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# We'd like to make a complaint in E major

Andrew Brown  
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[The Guardian](#)

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The Complaints Choir of Helsinki is not the only complaints choir on the internet, but it is incomparably the best. A Finnish-German artist couple, Tellervo Kalleinen and her husband Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen, asked visitors to an arts festival to submit their complaints about life, and then set the idea to music. They started in Birmingham, a promising city if you're looking for whinges. But the Birmingham Complaints Choir is small, and sadly pedestrian. "Birmingham has changed so much. I liked it more before," they start.

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In Helsinki, the whole city seems to have entered into the spirit of the occasion; 100,000 people have already watched it on YouTube (Birmingham's performance has attracted only 12,000, which gives them something else to grumble about, I suppose). The Helsinki choir was made up of almost 100 people (most of them women) and their complaints, chosen from a field of 2,000, made a sad, delightful poetry.

"Why is the cord of the vacuum cleaner always too short?" they sang. "Like summer ... You can't get rich by working, and love doesn't last for ever ... Bullshitters get on too well in life ... going to work every morning, and coming home every night, eventually you lose your mind ... the employment agency only needs Java programmers ... tramline three smells of pee ..." and finally, in a rousing chorus of irresistible cheerfulness: "It's not fair! It's not fair!" as the sunlight blasts off the snow-covered harbour.

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Later, the experiment was tried in Hamburg and St Petersburg. Those performances are not online, though they seem to have been improperly grim. The only complaint recorded from the Russian performance on the Kochta-Kalleinen's website is: "I complain about existential horror." This is not in the spirit of a proper complaint. Far better the Finns cheerfully belting out their problems. "Our ancestors could have chosen a sunnier place to live," the choir sings on a frozen stretch of Helsinki harbour. They even address the grimmest problem of modern life for which Finland is responsible: those five seconds of anti-music that we have all heard far too often, thanks to Nokia. "Why must ringtones be so irritating?" they sing, to a descending fragment of a well-known melody.

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