

TMDTA 47 Hannah French

Wed, Aug 24, 2022 2:27PM 1:06:23

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

pain, people, play, wheelchair, hear, radio, bit, feel, hip, happen, chair, thought, music, dislocate, worse, silence, sorts, musicians, hypermobility syndrome, talk

SPEAKERS

Hannah French, Rebecca Toal, Hattie Butterworth

- H** Hattie Butterworth 00:04
Hello and welcome to Things Musicians Don't Talk About with your hosts Hattie Butterworth.
- R** Rebecca Toal 00:10
And me Rebecca Toal.
- H** Hattie Butterworth 00:12
Within our vibrant musical world, it can often feel that the struggles and humanity of musicians is lost and restricted.
- R** Rebecca Toal 00:19
Having both suffered in silence with mental, physical and emotional issues. We are now looking for a way to voice musician stories, discuss them further and to connect with the many others who suffer like we have.
- H** Hattie Butterworth 00:30
No topic will be out of bounds as we're committed to raising awareness for all varieties of struggle.
- R** Rebecca Toal 00:36
So join me Hattie, and guests as we attempt to bring an end to stigma by covering the things musicians don't talk about

musicians don't talk about.

R

Rebecca Toal 01:06

We have the awesome Hannah French with us: musician, broadcaster, musicologist, writer. So not much.

H

Hannah French 01:14

Why not?

R

Rebecca Toal 01:14

Just a couple of things.

R

Rebecca Toal 01:17

Yeah, a bunch of things. How are you Hannah?

H

Hannah French 01:20

I'm well, thank you. Thanks for having me.

R

Rebecca Toal 01:22

No, it's completely our pleasure that you're here. So I first came... I mean, I think I'd heard you on the radio off and on. But then I came across your documentary, 'The Silence of my Pain'. And I think I emailed you straight after listening to it, because, well, I sent it to Hattie first. And then I don't think I even asked you. I just sent you an email. Yeah, I didn't need to ask. Yeah, we're just so interested in your life as a broadcaster and living with chronic pain, and Ehlers Danlos syndrome.

H

Hannah French 01:53

Yes. Ehlers Danlos Syndrome.

R

Rebecca Toal 01:56

Almost got it.

H

Hannah French 01:57

Hannah French 01:57

You did!

R Rebecca Toal 01:57

Yeah, just to start off, would you be able to give our listeners just to kind of, well, it's always really hard, but a summary of who you are...I was gonna say how you got to this point, but there's so much in your life, so maybe let's start off with what you do currently?

H Hannah French 02:14

Well, I currently work for Radio Three, and I present the early music show and Record Review Extra, so I'm a Sunday girl, really. But then throughout the week, I present breakfast sometimes standing for Petroc, and I present live concerts. So lunchtime concerts from Wigmore Hall or from LSO St. Lukes, and then evening concerts and proms and radio three round Europe at Christmas, that kind of stuff.

R Rebecca Toal 02:39

Yeah. So lots of lots! And you do live with EDS. Would you be able to describe what that is? Because I wasn't completely sure before I'd heard you talked about it what it was at all.

H Hannah French 02:51

Yeah. Ehlers Danlos Syndrome is a hypermobility syndrome. It's a collagen deficiency. And it affects soft tissues. So sometimes people call it kind of stretchy gone bad.

H Hannah French 03:07

Lots of people are hypermobile and that's fine. And the hypermobility syndrome is when the bendiness becomes a problem, when it's associated with pain, and it tends to affect people not exclusively, but it tends to affect people from their early 20s onwards, because as children you know, loads of kids are bendy. Loads of kids dislocate and, and there's nothing wrong with them, that's just a normal part of growing up. And that was me when I was little. I didn't dislocate but I bent a lot. I could do all the circus tricks in the lotus position, and how far my arms go and fell off more ponies than I had ... and bounced and never broke anything, and all that kind of thing, but the hypermobility syndrome, Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and Ehlers Danlos actually, you know, I've got the good type. There are vascular types as well which are much more destructive and and pose a threat to life. Mine doesn't. But there's no cure either. So it affects as I say, all the soft tissues and my joints will sublux really regularly, occasionally they dislocate fully but very regularly they sublux so they partially come out of joint and then all around, I get a spasm to try and stop that you know your body does try to help yourself but it tends sometimes hold it ever so slightly out of joint before it goes back in again. So I stretch too much. It's a little bit like being Elastigirl from the Incredibles. I reach too far, I forget. It affects from head to toe, my, my jaw, my neck, my shoulders, my hands a lot.

H

Hannah French 04:49

My hip is massively affected and as a result of that and operations and nerve damage and chronic pain in my hip - that's why I use a wheelchair. I have plasticity in my legs: as I try to walk, they turn inwards and they stretch and stretch and stretch turning inwards. And so I have about 12 really good steps and after that it's not pretty. And then yeah, my knees and my ankles occasionally as well, but the more I use my chair, the more that's managed. And they say there is no cure, so it's all done through management through physiotherapy, I've had a fabulous osteopath, and a combination ... I seem to circle around things like massage, and acupuncture, and you know, all sorts of things in order to manage it and to sustain the quality of life that I hope to have.

R

Rebecca Toal 05:36

Sounds like a full time job.

H

Hannah French 05:38

And then it affects the insides as well.

R

Rebecca Toal 05:39

Yeah.

H

Hannah French 05:40

So...

H

Hattie Butterworth 05:40

Yeah.

H

Hannah French 05:41

...digestion, I have various things with my heart, which actually are not connected we don't think, and my eyes. Yeah, and kind of associated asthma, anything that stretches will stretch. And if it didn't hurt it, it'd be fascinating. And it still is quite fascinating. But the pain is at times extreme. But as a base level, in my hip, it never goes away. It goes away in my other joints, because it hasn't got caught in that horrible cycle, but the chronic pain is there and my hip permanently

—

H Hattie Butterworth 06:20

Mhmm, yeah, I mean, when I heard about your kind of journey, and we kind of haven't really mentioned yet, but you are, or were a flautist.

H Hannah French 06:30

Mhmm, yeah

H Hattie Butterworth 06:30

A baroque flautist. And I mean, my first thought was, how do you go about accepting that you have a chronic pain as a musician? And was it a kind of a grieving period? Do you still play now? Or, or is it sort of a sense of you had to let that go because of your EDS?

H Hattie Butterworth 06:49

How does that work?

H Hannah French 06:49

Yeah.

H Hannah French 06:50

Well, first up, I think that a lot of people who have hypermobility in the first place, whether or not it's a syndrome, are really predisposed to the arts, and certainly to dance. I mean, I often joke and I shouldn't joke, but you know, in the past, I probably would have joined the circus. I can do all sorts of things. But, you know, got quite seriously...

H Hannah French 07:11

You know, there's a real disposition towards that. I, I played the piano to really decent level, I went to uni as a pianist, really, and my technique was, was foul, because I could get around all sorts of things with these really bendy stretchy fingers that, you know, could contort, do all sorts of things, but it's not sustainable over a long period. And you don't really realise that when you're, I mean ... I joked a bit about the flute, because the Baroque flute has just one key. And it's the key that you play with your right finger and my right hand finger has an extra line in it. Do you see? So...

H Hattie Butterworth 07:11

Yeah.

R Rebecca Toal 07:48
Oh wow.

H Hannah French 07:49
It hasn't actually got an extra joint...

H Hattie Butterworth 07:50
Wow!

H Hannah French 07:50
...but it's really, really long.

R Rebecca Toal 07:52
Bendy!

H Hannah French 07:52
And so it's got four segments instead of three, which I've got on all the other ones. And that's the only one that I needed a key for. And the maker of my flute, was kind of a bit fascinated by that finger in he was like "Ah, it's great, because on your flute, I can put the key here and you can still reach it because you've got a really long finger." All I mean, there are some, there are some benefits of it. But yes, so I suppose I, I studied at university and I went to the Royal Academy of Music, afterwards for postgrad, and then I played professionally. And I started falling over in my early 20s and mid 20s, and was stone cold sober at the time, and would fall downstairs and step off buses and fall straight onto the pavement. And it was all a bit... well, it was really disconcerting. And, and then my legs started twisting, and I remember going to see my GP and by the time I saw her, my kneecaps were pretty much facing each other, and she...

H Hannah French 08:49
... immediately sent me off for tests and stuff. And at the time, I used to run a lot in the park, and I mean, I had this funny run where my feet would flick out, and people would mock it on occasion. I bet they feel terrible now.

R Rebecca Toal 08:49
...

Wow.

H

Hannah French 09:04

It happened very slowly. I've got reports from the Academy playing my flute, and it said, things that say "put both feet on the floor when you play", and I'd obviously started picking up my left leg. And I think that the, you know, my pain thresholds must be pretty high. And so the pain that I was experiencing, and my hip, my knees were twisting round to accommodate it and to get it out of pain. And all of that started over a really long time. So by the time I was falling over, it was because my knees had twisted around so much that they would then catch and then partially dislocate and then I'd fall. So it was quite bizarre to begin with. And, you know, playing the flute too, it's a very much a cross thing. It's a cross-body, you know, and obviously there are ways in which you should sit and play properly and all the rest of it, but essentially you are on that diagonal. And I do sometimes wonder, you know, you sit in churches peering around, you know, columns to see the conductor and you know, you do contort yourself, so many musicians contort themselves to play their instruments. So, you know, I probably had all sorts of bad habits and, you know, to begin with that, they're like you know, "you must stop crossing your legs", well all three of us are sat here crossing our legs.

H

Hannah French 10:12

You know, "stop crossing your legs"... all these kind of habits that you get into of... It's not a leap for somebody with hypermobility to get into bad habits and over time for that to start wearing or to start pushing, and then if you can, if you do have that flexibility to keep moving and moving and moving, and then before you know it, as I say, your kneecaps are facing each other, you've got a really funny run, and they start giving way as you start falling over. Unfortunately, for me, it was quite a one way street by that point. And it wasn't that long before...it was just happening more, more and more often and, and then I started all sorts of rounds of treatment and physio and I was on a Botox trial. I used to joke I'd have the smoothest thighs in central London... but you know, and we used to put Botox into it to relax the muscles around my hip, and then they'd feel my leg straightening up and I'd be like "look, it's straight again. This is amazing." And then I got like three months, or however long Botox lasts, before it would go back to where it was again, and then I had operations to try and replicate that, and they went wrong, and eventually, it was because my hip was so mangled, and you know, it was presenting in other places, it's always that thing, isn't it? It's like, you never ... what you're actually looking at, it's the knock-on from something else. And then over, yeah, numerous things that tried to make happen, and, yeah, I increasingly had to use a wheelchair and the operations didn't work, and the pain didn't go away. And yeah, and then playing became just a whole new ballgame. Because while I was on crutches, I could kind of get to places, and that was quite ... I've always been fairly gung-ho and like, "Oh, I'm sure that'll be fine. I'm sure we'll make that work." And actually and then it just became more and more difficult. And as we know, as much as there's a lot of goodwill, you know, there are concert venues that are just not accessible. It's amazing how many stages are actually not accessible. And yeah, there were some memorable occasions ... well you know what historical performances are like: you're playing in bandstand in the middle of muddy fields, and there were some memorable things with wheelbarrows to get to the ladies.

B

Robyn ... 10:00

R Rebecca Toal 12:28

Oh my goodness.

H Hannah French 12:29

You know, and then even, you know, touring and flying, and wheelchairs getting smashed up on planes, and I just, you know, it got to a point, I was like "I have to really seriously consider that this isn't working." And yeah, you know, there were other things in the mix as well. But eventually, it just wasn't viable.

R Rebecca Toal 12:49

It sounds exhausting. Like, being in that space of performing and having to constantly kind of expect the next thing to go wrong. Would you say that you turned to these other things in the mix, as you say, out of kind of exasperation, or were they already firm interests?

H Hannah French 13:12

Yeah, some things were already firm interests. I've always had a kind of desire, a thirst for research, it's always been a thing. So you know, moving into musicology. and you know, I was a lecturer for 12 years, and I loved it. Things that ran alongside would definitely always there. Um, but they came with challenges as well, and I have to say that the BBC are amazing. They're incredible employers, and I feel really, I feel really heard and I feel really cared for. And when it comes to access, I feel like they're on it. You know, and I can't say that for everything in the past. And I would say that I did have a period, especially when things were getting worse. And you know, moving to using a chair, for me, partially, it was like wings, I got my wings, I got my independence, because I was just doing less and less and crutches are just the work of the devil. I mean, you know, I talk about my shoulders dislocate ... the less I used my crutches, the less often my shoulders dislocated, and my neck stayed in place, and my jaw would pop out. It's like crutches are just awful and when I moved into my chair, I was like, "Okay, I can now do stuff." And for me, it's always been about, "oh, hang on. If I do this, it means I'm able to do that." So I found my chair very abling in loads of ways. But it's hard for people to see that happening and to accommodate it. And it's hard when you are really keen to do stuff and not to be excluded because you're suddenly using a chair. It's hard to articulate that and I had some really bad experiences and I'd say experiences that were really, really detrimental to my mental wellbeing really detrimental and have taken a very long time to get over and the BBC have been actually very healing in that respect. Okay, so some ways, it's easier because I turned up and I was already disabled. And so they're like, "right, we need to do this, this and this." So, you know, I don't need to make excuses for them. They were brilliant. But by the same token, it's often hard to articulate exactly what you need. And it's often depressing when you have to basically describe your worst day to people who may employ you whether long term or short term. Because if you don't describe your worst day, when that comes, you can't do your job. And that's something that's quite difficult to get your head around and difficult to articulate at a time when you're actually coming to terms with that yourself. You know, for years and years and years, if anybody ever took a photo, I'd get out of my chair for the photo to be taken. So anybody who's snooped my Facebook or what have you are like, "oh, well, it's very recently you're in a chair," and I'm like "no, because the crutches or the wheelchair are

always, you know, a metre out of shot." And perhaps it's vanity, perhaps it's that I didn't accept it for a long time, perhaps it's that I hoped for... I mean, I looked for answers for a really, really long time, you know, despite saying it suddenly enabled me to do things, I always considered, it was kind of this got me from A to B, and then at B I would do what I intended to do. But I think that when I came to realise that this was my reality, and that was okay, and that people would still book you to do things and would still value what you have to say or give, then that really changed things.

R

Rebecca Toal 16:48

I was gonna say it takes a lot of courage to describe your worst day when applying for things.

H

Hannah French 16:55

Yeah.

R

Rebecca Toal 16:55

Because you, yeah, it's the same for mental illness, you worry that people will see that as a ... and I know that, legally, they shouldn't use it against you, or whatever, but it takes a lot to say, "Look, this could happen."

H

Hannah French 17:09

It does. And even when there's real positive discrimination here - ... I was going for jobs at one point, and I knew, I knew I'd get an interview every time because I had to get an interview, you're gonna get - ... and I'm like, "Please don't waste my time, please." Because it's exhausting going to all of these... if you're not going to employ me, I'd rather you just say that. And of course, you can't say that. And they can't say that back to you. But that's part of the exhaustion because you're like, "I know, you don't want to discriminate, and I believe you're not... but like, please don't drag me all the way to these places if you've no intention."

H

Hattie Butterworth 17:40

I hadn't thought of that.

H

Hannah French 17:42

Yeah, but it's, it's, it's that fear. And I think it's, it works on every level. I mean, the wheelchair's a good example, because it's so obvious. But anything, be it mental health concerns, or, or any kind of invisible disability, or it doesn't even have to be classed as a disability, something that you carry with you, you don't want to have to admit to it, because you think "well, they're just

going to take the easy option and employ the next person." And it's taken me a really long time to trust that. And to trust that, that there is a level playing field and that they might even pick you.

H

Hattie Butterworth 18:17

Yeah, rather than seeing it as a reason for them not to want you, of course, they won't want me because I'm in this...

H

Hannah French 18:25

Well, it's just a bit more faff. There's always a bit more admin, it always takes a bit longer. It's stuff like that, and you think, "oh, gosh, well it'd just be much easier if..." and you know, and you know, they could just employ this person or this person instead. And yeah, I think that does take a lot of trusting and believing in yourself.

H

Hattie Butterworth 18:43

I mean, that's another thing we talked about is how the instrumental teacher is often the one person they think they have to go to with all of their problems, because they will have the answers.

H

Hannah French 18:53

Yeah.

H

Hattie Butterworth 18:54

But did you find that like, in your role as a kind of lecturer, you were kind of in a quite an interesting place of being in between that kind of very intense role and then also, kind of maybe clinical role or something? Did you feel that your own experience was able to sort of ... maybe not advise, but like, give a kind of empathy?

H

Hannah French 19:15

Yeah, definitely. And I was, I was an academic studies lecturer, but I was also a tutor. So I had ... my role was to oversee the the academic and pastoral welfare of, at times... I'm just trying to think ... there were probably 120 students, which sounds utterly ridiculous. But you know, many just sail through and are absolutely fine, but I, I was quite young when I started, I was kind of mid 20s. And I think you're right, I think that students do need somewhere else to go and someone else to speak to. They would come to me with all sorts of things. Which are probably not for right now. I think because I was in my early 20s, and you know, would chat to them and give them a safe space to talk, they really did come and use that. But then yeah, I was there for quite a long time. And then in the process of being there I was then in my chair, and, you know,

I could think off the top of my head of a dozen cases, just right now, of students who came and said, "I think I need to talk about something. And I'm really fearful to actually tell my teacher," because as you say, it's quite an intensive relationship that you have, and, and you're trying to please them, you're trying to make your way you're trying to impress visiting musicians coming in to give masterclasses and that kind of thing. And, you know, pain, or anxiety, or anything physical, the beginnings of RSI, things that they were trying to mask, because either they didn't want to admit to it, or reveal it, because they were fearful, they'd get pulled from a project, or that they would be told to stop for a while, and they're like, "I can't stop, because I've got exams coming up," or "because I've got this amazing gig that I really want to do." And I was in a really privileged position that, you know, they could come and talk and that they did come and talk and that I could then advise them, either to go and see a very particular GP that we had a link to, through the Academy or BAPAM. And, but the first thing to do really was to get them to talk to their teachers, and the minute they'd broken that spell, they were like, "it's fine. It's all going to be fine. I talked to them. And they said 'this is what I need to do.'" And, you know, I think there was only really one case that I can think of that...that that didn't end the way the student wanted it to. And, you know, that's, that's pretty good, because otherwise, you know, as we know, anything that's left and not addressed, just gets worse.

R

Rebecca Toal 21:59

Yeah, we've talked quite a lot between us and also to other students about ... yeah, the difficulties, particularly with injuries or personal things, talking to your instrumental teacher, because of how much your your identity in the relationship with them is your playing and you feel like anything that's affecting that, even under the surface, you can't tell them because of who you are as a musician. For you, when playing was slowly fading out, I know that you said you had other things going on, but did you feel at all like you were losing your identity as a flautist?

H

Hannah French 22:38

Yes.

R

Rebecca Toal 22:39

Yeah.

H

Hannah French 22:40

Yeah, I made excuses. And then things in life changed too: I got pregnant. And then I could say, "oh, I'm on maternity leave, I'm not ready to come back yet." And then I moved abroad. And that, in a way was a kind of way to hide from it for a while. The problem with playing isn't just access to stages, you know, I obviously can't stand for long either now. And there are ways around that I used to take a stool, like a barstool with me and keep that behind the chair and perch on that if I had a solo and then sit back down again. And yeah, there are ways around that. Unfortunately, it's also affected my breathing. So when I really breathe properly, for long

periods, it catches something really horrible catches in there. And it's ... that got worse and worse. And, and so in a way the decision was made for me. So that was out of my hands. Occasionally I play at home ... we all know what happens when you've not played for ages.

R Rebecca Toal 23:50
Pretty fresh!

H Hannah French 23:51
Yeah, you think "Ah, I can do this!" And then, you know, you play a little bit longer, and then it sounds good and you're like "argh".

R Rebecca Toal 24:00
"What have I done?!"

H Hannah French 24:02
It sounds good. And then, you know, I did get my flute out about six weeks ago. And I had quite a spiral afterwards. Because ...

H Hattie Butterworth 24:13
Yeah.

H Hannah French 24:14
...You know, it did exactly that. "Oh, gosh, my embouchure's gone or my fingers are feeling all tired." And then it ca-..., you know, and then it started really ringing again, and I'm like "argh I why am I not doing this?" And then the pain really was terrible. And "that's why I'm not doing this." It's like I've always got to keep proving to myself why it's not happening. And that's tough. And I... you know, I've been so fortunate. I have massive privilege because radio came along at just the right moment. So as I say, we moved abroad and I made a deal with my husband that he would ... we moved for his job and I would write my book. And we went for three years, and I was like "right, this is fine if I come back with a book." So I did! It worked and you know, I was very fortunate, I got a publisher and it was all fine. We came back and just in time to launch it, and that was, you know, a real thing. But just before we left, Radio Three got in touch. And I'd done some, you know, interviews and things like that as a kind of so-called 'expert'. And then they said, "do you want to have a go at presenting?" I thought "I've wanted to do this forever!" And so I um... I wrote a script. We were house hunting in Canada for a weekend and I wrote the script on the plane and came back on the red eye and didn't admit to them that's what had just happened and I went in and did it and they were like, "God, it's great. Do you want to do it again?" and I was like, "Okay, I've gotta fess up what's happening here."

And, and they were incredible. And that producer was like, "just don't worry, we'll make this work" and came out to Canada, and we made some really fun shows. And he showed me what I needed to do and turn my airing cupboard into a little studio, which was amazing prep for lockdown.

H Hattie Butterworth 26:00
He went to Canada?!

H Hannah French 26:01
He flew out and ...

H Hattie Butterworth 26:03
That's amazing!

H Hannah French 26:03
Yeah, I mean, I'd met him once and I remember going to the airport with my baby daughter, and saying to her, not that she could speak, "We've got to look at for him. I'm not sure I can remember what he looks like. And he can stay at our house for about 10 days." And let's see our furniture just arrived.

H Hattie Butterworth 26:19
That's amazing.

H Hannah French 26:20
It was all a bit crazy. But you know, rocked up and we're got on like a house on fire. He'd lost his credit card en route.

H Hattie Butterworth 26:27
On my God.

H Hannah French 26:27
"Okay, here's my credit card. You have that one." Yeah. And we flew to New York and made some shows there and in Toronto as well. And yeah, and as I say it was sorted out. I bought some kit, and he showed me what I needed to do and and then it just kind of evolved from

there. And I started making shows, and then worked through CBC, doing the kind of transatlantic yoghurt pots, and that was great. And I just, I can't tell you how that came along at the right moment. Because I suppose that was kind of crunch time, so it was like, "I can't stretch this maternity leave anymore. You know, what am I gonna do?" And, yeah, I mean, radio is the most liberating thing and no one can see me.

H

Hattie Butterworth 27:15

Aww!

H

Hannah French 27:17

And, and that is just so liberating. Because again, it's always my thing is like, just book me for my brain don't book me for whether I can walk or not, you know. And, and that's why I, yeah, I just took to it like a duck to water. To some extent. Like, they spent a lot of time like helping me out.

H

Hattie Butterworth 27:39

That's the thing that strikes me about about you is it's ... it is listening to you on air is just like, I don't know, it really feels like you've been doing it forever. And it's, and I'm really curious about the kind of early music connection and continuing that because I might think, and maybe you've kind of come to terms with it yourself, but watching a lot of Baroque players and talking about Baroque music all the time, you know, do you feel like the kind of the flute has just completely morphed ... the love has sort of just morphed into talking about it, experiencing it? Or do you ever kind of feel like a bit of jealousy or envy?

H

Hannah French 28:14

Ah, it's a funny one, because I to begin with. In some respects, I wanted to be talking about symphony orchestras and situations that I wouldn't naturally be in. But the early music show was fantastic, because especially in the early days, I was storytelling, and I still am. But you know, a lot of the kind of composer profiles and, you know, and it's, it's fantastic, cos' I get to pitch ideas - "Awh, can I make a show about this, or this or that?" - You know, and that was a very easy transfer. Just occasionally, I get these twinges of "I wouldn't play it that way." But I do think it really helps in order to get inside the music and to be able to describe what's going on and to be able to share insights, and listen out for this and that and the other. So, you know, I often say that the painting in the wrong frame is not going to be appreciated. So you know, a performance that's framed in just the right way, people might just you know, take to it in a way, I don't know.

H

Hattie Butterworth 29:17

I'd never thought of sort of presenting in that way of like...

R Rebecca Toal 29:20
But it makes so much sense.

H Hattie Butterworth 29:21
It doesn't it? Yeah.

H Hannah French 29:23
It's a real thrill. I especially find it at Wigmore Hall. It just feels like you're sitting at the edge of the stage, just whispering some secrets in the audience's ears, so that they just hear it in a slightly different way.

H Hattie Butterworth 29:34
Wow, that must be stressful though. What if you have nothing to say?

H Hannah French 29:38
Well, yeah, but I think that that is where I get my kicks now.

H Hattie Butterworth 29:45
Right.

R Rebecca Toal 29:46
And I suppose that does translate to going on stage with a piece you might have played 1000 times and finding something new in it and knowing that it's going to sound as fresh as the second time you played it. You know, it's there. There's definitely loads of transferable skills. And also in the way that you present a show there's usually a climax, there's a, there's a minor key, pianissimo mysterious moment, there's a bit where it's like, then you reveal this and then, you know... you probably could if you mapped out a piece of music and you mapped out an early music show script, you'd probably see similar sorts of things.

H Hattie Butterworth 29:46
I just wanted to know, how you manage the like mental side of pain, because it has a sort of whole body experience. It has to affect your brain as well in the way that you can work or the way that you know, your mental health is or or anything, you know, do you feel like you might

experience the same intensity of pain, but you sort of mentally deal with it better now? You know, in the beginning was it a lot, was it really difficult to come to terms with mentally would you say?

H

Hannah French 31:01

Well, pain is all in your brain, isn't it? And it's what you don't want to hear when a healthcare professional says, "well, it's all in your brain" because you think "well, am I just making it up then? Like, could I just think myself out of this situation?" And I confess I, I live in a ground floor flat, and there's a corridor, and it's been a corridor I've loved and hated because I've practised walking in that corridor, I've tried to relearn to walk in that corr-... you can reach both sides, so it's brilliant in that respect. And I tried to walk in there, just to prove to myself that when I do it, my hip goes red and hot. Because I kind of have to see what's going on. You know, I've had those times when I'm like "I don't quite believe this is happening. I'm just imagining this is happening." And I had to make it worse, a bit like trying out my flute again, I had to just keep proving to myself that it's not just in my brain, but it is, of course, it's generated by your brain and your nervous system. And what I was saying at the beginning, I was quite disbelieving and had to keep testing it, just to kind of, you know, just to kind of...

H

Hattie Butterworth 32:06

See it for what it is.

H

Hannah French 32:07

Yeah, exactly. And it's a very destructive thing. And I think I used to see a rehab Pilates instructor, and she would say to me, "how are you? And how's your body?" It's not always helpful, but it was helpful at that point, because I could say how I felt, but then I could say, "and my body's not keeping up." And I do sometimes feel very much like that. I get brain whizz, and my brain is whirring, and I've got all these ideas and blah blah blah blah blah, and my body is just literally... I'm like taking it with me to things. And that is ... that is tough. And I think for a long time I searched for answers, and I somehow believed it was going to go away. And I've had to learn that it's not going to go away. And I spent three weeks in a, a rehab programme, like an instate rehab programme, and I had a physiotherapist that I worked with there who was fabulous. She was a real realist, and I would ask her questions, and she'd give me straight answers, you know. And she'd say, I'd say, "Do you think I'll ever run again?" She said, "No, I don't think you will." And it was what I needed to hear, I needed that reality check. And I think that, you know, just as, I say pain gives you boundaries, because it tells you when to stop doing something, I think that for me, I had to reset what my boundaries were, and see what I really could do, and start to accept what I couldn't do. You know, sport for me is a real no-no. And it's and it worries me, it worries me from like a heart health perspective and I joke ... half joke that you know, I do live radio instead because it gets my heart going. It saves me going to the gym. Because you know, it is tricky because people say "well, can you swim?" Well, I sort of can swim but something very, very odd happens with the pressure in my hips, so it's dislocated a number of times in surgery and with accidents. And something very horrible happens with the change in pressure from the water to outside the water and the worst is on an aeroplane, any

kind of g-force of landing is horrific. So I've had quite a lot of help in managing that. Because you know, when you're in an airport, what you really need is to be an absolutely excruciating pain.

R

Rebecca Toal 34:21

You are anyway.

H

Hannah French 34:22

When you're negotiate that "I'm trying to o get off the aeroplane. Has my wheelchair been smashed up? What's going on?" It's like the G-force of landing is one of the worst triggers if you really really want it to cramp and be horrific. So I think in terms of coming to terms with the pain, I'd almost say now that I use it. It's something I've seen more as a force than as a punishment. And it felt very punishing to begin with because pain is punishing, isn't it? You know, it's cruel. But now I'm like "well, if you're coming with me, you've gotta help me. You've gotta do something." And I do feel like I have an option in what I present. And I don't mean like, on the radio, I mean what I put out in life as to how I ... you know, and I do try to channel it as a as a kind of almost like an energy force. I don't mean Star Wars...it needs to be something because it's not going away. So, and you know, I've had some dark times. I, I'm really lucky that I don't really suffer depression. There are some things that are depressing and I can see that they're depressing, and I feel that that depressing, you know, I'd love to go play tennis or go for a run in the park and, you know, I used to see mums pushing prams down the road and just be like "I just want to do that." I can, but only for like, 20 steps, using the prom like a Zimmer frame. And that is depressing. But I don't believe I've ever really been depressed. Mine comes out much more in anxiety and tics and OCD types, which again, like the pain and in a very similar way, I've had a lot of CBT and really tried to channel it into what I want to do. And I think that kind of, you know, I run into the trap of exhausting myself from just pushing on and on and on, because that is my coping mechanism. But equally if you took that away, I don't think it's a denial thing. I think I was always like that as a child. I think it's all ... I think that's part of my character. And when people say to me, "Well, maybe you should just stop working." And ... my osteo said, "Have you ever thought about a life in which you just focused on your health?" And it really made me think, but I then cried a lot. And I went "I can't imagine that because I work really hard to get to a place where I can go and do what it is that I want to do." And you know, there are so many things that you can do. That that's that's part of it. So in terms of adjusting and working through those changes, and working with ... working with the pain, not against the pain, I think that was the real mindset. And that was the thing that took a really long time. But there's a certain amount of pain that is a known quantity now. And I only really panic when there's something very new that I don't recognise, like, my pain is such a friend and foe. Ot's there, and we know what's going on with each other. When something new comes along, like that worries me.

H

Hannah French 37:40

Yeah.



R

Rebecca Toal 37:41

There was something that you said or described your documentary .. I think you said it was a meditation and reflection on pain rather than a fact finding mission to solve pain. And that kind of sounds just generally how you deal with the pain now.

H

Hannah French 38:01

Yeah.

R

Rebecca Toal 38:03

Which is, I guess, where we've sort of come to with mental illness as well. But ... and it's worth working with rather than against, which is easier on some days than others.

H

Hattie Butterworth 38:14

Yes. Yeah. That's what I feel like, it's important for me to hear that today.

R

Rebecca Toal 38:18

Yeah.

H

Hattie Butterworth 38:18

Cos' I just said to you earlier, things are getting a bit worse for me with anxiety. And the first kind of feeling I feel is that I failed. And then hearing you say, "No, like I work with it." You know, if I ... kind of wish I could tap in a bit more to that, like idea of working with my anxiety, like it's not out to get me, rather than I always kind of feel like, "oh, no, I failed, because I'd let it take over or whatever." So...

H

Hannah French 38:45

You know, in your case, and my case, just the same to accept that actually, it is part of your character. And people do love you for it.

H

Hattie Butterworth 38:56

Yeah.

H

Hannah French 38:56

You know, at times when I get very envious, and that's very different to you, but when I get

you know, at times when I get very anxious, and that's very different to you, but when I get very anxious, I become very particular. And at one point, someone said to me, "Well, I'd employ you because you're dotting all the I's and crossing all the T's and you're going back to check that the T's are crossed, and the i's are dotted." And you know, I translate quite a lot of that into radio work and the precision that you need in that and I know that's okay. And I do obsess about things like speaking to time, and that kind of stuff. And that's all right. And that's part of my character, part of my DNA that I can use and celebrate rather than being like "oh, gosh, it's quite destructive. I have to check this and I've checked this and have I numbered the pages? Well, yeah, I have and it's a good job that you checked that. Right, now get on and do it."

R Rebecca Toal 39:45
Yeah.

H Hannah French 39:45
You know, it's like knowing how far you can take it before it does. And you have to, you know, sometimes say "yeah, I need some time out because of this." I've been in bed all day today because I knew I was doing this this evening. And because I have to feel like I've achieved something, and I'll go home, and I've achieved something because I've done this. The fact that I've written scripts in bed today, radio listeners are not going to know that those scripts were written in bed.

H Hattie Butterworth 40:11
Yeah.

H Hannah French 40:12
But I had to give in to my legs because they weren't cooperating. And it's like, "Fine, we'll do this in bed then."

H Hattie Butterworth 40:21
Aww I like that.

H Hannah French 40:22
You know, so it's kind of, it's like having an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other and doing a bit of a deal with both.

R Rebecca Toal 40:29

REBECCA TOAL NOTES

Yeah. You did say that you previously have kind of put the crutches and the wheelchair out of shot. And it feels like ... maybe it's just the impression that I'm getting from your online presence, now that you're ... you feel more able to talk about things. Was there a certain point which, like, for example, the inspiration behind doing the documentary, was there a point where you were like, "I just want to talk about this"? Or was it just the kind of ...

H

Hannah French 40:59

The documentary was real turning point, and I thought really long and hard about making it. I'd actually pitched it as a TV show years ago. And I'm so glad it didn't get commissioned, because I wasn't ready to make it. And then the opportunity came up, because there was a BBC-wide Disability Awareness Week. And one of the commissioners mentioned it and I thought "Yeah." And the same producer, Les, who had worked with me in Canada, right from the very beginning, you know, when he'd come out, he, he didn't know me, and we bonded really quickly. And he just accepted every bit of this wheeling hot mess. And, you know, carried me and carried the chair. And, you know, we got stuck in Central Park, and we decided to take the subway in New York. And these things are not very accessible. And he was like, "it's fine, we've got this." And so we've had lots of experiences and he'd seen bad days, too, you know, he'd seen me sit on the floor of a car park and cry and go, "This is too hard. I can't do this right now." And he'd be like "that's okay. Take some time. And then we'll go and do it." Right, fine, I'm there.

H

Hannah French 42:12

So I really trusted him. And I really, you know, felt it was the right time. And he was the right person to make it with and I felt like I could be honest, because it's easy to come out with platitudes and regurgitate things that you've been advised. And, you know, there are lots of lines I could say...It's lovely talking to you, because I don't feel like I'm saying them. We can just chat about it. But, you know, it really was a meditation and, and it wasn't called The Silence of my Pain when we started out .It was going to be called The Sound of my Pain.

R

Rebecca Toal 42:45

Wow.

H

Hannah French 42:46

And we started it. And I said to him "it's not...", you know. Well, I thought I'd find something... I hoped I'd find something. Because as I say and as you mentioned earlier, you often feel like music should be your tool. It's like the thing that is right inside you, and it's there and it's there to be used. And so many people have said to me, you know, "use your music. Don't you have music on when you're trying to do it?" I'm like, "No, I do not. How could you do that to it? Show some respect woman!" You know, and as it went on, I was like "Les, I don't know if I'm going to find anything." I really don't think it's, I don't think that's the answer. Because we, even when I pitched it, I pitched it in a way that I didn't really know how it would end. And I thought, well,

this is only going to be an honest and true thing if I do find it an ending. You can't go on a journey knowing where you're going to end up, it's not much of a journey is it? And I, you know, I thought "am I going to end up with hard rock or jazz or something that I haven't played?", but I would find another outlet and it didn't happen. And then I just realised as I actually listened properly to what I was saying to other people who are also in pain and did use music and the more they told me what they did do the more I went "well, I don't want to do that. That's fantastic that that works for you but I cannot imagine doing any of those things." And I'd sit in a studio and I realised I'd get to studios early and just feel so calm, not pain free but just calm and I could listen and some of that white noise crackle that comes along with pain that just, you know actually in proper silence which actually is so rare, isn't it? It's hard to find proper... the minute you try recording outside or in a building, you hear every little thing. But in a studio there was something so calming and I thought "Why do I love radio so much?" and I was like "do you know what? I get there and it's quiet." And then I sat in a concert at Oxford Lieder Festival and it was about silence. And there were these really poignant moments of silence. Benjamin Appl and Sholto Kynoch were performing, and it was really powerful, and I got really emotional. And I realised that what I'd been looking for was, yeah, right there all along. And it was just, yeah, admitting as a musician that actually what I really craved was silence. And, you know, I said it there, and I hold to it that I don't use music, not that the people I spoke to use music or something. Of course I could never abuse music. But I need the silence, to get myself in a good place, or in a place where I can then accept the music and appreciate the music and love the music and let it in. And that I find, you know, really, a really powerful reminder of how I do cope with stuff.

H

Hannah French 45:52

The other thing we should talk about maybe if there's time and you want to...

R

Rebecca Toal 45:54

Yeah, absolutely.

H

Hannah French 45:56

Is the idea of fascination or flow. Because I think, and the more I've thought about it, I think it's something that musicians experience all the time. And I think it's something that I've experienced since being tiny, and that everybody does, and it's just quite hard to articulate it. I talked to a neurologist, and he explained it as getting yourself into almost a meditative state. It's the state of flow that you're in where it's like time stands still. And I described it to him with a part of the B minor Mass, the Benedictus where, you know, especially when I was playing and before it was, you know, really debilitating. Before I, before I took a stool, when I was still crutches to my seat in the orchestra, and then stand up to play and I'd stand up to play and I'd be like "oh, boy, that hurts." And then you know, you start through the introduction, and then the singer starts and then and ... we all know this feeling of like, "oh, gosh, did the last bar just happen? And did I just...?" And you know, you have it in the car, don't you when you're driving along, you go, "ooh, the last 100 yards," or it can happen in in so many situations. But I think for musicians, it doesn't mean that you're not present, but you're so enveloped in the music that you're kind of carried along. And before you know it, the aria's finished. And you sit down,

you're like, "where did the time go?" And he said it only really works in pieces where it's a little bit too difficult for you. Well I was like "Benedictus, it's quite hard." You know. So if it was, you know, if it was too easy, you wouldn't get to that place because your brain wouldn't be focusing in such a way, it would take ever such a lot of effort to really, you know, imagine playing three blind mice and really trying to put your whole soul into it. Maybe that is the case.

R

Rebecca Toal 47:57

Yeah it's my favourite piece!

H

Hannah French 48:00

But it has to be something that is just slightly out of reach perhaps and that you become so absorbed in it. And I think that it's not always something that lasts the whole piece, it may just last a few bars, or it may just last ... and you're like ... And it's that real absorption. And the thing is that the Osanna from the B minor Mass, if I hear it out of context, it starts up this pain that is so intense in my hip, that it takes my breath away. And there are a few pieces of music, that's just a very particular one where that happens, and, and in the process of the documentary, which perhaps isn't quite as much of a surprise, because it's where it starts, but that's what we worked out, and he'd helped me to understand that you have this state where you don't feel pain. Does your body ... is your body in pain? Yes. But your brain is so absorbed in something else that it is distracted from your pain. But the point is that the pain hasn't actually gone away in that time. So when you sit down again, and I sit down, the pain floods into the ... into my hip, and then when I hear that moment out of context, it floods in again, because it's almost hardwired. It's part of the ridiculous nerve ending problems that are cycling round in there between my brain and my head. And that piece of music has got caught in that cycle. And when I hear it, even though I say to myself, "you haven't just played the Benedictus. You haven't just sat down. Why is it ramping up and ramping up?" And I don't ... I find that very difficult to control. Um, so this idea of fascination or flow is very enticing because it is that release and there is this moment where you're not in pain...You think you're not in pain and that's ... the closest I get to that now which I do get is live radio. And it's addictive.

H

Hattie Butterworth 50:08

Yes, I was thinking about it.

H

Hannah French 50:09

You get a kick from it.

H

Hannah French 50:10

Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 50:10
Yeah.

H Hannah French 50:12
Probably don't tell Radio Three. They're like "you got addicted to the radio?"

R Rebecca Toal 50:16
Put you on a rehab programme from radio.

H Hannah French 50:18
"Gonna have to ween you off. Keep her out of pain. Stick her back on again." But you know, it comes at a cost because it you know... And so I can be really tired after, especially if it's a long broadcast, but I wouldn't swap it for the world, because I think that's what really keeps me going. That's what gets me out of bed. You know, and that's what we need. And that's what, you know, when it comes down to it, that's what musicians are doing the whole time because everybody gets a kick out of it. You don't need to be in pain to get a kick out of that idea of fascination because it's so alluring. It's like another world of, you know.

H Hattie Butterworth 50:58
Warped time.

H Hannah French 50:59
Yes, exactly that, exactly that.

R Rebecca Toal 51:01
It also sounds like the flow is a break from the pain as is live radio, but so is the silence in the studio before ...

H Hannah French 51:11
Yeah.

R Rebecca Toal 51:11
So it's interesting that it's the distraction, but also the noise. And it's...

H

Hannah French 51:16

Well it's the pacing, it's like the way you'd pace yourself through playing a piece of music. You know, you have those moments where it's just, you know, there's some release, and then "this is a really intense bit", and then it's a ... you know, I suppose for me, it's like that, there are those different moments and yeah, it's it's powerful. And again, it's one of those things like, if it didn't hurt it'd be fascinating. Well, it does hurt and it is fascinating.

H

Hattie Butterworth 51:40

Yeah.

H

Hannah French 51:41

Because, you know, you want to find where that happens in other parts of your life. And I think it ... I think it does. And I think that is a definitely for me a coping mechanism. And I thought that that wouldn't be there. So when my osteo says, "Have you thought about not working and focusing on your health?"

H

Hannah French 51:58

I'm like..

R

Rebecca Toal 51:58

That's why you cry.

H

Hannah French 51:59

Why ... yeah! Why would I take away all of those real highs? The highs are worth the lows. And you know, that is a it's a, it's a price worth paying for. And yeah, sometimes in its cruelest moments... you know, I, I was at a point where I would walk on stage, again, was this vanity? Was this...? What was this all about? That I would use my wheelchair to get to the edge of the stage, then take a walking stick, walk the ten steps, and I'd be like "yeah, it's fine, I can walk across the stage, I've got enough steps to do that." And I did. So I would get to the middle of the stage and be like, "ladies and gentlemen... Urgh, it really hurts!" I'm like "Why am I doing this to myself?"

H

Hattie Butterworth 52:42

Who am I proving this to?

H Hannah French 52:43

So now I go out in my wheelchair and go "Hello, I'm not in pain. Let's start, shall we?" It's a weird, weird thing. But you know, the back of my mind, was it "Well, if I go out in my chair, would...? Are people uncomf-...? Am I uncomfortable? Are people are uncomfortable? Would they rather have somebody ...?" Well, I mean, nobody has ever suggested that they'd rather have somebody walk out instead of wheel out. You know, it's not, it's not a thing, but it's all of those little, you know, voices in your head that tell you without you know, that's it's probably this is me of with language again, it's not voices in my head, is it? But it's all of the ...

H Hattie Butterworth 53:20

Judgments, yeah.

H Hannah French 53:20

It's the judgments. It's the, it's the devil on one shoulder and the angel on the other and the devil is going "Yeah, but you know. Not everybody needs to wheel out" and the angel's like "why not?"

R Rebecca Toal 53:30

The angel is very quiet in those moments.

H Hannah French 53:32

Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 53:39

The thought of you standing there in pain, it's like you're not fully yourself..

H Hannah French 53:42

No.

H Hattie Butterworth 53:43

...in that experience. But then you wheeling out and just being there, you're fully yourself, you know, and like the thought of someone else taking your place on the early music show or whatever, like that's quite sad, like the thought...

R Rebecca Toal 53:55
Quite sad?!

H Hattie Butterworth 53:56
That's really sad!

H Hannah French 53:57
But also, utterly ridiculous, when you think about it, it's like, I don't need to be able to walk to present the early music show, so why would they need to...? But yet, why did I think that for so long... The amazing liberation of radio is that you know, nobody can see. And you know, when I made that, that documentary, the best bit about it was the number of people who wrote to me saying, "I played this to my family because it let us talk about it afterwards." And that's why I really wanted it to be. Yes, a meditation, somewhere to ... some space to think about it, but also just a way to talk about it because I hadn't. You always want a clean start, don't you? Conversations with friends and family and employers, they never start from scratch. You know, and and in a way for me, my relationship with the BBC did start from scratch because I was already disabled when I rocked up. But you know, so many conversations don't start that way and it's difficult to bring stuff up. And one of the real joys of having made that documentary was that it was a place to remind my friends not, not about, you know, day to day stuff, but just to say, "we can talk about this, and d'you know what? When you take a photo, I'll stay in my chair now, I think, and that's okay." And it really did change a lot of that.

H Hattie Butterworth 55:17
Wow. It's so comparatively recently as well.

H Hannah French 55:20
Yeah! It's only two years ago. Ridiculous. And I've sat in this for nearly 12 years.

H Hattie Butterworth 55:27
Yeah, I think what struck me about it was the ... it's always so hard to call it 'brave' ... I really hate calling things like that brave. I think when, when I know classical music in general, and to a certain extent, the BBC, and I'm sure they would agree, there can be a sense of you wanting it to be quite jolly and quite upbeat. And, you know, the listeners are all very, you know, excited about classical music. And, you know, I sometimes think maybe they don't want to hear about our problems, because...



H Hattie Butterworth 56:00

Yeah. That's kind of where I feel like the bravery was or the sort of difference was to other things I'd heard was, it was a real witness to like something really negative, I suppose? But out of that, just such a truth of your experience and your experience as both a musician and like, a broadcaster. And as a person. Yeah. Like, I feel like you don't get many experiences to hear someone's...

H Hannah French 56:25

No, and I don't think you get many opportunities to do that. And often you criticise, "ah you know, it's the week of this. It's the day of this."

H Hattie Butterworth 56:31

Oh yeah.

H Hannah French 56:32

You know, it's like endless, you know...

H Hattie Butterworth 56:34

Awareness.

H Hannah French 56:34

Awareness of something, but actually, that was a really positive example of that, in that there was suddenly a platform and it was like, "take this platform."

H Hattie Butterworth 56:43

Yeah.

H Hannah French 56:44

Because it wouldn't rock round that easily otherwise.

H Hannah French 56:58

And I don't want you to think that I'm a kind of endlessly cheerful person...

H Hattie Butterworth 57:02
No! No.

H Hannah French 57:02
I think I am a cheerful person. But, you know, it doesn't mean that we don't have major doubts. And I think that at times when I have, and I've run Les, and said, "I'm not coping this week." And he's said, "Go, listen, go listen to it again, listen to what you said, because you really meant it." And, you know, there was one particular time when he said that, and I did and it was right.

H Hattie Butterworth 57:27
Wow.

H Hannah French 57:28
And, and it is, you say it's a witness. It's a, it's a reality, and it's a truth. And, and it doesn't mean that then I bounce back and I'm just like, "brilliant, right! Let's go and talk about Josquin!" at all. It was, it was just that, you know, you accept ... there are very few times that you get to reflect on who you are, without it being a vanity project. And I really hope that it wasn't a vanity project.

R Rebecca Toal 57:52
Not at all.

H Hannah French 57:53
And it was like a chance to just ... not redefine myself, because ... just to define myself, because in some respects, yeah, lots of things have been hidden. You know, Ehlers Danlos Syndrome is a very invisible disability for lots of people. If I, if it hadn't affected my hip, I'm not sure you'd see it. If it you know ... because, you know, sort of massive spectrum. And, you know, some people are way worse place than I am, you know, I don't have feeding tubes, and I can stand up, I can transfer myself out of this, I can drive a car, I can do ... you know. Lots of things that I can do that people don't do. And also some people who aren't affected as severely at all, but it's, you know, it's absolutely their day to day life. And, and so I think that anything that is ... so many things are hidden. That's where I was coming from, and, and we mask things, we hide things. And we only reveal them to ourselves or to our partners or at home. And for me, it was just an opportunity to introduce myself as who I really am. And beyond the voice on the radio that can sound chirpy at six o'clock in the morning... It doesn't start at six o'clock, it starts at half-past six. But I'm chirpy before it starts!

H Hattie Butterworth 59:17
But you're there at six, in the silence.

H Hannah French 59:23
Yeah, having a great time. But it's... it was an opportunity to say "these are the things that I hide in order to do what I do, and I'm going to carry on doing what I do, but I'm not going to hide them anymore, because I don't need to hide them because there's nothing to be ashamed of. It's not quite who I was. It's not something that people at school would recognise in me. But actually, this is it. And it's okay."

R Rebecca Toal 59:48
It was very powerful to hear it from somebody that was already on the radio. We talk about it a lot. We know lots of friends who talk about their stuff, but to hear it from somebody that you recognise, was incredibly powerful, so thank you.

H Hannah French 1:00:11
I'd say it's a pleasure. It's, it's not pleasurable. It's a gift actually, in lots of ways. And, and I think that if people felt that they knew where to go and who to talk to, and they could see a route through it, it wouldn't feel like such a massive admission that there's something that's not quite right, or something that they want to reveal about themselves. Or, you know, there's a choir member who really needs that bar stool.

R Rebecca Toal 1:00:40
Yeah.

H Hannah French 1:00:41
And that would keep them singing, but they can't quite say it, and it's going to get too far. And then that's not the right thing.

R Rebecca Toal 1:00:46
Yep.

H Hannah French 1:00:48
You know, that's the that's the part that that makes me really sad.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:00:56
I've had quite a big win today actually!

R Rebecca Toal 1:01:27
Do it!

H Hattie Butterworth 1:01:27
Got a new job!

H Hannah French 1:01:31
That's brilliant. Thank you. Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:01:44
So that's cool. Yeah.

H Hannah French 1:01:46
Can we make some kind of we three witches? Seeing as the three of us are a sitting round?

R Rebecca Toal 1:01:51
Congratulations Hattie!

H Hattie Butterworth 1:01:52
Thank you everyone.

R Rebecca Toal 1:01:53
Especially because you were so stressed about getting a job!

H Hattie Butterworth 1:01:56
Yeah, it feels like it's farther in my kind of direction of where I want to end up with more media

stuff. And, you know, telling people stories and things. So yeah, that's my win. What about you?

H Hannah French 1:02:11
I got my car two days ago.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:02:14
That is a win!

H Hannah French 1:02:15
I know. It had eight miles on the clock.

R Rebecca Toal 1:02:17
Eight?!

H Hannah French 1:02:18
Can you believe it?

R Rebecca Toal 1:02:22
Just like out of central London.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:02:22
Where did it go?

H Hannah French 1:02:24
Where had those eight miles been? Um, yeah, I've got a motability car and my wheelchair fits in the boot perfectly.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:02:28
That's amazing!

—

H Hannah French 1:02:30
Yeah, and it's it's at least half electric. I'm gonna have to learn to plug it in. Yeah, and remember, and if charging my phone's anything to go by...dangerous. Yeah, I really hoped for a day where I can charge the car and then charge the wheelchair battery from the car and charge the phone battery from the wheelchair. It's like some kind of ...

R Rebecca Toal 1:02:53
It would make sense.

H Hannah French 1:02:54
It's like the cat chasing the mouse with the dog chasing the cat.

R Rebecca Toal 1:02:58
Or the woman who ate the fly.

H Hannah French 1:02:59
Yeah, that's the one.

R Rebecca Toal 1:03:01
Who ate a cat...

H Hannah French 1:03:01
It doesn't end well though.

R Rebecca Toal 1:03:02
No, what happens at the end?

H Hattie Butterworth 1:03:04
Oh my gosh.

R Rebecca Toal 1:03:05

Does she explode or something?

H Hannah French 1:03:06
Yeah, she ... she didn't she?

H Hattie Butterworth 1:03:07
She dies.

H Hannah French 1:03:07
She ate a horse. She's dead Of course.

R Rebecca Toal 1:03:09
Oh, yeah.

H Hannah French 1:03:10
Yeah, not good. Anyway...

R Rebecca Toal 1:03:12
That's not gonna happen.

H Hannah French 1:03:12
No, that's not gonna happen. Yeah, that would be the dream, wouldn't it? Plug the phone into the wheelchair? Plug the wheel hair into the car ..

R Rebecca Toal 1:03:20
and the car into ..

H Hannah French 1:03:21
...to my house. You see? That's what I can't do. That's why it's dangerous. I can't charge it at home. So I'm gonna have to find on street charging.

R Rebecca Toal 1:03:29
There's some around here aren't there?

H Hannah French 1:03:30
Yeah, loads and it means that I should go and work in a nice cafe while it charges or something.

R Rebecca Toal 1:03:36
What a shame.

H Hannah French 1:03:40
And the thing is that I've thought about this for quite a while and now I've actually got to do it.
But she looks good doesn't she?

R Rebecca Toal 1:03:46
So good.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:03:47
She's a real...

H Hannah French 1:03:49
She's a keeper.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:03:50
She's a keeper!

H Hattie Butterworth 1:03:54
Oh, Rebecca?

H Hannah French 1:03:55
What's your win?

R Rebecca Toal 1:03:55
I don't know.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:03:58
What about your gig being cancelled? Is that a win?

R Rebecca Toal 1:04:01
No, because I really wanted to do it.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:04:02
Oh, sorry. You'd had a nice time though?

R Rebecca Toal 1:04:04
I had a nice time not doing much.

H Hannah French 1:04:06
What did you do instead?

H Hattie Butterworth 1:04:07
Did you just sleep?

R Rebecca Toal 1:04:08
Did I sleep? I went climbing, I'm getting really into climbing at the moment.

H Hannah French 1:04:12
Climbing? Oh!

R Rebecca Toal 1:04:13
which is really exciting. And I did a few

...which is really exciting. And I did a few..

H Hannah French 1:04:16
Indoors or outdoors?

R Rebecca Toal 1:04:17
There are outdoor ones, but it's mostly indoors. Yeah, like sent... they call it sending routes where you like get to the top of a route. And like 'complete it' basically did a few that I ... because they reset all the routes quite regularly. So whenever I go and I'm like, "Okay, I'm gonna go back to that one and try it again." It's gone, but I've been more regularly so that some of the ones that I'm still working on are still there when I go back. Yeah, because they're all like colour coded as well.

H Hannah French 1:04:45
Well that's a win!

H Hattie Butterworth 1:04:45
Can you feel the improvement each time you go?

R Rebecca Toal 1:04:48
Yeah!

H Hattie Butterworth 1:04:48
I've never even tried it.

R Rebecca Toal 1:04:49
...Because we did say that you should come but you're probably going to be quite bad.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:04:54
Can you imagine the abuse I get?

H Hannah French 1:04:57
...

If it's any consolation, I'd be worse.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:05:01
I will take pride in that I'd be the best one here.

H Hannah French 1:05:04
That's a win.

R Rebecca Toal 1:05:05
Usually I'm the worst in the group. So, yeah, this makes me feel pretty good actually.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:05:09
We're not ending well.

H Hannah French 1:05:11
I feel like I could maybe abseil...No, no, I couldn't abseil down, that would really hurt wouldn't it? I'm just trying to think of a way that I could just ... no, because basically my shoulders would pop out.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:05:20
Ooh yeah.

R Rebecca Toal 1:05:20
Most of the time we just lie on the floor and watch other people.

R Rebecca Toal 1:05:23
Okay, I'd be great.

R Rebecca Toal 1:05:24
And there's a really nice cafe.

H Hannah French 1:05:25
Yeah I could face the cafe.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:05:28
There's a cafe?

R Rebecca Toal 1:05:29
Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:05:29
Okay Hannah and I will be in the cafe.

R Rebecca Toal 1:05:31
Why do you think I go?

H Hattie Butterworth 1:05:33
Oh, that's so fun, though.

R Rebecca Toal 1:05:34
Yeah.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:05:35
But thank you so much.

H Hannah French 1:05:36
No, it's a pleasure.

H Hattie Butterworth 1:05:37
It's been the absolute highlight of my week.

