

# S2E7 RICKI CUMMINGS

Tue, Dec 26, 2023 1:37PM 41:59

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

christmas, advent, concerts, people, day, advent season, rituals, part, feeling, year, podcast, dad, candle, care, ricky, choir, episode, mom, liturgical calendar, wells

## SPEAKERS

Elle Billing, Ricki Cummings

---

- R** Ricki Cummings 00:00  
Hi, my name is Elle Billing. I am a chronically ill queer femme, and I'm tired. I'm here this episode and every episode to dig at the roots of our collective fatigue, explore ways to direct our care and compassionate and sustainable ways and harness creative expression to heal ourselves and our world. And welcome to Hoorf: Radical care in a late capitalist heckscape. Our guest this week is me, Ricki Cummings. In addition to being the editor of Hoorf, I am also a writer. My newest book, Confessions from a Drainage Ditch, came out in September and is available on Amazon. You can also find my work in Poetry Magazine, as well as Sobotka Literary Magazine. And various other places. You can check me out at rickicummings.com . Welcome me.
- E** Elle Billing 01:18  
Hello, Ricki.
- R** Ricki Cummings 01:20  
Hello, Elle.
- E** Elle Billing 01:22  
Okay, now I want to do the Animaniacs "Hellooooo, nurse." I almost said that instead of your name,
- R** Ricki Cummings 01:28  
but it's because you're a vaudevillian weirdo.

**E** Elle Billing 01:30  
It's true. Emphasis on both vaudevillian and weirdo. And also a secret third thing.

**R** Ricki Cummings 01:36  
The third thing is ADHD.

**E** Elle Billing 01:38  
Hello, nurse. Like we don't record the video, but we can see each other. So like I popped it off screen and put my phone away. And then I popped back onto the mic and did that. And it looked. It was really funny.

**R** Ricki Cummings 01:52  
It was it was incredibly funny. Yes, yes. Yes. Yes.

**E** Elle Billing 01:55  
The only thing funnier. I think that's happened in the last month was when I was in Chicago. And we were sitting at a table talking about something and a pause. Our kid Nat had corn on their teeth. And they said, CORN TEETH

**R** Ricki Cummings 02:14  
that child's weird. I don't know where they get it from

**E** Elle Billing 02:16  
comedic timing. You don't know where they get it from?

**R** Ricki Cummings 02:20  
No idea. Really.

**E** Elle Billing 02:22  
Corn Teeth has stayed with me for a month. I went to-- I work at great inspection now. And I went to work one night. And my supervisors, if there's field corn in a sample of either canola or the sunflower seeds, yeah, like she takes them out and brings them home for her dog. Because

the sunflower seeds, yeah, like she takes them out and brings them home for her dog. Because apparently her dog likes to eat the corn. Ah, and so she saves them in this little origami box on her desk. and so like I took a photo of it and sent it to you that one night I was at work.

R

Ricki Cummings 02:54

I remember that. Yeah,

E

Elle Billing 02:56

Someone lost their teeth. Anyway, how have you received care this week, ricki?

R

Ricki Cummings 03:03

I think the biggest thing has just been patience from people in general. Earlier, this week, I went to my garage and worked on my little project car that I have. And like, every time I go, it makes my back sore. Because I'm 42 years old. And like, every time I lean over the hood or something like that, my back gets angry, because but um, so like, I was already feeling kind of sore. And then I was doing some housework, it was either Sunday or Monday, I don't remember which now. And we have one of those little like little office paper shredders, you know, it's basically like a garbage can with a shredder on top. And I was moving that and I went to set it down and I got about three quarters of the way bent over and my back just exploded in horrifying, agonizing pain. And I couldn't even sit up really, like I could stand and I could lay down but like anything in between was bad news, but especially bending over. And so that has been healing over the past couple of days. It's like the muscles of, are less angry and like all of my vertebrae have shifted back into position and everything. But that's taken time, and the patience that I'm getting not just from my child, but like my spouse, and even my cats are like, Oh, I better be careful around here. That's been nice. That's how I've I think received things the most is just getting a level of patience and grace from people and that's been really nice. It's been comforting. it reminds me that I'm a part of a group of people and creatures that care about me. So

E

Elle Billing 05:07

I'm sorry that happened. But I'm glad that the world that you're in shifted around you to accommodate your recovery.

R

Ricki Cummings 05:15

Yeah. And like I was, I was still able to like do some things. I just haven't been as mobile as I normally am and that has, that has helped quite a bit is just like the understanding that I can't just like hop up and do something. I would have to warm up to it. You know, make a dad sound while he's getting up (groans) you know,



E

Elle Billing 05:43

I made one of those getting out of the recliner the other night. And by getting out of the recliner, I mean, failing to get out of the recliner my parents looked over and they're like, you're not standing. I'm like, nope failure to launch.

R

Ricki Cummings 06:01

You get like halfway up and then sat back down?

E

Elle Billing 06:04

uh huh. It was embarrassing. Oh, that's great. like we're gonna try this again. in a little bit. like, my dad had recently commended my, my achievement of attaining dad sneeze level. Which felt like a like a jewel in my crown. But like, failure to launch from the from the recliner was not nearly as -- I wasn't nearly as proud of that. Oh, man.

R

Ricki Cummings 06:48

I have to tell you an aside, just the most ridiculous aside.

E

Elle Billing 06:52

Oh, absolutely.

R

Ricki Cummings 06:53

We were driving somewhere in town the other day. And we went past a church. And of course, it had a neon sign because we're in Chicago. And

E

Elle Billing 07:07

Wait, you mean neon? Not like regular church sign?

R

Ricki Cummings 07:09

I mean, like knee like, yeah, neon neon? Yeah. And more than half of the sign was busted out. It was it was like, Philadelphia or something church or something like that. And the letters that were still lit, said Hi Chu. And all I could think of was dad sneezing. Just this really ridic-- Hi, Chu. So and of course, I was driving at the time. So like, I was trying not to laugh myself off the road.

E Elle Billing 07:46  
Right.

R Ricki Cummings 07:46  
But, and then trying to explain that while I was driving at the same time. I'm pretty sure Nat thought I had lost my mind.

E Elle Billing 07:57  
Yeah, I mean,

R Ricki Cummings 07:59  
again,

E Elle Billing 08:00  
my dad does have very specific sneezes.

R Ricki Cummings 08:04  
Yeah, yeah.

E Elle Billing 08:05  
Did you mean like my dad's sneezing or a dad's sneezing?

R Ricki Cummings 08:09  
A dad?

E Elle Billing 08:10  
Okay. Okay.

R Ricki Cummings 08:11  
But also Dan. Yeah.

E Elle Billing 08:14  
So it is Advent. When we are recording this. Your birthday is on the winter solstice.

R Ricki Cummings 08:24  
It sure is

E Elle Billing 08:25  
This episode releases on Christmas Day.

R Ricki Cummings 08:27  
Sure Does.

E Elle Billing 08:29  
It is a season.

R Ricki Cummings 08:32  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 08:33  
I think everyone I know is sort of struggling with the seasonal blues right now. Because this --

R Ricki Cummings 08:39  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 08:40  
--the sun is setting so early.

R Ricki Cummings 08:42  
Yeah. I had mentioned the other day to a friend of ours that it just seems like this year, the sun is setting even earlier. First of all, like, I was eating shredded cheese out of the fridge or

is setting even earlier. First of all, like, I was eating shredded cheese out of the fridge or something. And I looked out the window and it was dark, like literally dark. The street lights were on and it was 3:30 in the afternoon. I was like, why do we live here?

**E** Elle Billing 09:07

Yeah, I -- there was one day where I had been cleaning my room and I have a I have a difficult time. Sensing correctly, how much time has elapsed in any activity. So I felt like I'd been cleaning my room for hours. I'd been really working hard, and it was dark out. I was like I've put in a good day. So I took one of my "fruit snacks" that I, that I used for like sleeping and pain management. Because I was like it's gotta be close to bedtime. Because I take those close to bedtime. It was six o'clock in the evening. And I had to spend the next four hours trying to be normal around my parents. And I failed.

**R** Ricki Cummings 09:58

I bet

**E** Elle Billing 09:59

Oh, My gosh, like I have made a huge mistake. You know, I was so zen. I actually didn't care. It was like, it did clean my room. I did do a lot. It's dark. Who cares? I'm not going anywhere. I only do that if both me and dad are home. Like if I'm home alone with mom, I don't do that. Because, somebody has to be able to drive if there's an emergency,

**R** Ricki Cummings 10:22

right

**E** Elle Billing 10:23

which we recently had happen. So speaking of ways we've received care.

**R** Ricki Cummings 10:31

Yeah.

**E** Elle Billing 10:31

And the holiday is my mom's big holiday is Christmas. And yeah, we've spent a lot of time decorating.

R Ricki Cummings 10:39  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 10:40  
So I've had years and years of mixed emotions about the holidays. And

R Ricki Cummings 10:45  
same Yeah, different, of course, but same

E Elle Billing 10:49  
there were really two things that have sort of changed my attitude about Christmas. And one of them was a friend of mine posted on Facebook a number of years ago, something a little-- he was trying to be, he wasn't trying to but he was being kind of quippy. Yeah. And saying, you know, there was something about the store is not observing the liturgical calendar.

R Ricki Cummings 11:15  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 11:16  
It's not a war on Christmas. It's a war on Advent. Because it's like, no, the Christmas stuff's out too early. Like it's Halloween, and then Thanksgiving, and then Advent. And then Christmas. Yeah. But I actually stopped to think about it. And I was like, oh, yeah, like we do miss Advent. And that is a whole season.

R Ricki Cummings 11:33  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 11:35  
That has a very different feel from Christmas. And then to layer on top of that. It was actually you talking about Advent. And you were, I don't know, just your feelings around it. Even as a post church person.

R Ricki Cummings 11:52



Yeah.

**E** Elle Billing 11:54

Like you still have connections to the Advent season and the way that you've talked about that. And it's but I mean, maybe part of it's because you were born on the solstice. I don't know. That's like, Oh, I'm an adult. Now I get to pick. Yeah, I get to pick what I do.

**R** Ricki Cummings 12:11

Yeah, the things I observe.

**E** Elle Billing 12:13

Right. And it's a little different now that I live with my parents and like, my job is to help my mom and I do have to decorate now. Yeah, it's not my own home. Yeah. But like, I still get to decide how I feel about it. And I still get to decide what parts I'm personally observing. And then my friend, Dean, who's probably listening to this, since I've left Idaho, he has sent me in, like an Advent devotional every year to keep me connected. And it's such a simple gesture, but it's just-- when it comes in the mail, I know what it is. I recognize, oh it's my Advent devotional and just like being able to choose that state of anticipation, and preparing and introspection, as opposed to whatever else Christmas has become has really, honestly, I think it's helped my mental health significantly over the last few years.

**R** Ricki Cummings 13:17

When I was growing up, I grew up in the Wisconsin, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, or the WELS, which is famously known among Lutherans as being very conservative. One of our famous alumni is Minnesota, former Minnesota representative Michelle Bachman. I don't use the word crazy to describe most people, but many of the behaviors that she had, while at an acting representative could be described that way, you know, like she had so many specifically right wing conservative conspiratorial views, that even the WELS finally just cut ties with her. But it took a long time.

**E** Elle Billing 14:13

Yeah

**R** Ricki Cummings 14:13

so that like it, that's the thing. The thing about growing up where we did, which was the Fargo-Moorhead area, North Dakota-Minnesota border area, is that like, conservativeism there tries to present itself as a kind of centrism. And for the most part that works, the idea of like the Minnesota Nice and things like that, like there's an element of truth to that. And in circling back

in the WELS there there is is a very specific adherence to the liturgical calendar. Ev- like in the program, for each service, you know, it would list whatever day of the season it was. And all of the scriptural readings were all they were all prescribed. This goes this day, this goes this day. These are the things that we study on these days. And the only time I was really aware of what season it was, was Advent, because there's such a ritualistic slant to it. Where one could argue that the entirety of the Advent season as it's celebrated by various Christian denominations now is an effort at syncretism in combining local customs into the church to make it more palatable to the locals. And both you and I come from Northern European Scandinavian backgrounds, where it gets cold, where the light starts to go out, where a lot of the time, if you're not prepared for the winter, you would die. And the way that that has been wrapped into the Christian faith, like specifically the way that we celebrated, it was interesting. To me, even as a kid, I was like, there, there is something to this, this part of it specifically, as I've gotten older and understood the world around me more and taking in more influences from friends I have in other countries and studies I've gone through in school, and just like being a curious person, I have learned that a lot of cultures have that end of year cyclical holiday season, where the idea is we're taking taking stock of the year that has come before, and looking forward to the year that's coming. But first, right in the middle of all that we're gonna have a really fucking big party, and we're going to eat, and we're going to be thankful for the things that we have. So I don't think it's any surprise, or coincidence, rather, that Advent and Christmas, and Yule and Saturnalia and all of those really big festival sorts of things, all happen to take place in the the middle of the -- as far as the global north is concerned -- the coldest, darkest part of the year where you are stuck indoors with your friends, hopefully, and basically forced to endure each other's company for several months. And when I was a kid, my mom was the one that took it upon herself to lead us in Advent devotionals basically. We had an old, an old set of typed devotionals that I think my grandpa did several copies of all of the the readings and the prayers and the this is why we do this. And and we had our own Advent wreath at home. And for those who don't know what an Advent wreath is, it's a it's a set of four candles for each Sunday in the Advent season. And then a center candle for Christmas. So it's five total. And then each candle represents a different aspect of the nativity story. I don't remember them all off the top of my head, you'd think that after 15 years or whatever of doing the same thing when I was a kid, I would remember them. But that portion of it always struck me as being very specifically weirdly pagan. Like it's a very specifically European thing. I feel like where like -- obviously white people do not have a monopoly on candle rituals or anything like that.

E

Elle Billing 19:48

Yeah

R

Ricki Cummings 19:48

but like it seems like a very medieval thing. Maybe medieval European thing

E

Elle Billing 19:54

to have candles in a circle



R

Ricki Cummings 19:56

to have candles in a circle and you light them because they represents certain aspects of an ancient story that has been handed down from generation to generation and you read from the sacred Sacred Scripture every time you do it, you know, and that ritualistic part of it, where we got the whole family together, and we, we read from my dad's bible of all things, because like, I, I can probably count on one or two hands, the number of times I recall my dad going to church that didn't involve a funeral. You know? Like, it always struck me as weird that we use his King James for that,

E

Elle Billing 20:39

for that, like, that's when his Bible was taken out. Yeah, that particular ritual,

R

Ricki Cummings 20:43

that specific purpose. I don't even know if my dad had any input in that. It always felt like he was doing a thing that he tolerated. Like he tolerated a thing for my mom's good humor.

E

Elle Billing 20:56

Yeah.

R

Ricki Cummings 20:58

It was interesting to me because like, a lot of the things, the the general things, not the specific Christian things, but a lot of the things that are hallmarks of midwinter festivals are like things my dad was totally into. Just like hanging out inside with your friends drinking beer, and eating as much as you possibly can. Well, not as much as you can, but like eating good food and enjoying yourselves and

E

Elle Billing 21:27

eat, drink and be merry. Yeah,

R

Ricki Cummings 21:29

yeah. And the way that those two things collided, for me, was very formative, I think, the way that my dad and my mom sort of, literally and figuratively sparred about belief systems. And having that illustrated to me in such a way, when I was a kid made me very interested in the way that other people might do things. And weirdly, as I've gotten older, I appreciate those things more, but not like the specific dogmatic parts of them. I guess the metaphysical idea of them were like, we're all together, and we're all trying to get through this really terrible part of the year by spiting it.

E

Elle Billing 22:30

Yeah. You know, I also think, maybe on that same metaphysical level, there is something really powerful about not just, you know, a family or a group of chosen family, right, being together and doing these rituals together, you know, to spite winter. But also having a shared language with, with people in other places who are doing the same ritual.

R

Ricki Cummings 22:56

Yes. Yeah,

E

Elle Billing 22:58

at the same time. And I think the first time I really resonated with that, like, I mean, I grew up in the ELCA, which is like the liberal cousin of WELS. Yeah. Like, I knew that we all had the same book of worship, right. But it didn't really register to me the power of like, having shared rituals across space and time, until I attended a Mass that was done half in English and half in Basque. Oh, and the part that was done verbally in Basque was printed in English. And the part that was done verbally in English was printed in Basque, and I was like, oh, yeah, like that's why -- the Mass you before Vatican II mass was done in Latin all over the world, right? Same language for everybody, but it was not accessible, right. So after Vatican II you could perform Mass in your own language, and then

R

Ricki Cummings 23:53

nobody knew what was going on. Right.

E

Elle Billing 23:55

But then, like, it was still the same rituals and ideas, but in an accessible way, right.

R

Ricki Cummings 24:02

Yeah.

E

Elle Billing 24:03

Theoretically. I mean, that's my, one of my religion professors in college, that the point of religion isn't to be religious. Like, that's not the point of any of these things. The point isn't to the point is to like, come together as people like, yeah, the way he said the point of a religion is

to trust God and to stand with your neighbor. And that, I think, for me, especially this year, just knowing that there's other people lighting a candle in the dark, and saying, you know, we're trying to build something better.

R Ricki Cummings 24:48

Yeah.

E Elle Billing 24:50

We don't have it right now. But like, Advent, my whole life, you know, we've talked about anticipation. It's the anticipation. It's like we're preparing we're waiting And, you know, sorry, I'm a little scattered. you know, you talked about how when you would do the ritual with your family, you know, you would read specific passages out of the, your dad's King James Bible. You know, one of one of them, I'm pretty sure is probably when Mary visits her her cousin Elizabeth, and they're both pregnant, right? Pregnancy is long. You know, this, like a lot of anticipation and waiting. And that's the whole Advent season is like that. Yeah. And I think about how, for people who are who follow the Christian tradition, you know, Christmas Day is like this big celebration, right? But like, yeah, when you think about it, nothing changed.

R Ricki Cummings 25:45

Right?

E Elle Billing 25:47

Like, literally nothing was different. On Christmas day. Like, baby God still had to grow up. So that's what that's what one of my niblings called him when she was playing. She was playing with our nativity. She was like, look, it's baby God. Like, Yeah. He still had to grow up. like nothing--The world was exactly the same on Christmas Day, like nothing changed. And I'm just I feel that so much, especially this year. Bethlehem canceled Christmas. And I was trying to explain that to my parents and mom's like you can't cancel Christmas. And I think she's thinking like Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, Santa calls on Christmas because of bad weather. But Christmas still happens, right? Yeah, I'm like, Mom like Bethlehem.

R Ricki Cummings 26:40

The Bethlehem. The town is still there.

E Elle Billing 26:44

Like, the town still exists. It's not just in the book, like the town of Bethlehem in solidarity with Gaza Canceled Christmas.

R Ricki Cummings 26:56  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 26:58  
weeks, weeks, weeks ago. Later, they weren't even doing a wait and see. They're like, No.

R Ricki Cummings 27:03  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 27:04  
Now it's terrible. It Yeah, like we can't have a party. Yeah, Nazareth. Which is I looked it up it is predominantly Muslim and Christian. Like, it got brought up a lot in church. You know how Jesus was never welcome in Nazareth. Because what good can or and people always were always like, what good can come from Nazareth? It's like, people still live there.

R Ricki Cummings 27:31  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 27:33  
And it's mostly Muslims and Christians now.

R Ricki Cummings 27:35  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 27:37  
Like, what are we building? What are we anticipating and creating and hoping for? I don't know. I don't have an answer for that.

R Ricki Cummings 27:48  
Yeah.

**E** Elle Billing 27:51

But it just feels especially prescient. Like we should be doing something different. Like our Advent this year, should have been different. And Christmas should be different. Not I mean, it just, it shouldn't be what it is like, yeah, we're doing it wrong.

**R** Ricki Cummings 28:10

Yeah, I have a feeling that a lot of the people that do adhere to a lot of the dogmatic things that I skipped out on. A lot of the things I don't necessarily care about anymore. I've a feeling a lot of those people will continue going on, is through the same rituals and things and not give a thought to why we're doing the things that like, that was always the thing when I was growing up was like, why are we doing the things that we're doing and saying the things that we're saying, and then doing the opposite? And ignoring people who are in need, and celebrating, celebrating the destruction of other people and places? And, and, like, ostensibly people that believe the same things that we do, you know, like,

**E** Elle Billing 29:20

I mean, if we take the Christmas story, as we were taught it, not only did nothing change immediately on Christmas Day, but like, the Holy Family immediately became refugees. They were Palestinian refugees, Palestinian Jewish refugees, but like,

**R** Ricki Cummings 29:42

because the occupying government was

**E** Elle Billing 29:45

occupying government was bent on murderous intent. Yeah. killing children. But what could be like a point of rupture, I think And I think is for. I mean, at least a lot of the people we know. And I don't want to say that we're doing so much better than everybody else. But we run in some diverse ish circles. And we're tapped into some justice minded people. And I think being queer and disabled helps. Yeah, keep keep our our eyes open to these things because war is a disabling event.

**R** Ricki Cummings 30:30

A mass disabling event.

**E** Elle Billing 30:32

War is a disability justice issue, you know, in addition to being a justice issue.

R Ricki Cummings 30:38  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 30:39  
And in a broad sense, like we're all grieving, and sad, and carving out little spaces for hope and joy, and dreaming to co- and trying to co-create something better right now.

R Ricki Cummings 30:57  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 30:58  
Where we like, I have a hard time putting it to words.

R Ricki Cummings 31:02  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 31:02  
Like, we wished that there could be a broader movement of people getting on board with doing something different. Like, yeah, it doesn't have to be this way.

R Ricki Cummings 31:16  
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 31:17  
And seriously, Advent could have been, like, it just it could have been so different. you pointed out there are like, the global north, in our European heritage traditions, winter is bleak. Every culture has come up with ways to hang on to hope and to create it out of the void. And that's why we light candles. I just think trying to find those little glimmers and flickers is what's keeping us going.

R Ricki Cummings 31:51  
And we're not the only ones who like candles



And we're not the only ones who like candles.

**E** Elle Billing 31:55  
Right, right. We're not

**R** Ricki Cummings 31:56  
Like, this is tied in somehow, but my conscious brain hasn't figured it out yet. My first stint in college was at an ELCA four year college in Moorhead called Concordia College. One of the things that it prides itself on is the annual Christmas concert. It's a apparently a Thing among Lutheran colleges in the Upper Midwest to have a big choral and orchestral concert

**E** Elle Billing 32:31  
'Tis.

**R** Ricki Cummings 32:32  
Tis. We had one, St. Olaf had one, I think Augie had one didn't they

**E** Elle Billing 32:37  
Augie does Vespers or did when I was there. I don't know what what the Christmas thing is now if it's the same, but when I was there, it was Vespers. Yeah, it was Multi Night.

**R** Ricki Cummings 32:48  
And so it's something that they had been doing since like the 40s or something like that. Concordia specifically, was very big on its choral programs, the world famous Concordia choir and whatnot. The concert itself is every choir that Concordia had. So it was the Concordia choir, Concert Choir, which is which I was a part of the freshman choir, those were, those are all mixed choruses. And then two women's choirs, upper class and freshman women, and the orchestra and the bell choir. So like it would be like 500 musicians all together for this concert. And some of the pieces were performed by all of those musicians. So some of the larger pieces, the individual choirs would start practicing in like October. school would start in August, and they would have their fall concerts in the middle of October. And then from that point on, it was pretty much Christmas stuff because the Christmas concerts were always like the first weekend in December. So like solidly in the middle of Advent. They were always huge productions. They had huge paint, they still have huge painted murals. Every year's program was different. It was a huge production. Combining all of the different creative departments, lighting would be handled by the Theater Department sound would be handled by the AV department and things like that. And the way that things would come together because they didn't we didn't we never did full dress rehearsals until like the day before the concerts and I want to say that were four

performances in Moorhead and then we would all pack up and go to Minneapolis and we would do the concert in Minneapolis too. And then one of the women's choirs stayed home every year. But because we would sing an orchestra Hall in Minneapolis, which doesn't have quite as much stage space as the massive gymnasium in Concordia, but the thing that those concerts provided me with, aside from the the transcendental unity of music, which could probably be a whole other thing, was the way that not only the college community came together, but it was a huge part of the local tradition. Those concerts were huge every night was like four or five thousand people and the regional tradition, because every year we would go to Minneapolis, St. Paul. And almost every year, the like, the various concerts would get broadcast on PBS, and the like the local PBS and stuff, like it was the unity of the performers. It was the unity of the community. But there were two things about the performances that always got me, one of them was that the first thing that we're we're instructed is, since almost everyone is standing the entire time, if you're gonna go down, signal the person next to you by squeezing their hand, and then sit down, if you have the thought to do that. And then the choir would just close in in front of you, like you're never there, just absorbed by the group. And there were several occasions where both, I squeezed someone else's hand and someone else squeezed my hand. But it was never because we were going down. It was always because we were-- As performers, we were overwhelmed. It was a very big overwhelming experience. The other thing was, in the middle of every year is performance is a section of Christmas carols. Each choir has a Carol, and then everyone would join together for Silent Night. And Silent Night has been my favorite hymn. Since I was a tiny, tiny baby, and having 5500 People all singing the same song together at the same time in the same place is one of the most overwhelming, unbelievable feelings, especially when it's your favorite song. Like I've been to other concerts where groups all sing the-- I've, I felt the similar feeling to it. Like when I went to U2, and and, you know, 60,000 people are singing, Where The Streets Have No Name, you know, like, everyone just goes fucking nuts when that song comes up. That's how it feels. That's how it feels inside that auditorium with all of those people. It's an amazing feeling of unity. That were it not for my upbringing, I would have never experienced. Even by that point, I had pretty much lost my faith. Like I didn't believe, I still don't believe most of the Christian dogma I don't like I don't believe that any of it is necessarily real. But that feeling of correctness and unity is something that I wish I could have every year. And like that's the part of the Advent season that I like. It's hard to be a person. It's even harder to be a person in areas of war, of hunger, of discrimination. And the purpose of Advent, as it is presented to us is giving birth to a better world, a better place, something better than now. And I think that's what we miss a lot. There's a purpose to the ritual. There's a reason or doing the things that we're doing. And I agree that that part of the sentiment has been lost: the Unity part of it.

E

Elle Billing 39:48

It's hard to be a person.

R

Ricki Cummings 39:51

Yeah,

E

Elle Billing 39:51

but being a person in community with other persons. That's that's what makes it bearable.

R Ricki Cummings 40:00  
It's less hard. Yes, less hard.

E Elle Billing 40:05  
Thank you for sharing that.

R Ricki Cummings 40:07  
You're welcome.

E Elle Billing 40:09  
I hope we make it through this winter.

R Ricki Cummings 40:12  
I think we will.

E Elle Billing 40:13  
Yeah.

R Ricki Cummings 40:14  
I hope more people than just us do.

E Elle Billing 40:17  
Yeah. Merry Christmas, I guess.

R Ricki Cummings 40:22  
Merry Merry Christmas, I guess.

E Elle Billing 40:28

Thank you for joining us on this episode of Hoorf. To view the complete show notes, and all the links mentioned in today's episode, or to get a full transcript of the episode, visit [Hoorf podcast.com](https://hoorfpodcast.com). That's H O O R F [podcast.com](https://hoorfpodcast.com). Before you go, make sure you subscribe to the podcast so you can receive new episodes right when they're released. And if you're enjoying our podcast, I'd love to have you leave us a review and Apple podcasts. Reviews are one of the major ways that Apple ranks their podcasts. So even though it only takes you a few seconds, it really does make a difference for us. Become a patron for \$3 a month you can support the creation of this podcast, pay my editor and join a community of fellow caregivers out here just doing our best. Thank you again for joining me Elle Billing in this episode of Hoorf. Until next time, be excellent to each other. Hoorf is hosted by Elle Billing at [elle and wink](https://www.elleandwink.com). audio editing by Ricki Cummings at [rickiep00h](https://www.rickiep00h.com) music composed by Ricki Cummings. Hoorf is a production of Elle and Wink Art Studio, all rights reserved. Hoorf Podcast can be found on social media channels at Hoorf Podcast at [H O O R F podcast](https://hoorfpodcast.com).