

Dog Howls Along With Piano

There are several things you can do to control a dog who likes to sing.

By September Morn

Q. My 9-month-old Dachshund howls when I play the piano. I know it's about the pitch of piano, but I can't really tell whether it's hurting his ears, or if he's just calling to me as a pack member. Either way, I will not give up piano, so what can I do about it?

A. I doubt it hurts his ears, because if it did, instead of joining in, he'd probably leave the room and find a quieter spot. I think you're closer to the right track with your "calling to me as a pack member" thought. I don't think it's so much about calling to you, though; it's more about joining with you in chorus.

Many dogs, when they hear sirens, howling, certain musical instruments, or people singing, will chime in with notes and tones of their own. Quite a few dog owners occasionally will playfully start their own dogs howling, by making howling sounds themselves. Some dogs will act like the goal of a group "sing" is to howl louder, and/or higher, than the music or sirens they're responding to. Others will move their voices up and down, and purposely harmonize with the other sounds.

Here are a couple of things you could do to control your dog's howling: When you get ready to play, put your dog in a separate room with the door closed, as far as possible from the piano. Distance and doors will muffle the sound of your music and it will be less tempting for your dog to join in. Even if he does howl a little, it won't be as loud and distracting for you. Or, teach your Dachshund to sing on cue. When you sit down to play, dedicate your first song to him and encourage him to sing along for the duration of the piece. Singing with your first song will satisfy his urge to howl and get it out of his system. It will also be more singing than most dogs would offer on their own, so he might actually get tired of singing before he finishes the song with you. Then you can play piano unaccompanied for the balance of your session.

By the way, if you can get him singing along in harmony with your piano, try to capture it on video!