



## The Synchronesh

### **A curriculum for professional development in audio drama with a focus on international collaboration**

Radio drama brings together a range of disciplines. Each has a skill set which is specific and distinct. But a high quality piece of work requires the input of all, an appreciation of what each discipline contribute and an understanding about how to work as a team.

The purpose of the Synchronesh project has been to develop an approach to professional development in this field which is

- Interdisciplinary
- International
- Practical

Our approach has been to bring together students from a range of disciplines in a cross cultural and multi lingual environment to support them in internationalizing their careers. Across the Synchronesh programme, we worked with participants in a whole programme initial summer school; weekend residencies focused on specific topics; and ongoing project work supported by expert mentors in which participants, working in small groups, created full length broadcast quality original dramas.

Contemporary audio drama is increasingly developed, produced, and distributed through international collaboration, often involving artists working across languages, cultures, time zones, and production infrastructures. While such collaboration offers creative richness, it also introduces practical, ethical, and communicative challenges that require explicit professional training.

This programme therefore embeds international and intercultural collaboration as a core competency across all roles, rather than treating it as an optional or secondary concern.

This document sets out a curriculum for the professional training of creatives who wish to develop and internationalise their professional skills in audio/radio drama. It makes full use of the evaluated experience of the Synchronesh project. It assumes that students already have skills in

their chosen discipline. The curriculum proposed is at postgraduate (Masters) level. It has been structured so that it can be delivered as a continuous programme over approximately 3 months; or as an intensive summer school style programme; or as a longer programme.

### **Disciplines**

This curriculum has been developed with the needs of these disciplines in mind;

Writing

Producing/directing

Acting

Sound design/editing

Music composition and production

### **Summary of key specific skill developments and learning outcomes**

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Key skills</b>
Writing  A writer of audio drama must be a dramatist who thinks like a composer, listens like a director, edits like a poet, and trusts the	Writing for an audio audience – no visual clues; must understand on first hearing  Advance everything (plot, characterisation, context etc) through dialogue alone  Working with soundscape and music  Creating characters distinguishable by voice

<p>listener's imagination more than their own explanations.</p> <p>The ultimate test – the audience who listens whilst driving – will they stay in the car after they have arrived to hear the end of the play?</p>	<p>Understanding of different audio media (podcast, broadcast, binaural, live recording etc)</p> <p>Partnering with the audience who will create all the visuals – and will probably listen alone and in their own space but potentially whilst cooking, exercising, driving etc.</p> <p>Unleashing the imagination to go where the stage or film might struggle – any era; any location ; huge crowds or very intimate.</p>
<p>Producing/directing</p> <p>A producer is a storyteller, sound designer, organiser, accountant, marketer and diplomat.</p>	<p>A strong understanding of what makes a compelling narrative</p> <p>Dramaturgical skills</p> <p>An understanding of different sound environments</p> <p>Understanding of how to cast for individual characters and the cast as a whole</p> <p>The editing process</p> <p>Budgeting, accounting, logistics and scheduling</p> <p>Contracts, copyright and other legal issues</p> <p>Fundraising, pitching, reporting, marketing</p> <p>Communication in the professional language of the rest of the team</p> <p>Leadership and problem solving</p>

	Advocating for the audience
Acting  Technical discipline and emotional precision	<p>Use of the voice</p> <p>Use of the microphone</p> <p>Ability to act for the ear not the eye</p> <p>Ability to grasp and interpret script very fast</p> <p>Working in a sound based ensemble</p> <p>Ability to play multiple roles in single production, differentiating the sound of the characters</p> <p>Understanding of the overall process and ability to work efficiently within tight timescales</p> <p>Ability to work remotely, to record scenes alone and to work in different environments</p>
Sound design/editing  The sound designer creates the world, controls meaning, and guides the listener's imagination	<p>An understanding of sound as a story telling medium</p> <p>Editing from an audience perspective</p> <p>Ability to clean up dialogue to enhance performance</p> <p>Ability to synthesize recordings from different sources</p>

	<p>Ability to use sound to anchor the story – location, environment, spatial awareness</p> <p>Creating and sourcing sound effects and understanding of where and how to use them</p> <p>Understanding of relationship of music to dialogue</p> <p>Strong skills with editing and other software</p> <p>Strong file management skills</p> <p>Good time management</p> <p>Teamwork skills</p> <p>Good problem solving and lateral thinking</p> <p>Knowledge of rights issues</p>
<p>Music composition and production</p>	<p>Ability to interpret a script musically</p> <p>Ability to compose music which complements and supports dialogue</p> <p>Understanding of how music contributes to dramatic structure</p> <p>Ability to work to a brief and to collaborate with other creatives</p> <p>Fluency across musical styles</p> <p>Technical skills to produce broadcast ready music in digital format</p> <p>Knowledge of licensing, copyright and plagiarism</p> <p>Strong communication skills; ability to meet deadlines; flexibility in approach</p>

Critically, the curriculum has international collaboration at its heart. It also focuses on collaboration, bringing participants together to work in interdisciplinary and international groups in most phases of the programme. Participants graduate with not only creative competence, but international professional readiness.

### **Why This Integrated Model Works**

- Prevents silo thinking
- Improves collaboration quality
- Produces stronger finished work
- Aligns with funder priorities (skills, inclusion, sustainability)
- Mirrors real audio-drama production conditions

### **Professional Relevance**

The skills based work prepares students to

- Join established professional teams producing work for national broadcasters
- Join established independent production companies
- Create their own independent production companies producing work for podcast or broadcast
- Develop audio drama for other settings – education; heritage; community; tourism etc

The international dimension ensures that students have both the functional skills and cultural understanding to work within:

- International co-productions
- EU-funded cultural programmes
- Transnational audio drama networks
- Multilingual and diasporic storytelling contexts

**Summary of professional skills developed by the programme**

Professional skill	Evidence
Strong discipline specific skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="920 309 1816 341">☐ Demonstrates advanced skills appropriate to audio drama practice</li> <li data-bbox="920 384 1653 416">☐ Applies technical knowledge creatively and effectively</li> <li data-bbox="920 459 1816 491">☐ Shows understanding of the conventions and demands of the form</li> </ul>
<b>Audio drama as distinct story telling art form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="920 577 1480 609">☐ Understands storytelling without images</li> <li data-bbox="920 652 1503 684">☐ Prioritises listener clarity and engagement</li> <li data-bbox="920 727 1771 759">☐ Makes informed choices about voice, sound, music, and silence</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration and teamwork</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="920 845 1615 877">☐ Works constructively within interdisciplinary teams</li> <li data-bbox="920 920 1480 952">☐ Communicates clearly and professionally</li> <li data-bbox="920 995 1608 1027">☐ Respects the expertise and contributions of others</li> </ul>
<b>International and intercultural competence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="920 1118 1554 1150">☐ Demonstrates sensitivity to cultural difference</li> <li data-bbox="920 1193 1608 1225">☐ Adapts working practices to international contexts</li> <li data-bbox="920 1268 1514 1300">☐ Avoids stereotyping and cultural shorthand</li> </ul>

	<input type="checkbox"/> Engages ethically with multilingual and cross-border collaboration
<b>Project management</b>	Meets deadlines and production requirements Works responsibly within constraints Demonstrates readiness for professional audio drama environments
<b>Reflective and critical engagement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Reflects thoughtfully on creative and collaborative processes <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies strengths, challenges, and areas for growth <input type="checkbox"/> Articulates learning in relation to professional development

## **Detailed curriculum**

### **Programme Philosophy**

#### **Core principle:**

Audio drama is not a linear pipeline — it is a *collaborative system*.

This programme is designed so participants:

- train together where understanding must be shared
- separate where discipline specific skill is required
- reconverge around live creative work

Each participant enters with a primary role (writer, producer, actor, sound designer/editor, composer/music producer), but gains cross-role literacy.

### **Programme Values**

The programme is committed to

- Ethical storytelling
- Artistic excellence
- Artistic development including development of the art form
- Inclusion and access for audiences and creatives
- Sustainability and care
- Mutual learning across borders

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## **Programme Structure**

PHASE 1 — Shared Foundations (All Roles Together)

PHASE 2 — Role-Specific Craft Pathways (parallel tracks)

PHASE 3 — Integrated Production Labs (all roles together in mixed groups)

PHASE 4 – Public Outcome, Reflection & Progression

## **Teaching & Delivery Formats**

- Listening labs
- Practical workshops
- Studio and remote production sessions
- Mentoring and “surgery” sessions
- Peer critique and reflection

## ***Working in International Teams***

Across the curriculum, we will look at the skills needed to work internationally. This strand, integrated into the core phases, aims to enable participants to:

1. Work effectively and respectfully in international, multilingual creative teams
2. Navigate cultural difference in storytelling, performance, and sound
3. Manage practical challenges of cross-border collaboration
4. Develop shared working practices that support equity, clarity, and care

5. Understand how international contexts shape ethics, rights, and production decisions

### **Learning Outcomes (International Collaboration)**

On completion of the programme, participants will be able to:

- Communicate clearly and professionally across cultural and linguistic contexts
- Adapt creative and production processes to international working conditions
- Identify and mitigate risks arising from cultural misunderstanding or structural imbalance
- Collaborate ethically with artists and communities in different national contexts
- Contribute effectively to internationally funded or co-produced audio drama projects

### **Practical Skills for International Collaboration**

Across all phases, participants develop practical competencies including:

- Clear written communication and documentation
- Shared file management and version control across borders
- Remote collaboration etiquette and protocols
- Conflict resolution and mediation in intercultural teams
- Awareness of differing professional norms and expectations

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### **Integrated Activities & Pedagogy**

International collaboration skills are developed through:

- Mixed-nationality working groups

- Remote and hybrid production exercises
- Case studies of successful and problematic international collaborations
- Facilitated reflection on cultural assumptions and working habits
- Mentored international production labs

Where possible, the programme pairs participants from different countries and disciplines to ensure collaboration is experienced, not abstract.

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## **PHASE 1 — SHARED FOUNDATIONS**

### ***Understanding Audio Drama as an art form***

#### **Participants:**

All writers, producers, actors, sound designers/editors, composers

#### **Core Themes**

- What audio drama *is* (and is not)
- Storytelling without images
- The listener as co-creator
- Voice as primary dramatic material
- Ethics, care, and representation

#### **Shared Learning Outcomes**

Participants will:

- Understand how each role shapes the listener's experience
- Develop a shared vocabulary across disciplines
- Learn where collaboration helps — and where it harms
- Recognise how decisions ripple across the system

#### **Shared Activities**

- Listening labs (contrasting styles and traditions)

- Script-to-sound breakdowns
- “What breaks audio drama” case studies
- Cross-role conversations (e.g. writers hearing edit constraints)

## **International Contexts for Audio Drama**

### **Core Content**

- Audio drama traditions across different cultural and broadcast contexts
- Listening practices and narrative conventions in different regions
- Power, voice, and representation in international storytelling
- Ethics of cultural translation and adaptation

### **Learning Focus**

- Developing curiosity rather than assumption
- Understanding difference as creative material, not a problem to solve

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## **PHASE 2 — ROLE-SPECIFIC CRAFT PATHWAYS**

### ***Depth without Silos***

Participants split into **five parallel pathways**, with regular cross-over sessions.

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<b>Discipline</b>	<b>focus</b>	<b>Core skills</b>	<b>Key outputs</b>	<b>International focus</b>
Writers	Writing <i>for</i> sound, not adapting later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio dramaturgy and structure</li> <li>• Dialogue as action</li> <li>• Writing space, silence, and implication</li> <li>• Writing for ensemble and voice contrast</li> <li>• Collaborating with sound and performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short audio drama script or episode draft</li> <li>• Annotated sound-aware script</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing for multilingual and intercultural audiences</li> <li>• Translation-aware writing (clarity, idiom, rhythm)</li> <li>• Avoiding culturally specific shorthand that excludes listeners</li> <li>• Collaborating with translators, dramaturgs, and cultural consultants</li> </ul>
Producers	Holding the whole system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Script development and editorial leadership</li> <li>• Budgeting, scheduling, and delivery</li> <li>• Casting and team coordination</li> <li>• Rights, ethics, and sustainability</li> <li>• Platform and audience strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production plan and budget</li> <li>• Editorial and collaboration framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing international schedules, time zones, and workflows</li> <li>• Budgeting for translation, travel, access, and coordination</li> <li>• Legal and ethical considerations across jurisdictions</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting equitable collaboration between partners</li> </ul>
Actors	Acting for the ear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocal technique and stamina</li> <li>• Microphone awareness</li> <li>• Acting without visual feedback</li> <li>• Ensemble listening and timing</li> <li>• Remote and studio performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recorded scenes or demo material</li> <li>• Ensemble performance assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performing in multilingual or translated scripts</li> <li>• Accent, language, and authenticity in international work</li> <li>• Navigating cultural differences in rehearsal and direction</li> <li>• Working respectfully with unfamiliar performance conventions</li> </ul>
Sound design/editing	Shaping meaning through sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue editing for clarity and truth</li> <li>• Sonic world-building and spatial logic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully edited dramatic scene</li> <li>• Sound design rationale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrating recordings made in different countries and conditions</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foley and effects as performance</li> <li>• Rhythm, pacing, and silence</li> <li>• Mixing for story</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing technical inconsistency across international partners</li> <li>• Cultural meaning of sound, space, and ambience</li> <li>• Avoiding sonic stereotyping</li> </ul>
Composition/music producing	Music that serves voice and structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dramaturgy for composers</li> <li>• Writing around dialogue</li> <li>• Musical restraint and motif</li> <li>• Transitions and episodic identity</li> <li>• Delivery of stems and alternates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scored scenes or episode cues</li> <li>• Flexible music delivery package</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Musical signifiers across cultures</li> <li>• Ethical use of traditional or culturally specific materials</li> <li>• Collaborating with international sound and editorial teams</li> <li>• Avoiding reductive or exoticising musical language</li> </ul>

## PHASE 3 — INTEGRATED PRODUCTION LABS

### *Making Work Together*

Participants are grouped into **mixed-role production teams**, each creating a short audio drama work. Where possible, groups are mixed across nationalities.

### **How It Works**

- The group pitches ideas to a “commissioner”
- The group briefs the writer
- Writers create or develop scripts, drawing on support from the group (dramaturgy, readings, script workshops)
- Producers lead planning and delivery to an agreed budget and timetable
- Actors perform
- Sound designers and composers build the soundscape
- The team develops a marketing/audience development plan
- All decisions are *negotiated, not imposed*

### **Core Learning**

- Real-world collaboration
- Constraint-driven creativity
- Editorial compromise
- Listening across disciplines

## **Outputs**

Each team delivers:

- A finished short form audio drama (7 minutes maximum)
  - Supporting materials (script, sound notes, credits)
  - A marketing/ audience development plan and associated materials which identifies the audience, countries where the work will be distributed and potential platforms including festivals, broadcasters, podcast platforms etc.
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## **PHASE 4 — SHOWCASE, REFLECTION & PROGRESSION**

### **Activities**

- Public or industry-facing listening showcase
- Reflective sessions by role and mixed groups
- Peer and mentor feedback
- Professional development planning

### **Outcomes**

Participants leave with:

- A portfolio-ready audio drama credit
- Clear understanding of their role in the ecosystem
- Cross-disciplinary literacy
- Professional confidence and networks

## Assessment

This curriculum is designed to be delivered in a range of environments. As such, assessment will need to be tailored to the requirements of that environment. The following framework is therefore indicative.

### Assessment Philosophy

Assessment within this curriculum should be;

- Practice-based: grounded in real creative and production work
- Role-specific: recognising distinct disciplinary expertise
- Collaborative: valuing contribution to group processes and outcomes
- Reflective: encouraging critical self-awareness and professional growth
- Internationally aware: foregrounding intercultural competence and ethics

Assessment prioritises **professional readiness and artistic judgement**, rather than purely academic knowledge.

### Suggested Assessment methods by phase

Phase	Assessment methods
Phase 1 – audio drama as an art form	Reflective journal documenting own listening and response to the work of others
Phase 2 – discipline specific skills	Submission of discipline-specific creative work eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ☐ Writing: audio drama script or episode draft with sound-aware annotation</li><li>• ☐ Producing: production plan, budget, schedule, and editorial framework</li><li>• ☐ Acting: recorded scenes demonstrating vocal technique, ensemble work, and mic awareness</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ☐ Sound design/editing: edited and designed dramatic scene with rationale</li> <li>• ☐ Composition/music production: scored cues with stems and delivery documentation</li> </ul>
Phase 3 – group production	<p>Assessment of the participant’s contribution to the <b>mixed-role, international production</b>. The <b>focus should be on</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ☐ Effective collaboration across disciplines</li> <li>• ☐ Responsiveness to editorial and production processes</li> <li>• ☐ Problem-solving under real-world constraints</li> </ul> <p>Evidence could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ☐ Finished short-form audio drama (group output)</li> <li>• ☐ Role-specific contribution within the group</li> <li>• ☐ Peer and mentor observations</li> <li>• ☐ Production documentation</li> <li>• Individual presentation or reflective evaluation</li> </ul>
Phase 4 – reflective practice and critical commentary	<p>Submission of a reflective document (written, audio, or hybrid), typically 1,500–2,500 words or equivalent</p> <p><b>The reflection should address:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of role-specific skills</li> <li>• Experience of interdisciplinary collaboration</li> <li>• Challenges and learning in international / intercultural teamwork</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical considerations encountered</li> <li>• Professional development and future application</li> </ul> <p>Assessment focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depth of reflection rather than description</li> <li>• Ability to articulate learning from practice</li> <li>• Critical awareness of one's role within a collaborative system</li> </ul>
<b>Cross phase – international collaboration</b>	Personal case study identifying and analysing participants' own cultural journey and the impact on their professional development.

## About the Synchronesh

The Synchronesh is a partnership project involving partners from Ireland, Albania, Hungary, Georgia, Romania, Italy, Ukraine. The partners supported 50 early career creatives to develop skills in audio drama through a programme of professional development including creating a slate of 10 professional full length dramas. <https://the-synchronesh.eu>



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