Taylor Swift. Like, I believe that's really important because when those people, like, see that, oh, classical music isn't just putting on a suit and tie and going to the Cleveland Orchestra. Like, Sure. Yeah, that's a part of it. And that's fun. And like, I'm down for that. I love that. But it's also just like fun. It's also should be like accessible. So yeah, that's been like something that I feel really passionate about is like making it more accessible to like people that wouldn't normally be like interested in that kind of thing. And that's why like, I don't know when I when I was teaching violin, if my students wanted to learn like, a Drake song, I wasn't like, no, we have to stick to what's in the book. I was like, well, yeah, let's do whatever you like. I want to make it more accessible to people because that's good for me, too. That means more business for me, more business for musicians, the more we can make it an all-inclusive space.

Heather I feel like the music world is really opening up for classical musicians because of things like video games. My sister, for example, is a classically trained singer. and pianist and she's sung on like the Zelda soundtracks and things like that and I feel like there's this huge opportunity in the world of gaming and and all the streaming shows and you know even Noah has a little composing business for who me yes for his let's give it a plug what's it called north coast scoring and music production there we go for independent movies and TV and what have you. And I feel like that the world's really kind of opening up for musicians. Am I right?

Sarah Oh, yes. And it makes me so excited. Like, I truly believe one of the reasons that I'm so passionate about integrating genres and stuff is because I think that's the future. Like, I kind of think it's getting hop on the bus or you're getting left behind. I actually played, sometimes I have the opportunity to play with Dayton Philharmonic, which is a group in Dayton, which is an orchestra there. And a couple weeks ago, we played, it was called Tchaikovsky 5 Drake. and it was literally Tchaikovsky 5 integrated with like 20 Drake songs. How cool! Yeah, and it was the orchestra playing and then they had like singers there too that were, you know, he played, the guy sang the Drake part and then like the backup singers and it just, I think, you know, I don't know that everybody in the orchestra had as much of a blast as I did, but it made me so happy because I was like, these are the people that we need to get into the classical music field. These are the people we need to get, the people that'll listen to Drake, that type of thing. To your point, do you think there's more of a space for that inclusion? Yeah, absolutely. I think that's the direction we're headed. The Cleveland Orchestra, they'll do E.T. soundtrack and they'll play, they'll do Star Wars. There's more and more of that because that is what's selling now and what people like. You can hate it and be like, no, I'm only classical, I'll never play the Pops concerts. You can have that attitude, and that's fine, but that's the way we're going, so it's kind of get on border.

Heather Yeah, for years I heard the lament of, you know, the graying of the audience and the audiences are shrinking and I think you have to kind of open your mind a little bit. And I always think about also these, you know, these classical composers. They were the rock stars of their day. They were rebels. I mean, that was some subversive music in some cases. And so I think, you know, we always think of the powdered wigs and the staid, you know, waltzes and things like that. That wasn't how it was in the day, right? And they experimented and they, you know, there's, I always, my favorite piece is a, is a Beethoven piece. It's a second movement, ninth, I think it's ninth orchestra, second movement. And he did it for a hospital. I was a chair. He did it. He wrote it for a charity concert for a veterans hospital and, and the whole thing was panned. Everybody hated it. They made money for the hospital, but they hate it, and it was like they took risks. They did things that were not conventional, but that's one of my favorite pieces of music.

Sarah Yeah, I love that you said that, because when people get so uptight and stuff, I'm like, do you think Beethoven would have liked your attitude? Like, do you really, like, who are you defending right now? Okay. All right.

Heather Well, Sarah, this has been a delight talking with you. We've had, we've kind of gone a few different directions. It's been really, really fun.

Sarah Tell people how they can find you. Okay. Yes. So, um, my business is City Six Strings. We are on Instagram. Citi, the number six strings. We have a website, citisixstrings.com. And then for me personally, I am Violin Sarah B on Instagram and on TikTok. And then also in my podcast, Sarah P on Spotify.

Heather That's spelled S-A-R-A-P-Y.

Sarah Yes, S-A-R-A-P-Y, like Sarah and Sarah P. So yes, feel free to listen, feel free to follow. I post some stuff, do some things.

Heather Yes. Well, fantastic. It's been a joy talking with you. It's been so fun. Thanks, Heather. Okay, so that's it for now. Thanks for listening. That's A Hard No is a production of Clever Girl Marketing, my little agency in Cleveland, in partnership with our friends at Evergreen Podcasts. Many thanks to our amazing team, including Maura Del Rosario, our production and marketing coordinator. Noah Fouts, our amazing producer, editor, and composer, who wrote our theme music and performed it with his band, The Big Leagues. and our new video producer and editor Kay Holmberg. You can find show notes and resources on our website, and you can find other fun stuff on our socials.

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