

---

Classical Music

**The Seattle Times**

---

## **Not feeling the Christmas show vibe? Here's an anti-holiday holiday show**

Dec. 21, 2022 at 6:00 am

---

Musician Erin Jorgensen is presenting “The Saddest of All Keys,” which she describes as a “surrogate holiday” show on Dec. 23. (Kelly O)

By [Gemma Alexander](#)

*Special to The Seattle Times*

[Erin Jorgensen](#) doesn’t hate Christmas. But she knows the holiday season isn’t all candy canes and mistletoe for everybody. Used to operating outside of the mainstream, Seattle-based Jorgensen is best known for performing Bach on the marimba in unexpected venues — sometimes [serving pancakes](#). So while the rest of the arts world is performing Christmas carols, she’s presenting “The Saddest of All Keys,” billed as an “anti-holiday-holiday show,” that will be held Dec. 23 in a former auto body shop in Ballard.

**You describe the show as a “surrogate holiday show.” What exactly is a surrogate holiday show?**

Sometimes you want to go somewhere in December and have it not be about the holidays. So it’s something that people can go to that isn’t necessarily about Christmas or any kind of holiday. It’ll be very peaceful and nice, but it’s not Christmas-themed at all.

I would describe it as kind of a little bit in the Laurie Anderson vein. I’m going to be playing marimba and I have some prerecorded music. I have a couple friends who are reading stories and I’ll be reading some text as well. But it’ll just be a kind of seamless, very stream-of-consciousness kind of 45 minutes or so that will be just a little respite in dark times — literally and figuratively, I guess.

**So “The Saddest of All Keys” is not a sad show?**

The title of it, I just thought it was funny. I don’t know if you’ve ever seen the movie “Spinal Tap,” but that’s where the title “The Saddest of All Keys” comes from. In the

movie, [they say D minor is the saddest of all keys](#). So that's kind of where the joke comes in and that's what everything is hinging on. There will definitely be some Bach pieces in D minor and I'll be doing some improvisation in D minor on the amplified marimba and on the acoustic marimba as well.

And there will be people telling stories. I think some of them will be vaguely, not holiday-themed, but kind of like things that happened to them around this time of the year. They might be talking about seasonal depression or taking drugs. I think it'll be relatable, you know? Like yeah, OK, this kind of stuff happens at the holidays and there's beautiful stuff as well. But I think, generally, my shows have a pretty uplifting vibe and that might be a lot due to my personality but also due to the qualities of the marimba. Not to be too much of a hippie about it, but it's literally positive vibrations. I think that the overall effect will be really charming and calming. And it'll be funny. Both of these people are extremely funny.

**Tell me a little bit more about your collaborators for this show.**

Rachel Kessler, she's a poet, storyteller, artist — a cool Renaissance woman. I just really like her voice a lot and I knew she would come up with something very interesting. I know she maybe struggles a bit around the holidays, too, and I wanted to have that voice in the program. The other guest is my friend Richard Lefebvre, who's just been a perennial frontman for many punk rock bands for 30 or 40 years. He's got a ton of great stories. Very funny, very acidic, great voice. I think it'll be really nice to contrast people actually talking about kind of real [expletive] with beautiful Bach music. I mean, I enjoy Christmas and I can be kind of corny. But I know that for a lot of people it's very difficult, they can't relate to it. So, I want to have those voices in there as well.

---

**“The Saddest of All Keys”**

6 p.m. and 9 p.m., Dec. 23; The Odd Sea, 1539 N.W. Leary Way, Seattle; \$10; [erinjorgensen.net](http://erinjorgensen.net)

---

*Gemma Alexander is a Seattle-based freelance writer; [gemmaealexander.com](http://gemmaealexander.com). This report is supported, in part, by the Rubin Institute for Music Criticism, San Francisco*