

# The Synchronesh

## Notes on Audience Development for Audio Drama Creatives

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### Introduction

Audio drama includes scripted radio plays, narrative fiction podcasts, documentary-fiction hybrids, and live listening performances. Unlike theatre or film, it does not depend on a shared physical space. Listeners may encounter it alone, through headphones, in cars, in classrooms, or at live events.

Because audio drama often travels across platforms, countries, and languages, audience development is not simply promotion after completion. It is part of the creative process from the earliest idea through to the long life of the work.

The audience is not an afterthought. It is a participant in the meaning of the work.

This note offers practical suggestions for independent audio drama creators working in European cultural contexts — including broadcast, podcast, festival, educational, and partnership environments.

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### 1. Define Your Intended Audience

Not every drama is for everyone. Clarity about who your work is for helps it reach the listeners who will value it most.

Instead of thinking “general public,” imagine a specific person. Audience Development may sound like working with a group but in reality it is most effective when built around the individual listener.

#### **Create a profile of your typical audience member:**

- How old are they?
- What languages do they speak and listen in?
- What is their family or household situation?
- Where do they live (urban, suburban, rural, transnational)?

- What kind of work do they do?
- What are their tastes in music, theatre, podcasts, film, or literature?
- What other interests do they have (sport, books, food, politics, social issues)?
- How do they listen — headphones while commuting, at home through a broadcaster, via a podcast app, at a live event?
- Do they want to be challenged? moved ? entertained? provoked?

### **Example audience profile for a 30 minute drama about the journey to Europe of a refugee from Sudan**

“Maria, 34, bilingual Spanish–German, lives in Berlin, listens to podcasts while commuting to her NGO. She likes her drama to make her think. She is interested in migration stories and contemporary European politics, She occasionally attends cultural festivals with a group of like minded friends. She listens to audio on her own for the most part but enjoys live listening events at festivals.

Conclusions follow

- She will be comfortable with a drama which includes bilingual elements.
- She would be likely to access it via major podcast platforms.
- A partnership with migration-focused organisations might be effective in bringing the work to her attention.
- Marketing might highlight the background to the drama and the authenticity of the story

### **Then ask:**

- Why will this person care about your drama?
- What emotional or intellectual need does it meet?
- Where do they already encounter similar work?

Maria will care because of the human interest in the drama – she will find the work because the subject interests her; she will listen to the end because she is absorbed by the story. The drama meets her intellectual needs because it sheds new light on a subject which concerns her and it meets her emotional needs because the story, acting, soundscape take her into the subject’s world.

### **Map how you might reach them:**

- Broadcasters and podcast platforms
- Festivals and cultural events
- Specialist publications and online communities
- Schools, universities, and libraries
- Social media channels and trusted cultural voices

The clearer the profile, the clearer the pathway.

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## 2. Give Your Work an Identity

A clear identity helps audiences recognise and return to your work.

In audio drama, Identity is primarily established through **sound**. If you have a signature style – for example, you primarily make period dramas or your focus is on stories about a particular character in different settings – give some thought to how that signature is conveyed in sound in the first 10 seconds.

For example, you might use

- A recognisable musical motif?
- A distinctive voice?
- Silence and intimacy?
- A layered cinematic soundscape?

That sound signature can then be linked to other elements of your identity to ensure that audiences **recognise, remember and find** your work.

Think about how you can adapt the sound signature for different aspects of your work – for example, how will audiences quickly recognise your products if you move into a new genre or produce a stand alone play after an episodic work?

### Visual and Brand Elements

Even though audio is primary, audiences often see a brand before they open it up to hear it. It is important to partner the sound signature with a coherent and consistent visual identity which is recognisable and meaningful to audiences. This means thinking about

- Colour scheme
- Logo or visual motif
- Typography
- Artwork style
- Consistency in thumbnails and social posts

Make sure the visual identity carries the same message as the sound signature – does it convey historical period? Location? Genre? tone of the play?

## Meaning

Visual clues and sound signature combine to convey meaning. When audiences understand what your work stands for, they are more likely to return.

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### 3. Develop a Conversation with Your Audience

Audience development is not broadcasting information. It is building a relationship.

When listeners feel heard, they are more likely to recommend the work, return for future projects, and participate in events.

Key elements include:

- Articulating a clear mission and vision
- Communicating why the work matters
- Treating listeners as collaborators rather than consumers

Understanding who you expect your individual audience members to be ( see section 1) is important in creating a context for this conversation which is likely to be attractive to them. But make sure you stay curious about who they are in real life – some of them might surprise you.

#### Practical approaches:

Conversations with your listeners might take the form of

- Post-episode discussions (live or online)
- Listener feedback and voice messages
- Live listening events
- Workshops and community engagement
- Social media conversations that invite response rather than simply announce content
- Participation in festivals.

In having an active conversation with listeners, you are not trading art for a consumer product. Rather, you are looking to give your listeners a deeper understanding of your work to build their connection with it and commitment to it – whilst you as an artist gain more insight into their motivations. Those insights may not change the work but they may change the messaging.

For example; social media conversations may reveal that listeners have a particular connection to a minor character allowing you to focus more story telling outside the actual drama on them and build a following through that.

Or a Q and A with a writer may open up your awareness of the aspects of their writing that audiences particularly enjoy, enabling you to highlight those in wider promotions as well as to develop new projects which build on them

Or participation in a festival may reach an audience ready for new experiences who then go on to tell their friends.

## **4. Work Through European Partnerships**

Across Europe, audience development is often closely linked to partnership. Public service broadcasters, cultural institutes, festivals, and universities play significant roles in the audio ecosystem.

Understanding this landscape will help you to expand reach and sustainability.

### **Potential partners include:**

#### **Public Service Broadcasters**

Radio remains central to audio drama ecosystems in many countries. For example, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Romania, Czech Republic are still extensive producers of Audio Drama even though budgetary pressures are having an impact.

Co-production or broadcast partnerships provide an opportunity to reach very large audiences, many of whom are serendipitous. This is an unrivalled opportunity to connect with an audience who might not otherwise have known to seek you out.

<https://www.ebu.ch/groups/audio-storytelling-group>

#### **Festivals and Cultural Networks**

Theatre, literature, and audio festivals provide entry points to new audiences. These festivals often have an international element, providing an opportunity to reach a wider geographical audience. Although the actual audience at a festival may not be very large, the credibility from being included in them or, potentially, winning an award can be very helpful as a promotional tool. Awards serve as a marker of quality for some audiences. Festivals can be an excellent place to build professional contacts who may then also recommend your work within their networks.

See the synchronesh website for a list of audio drama festivals

<https://the-synchronesh.eu/>

## **Universities, Libraries, and Cultural Institutes**

Participating in live events whether listening sessions; workshops; Q and As; developmental activities for young professionals helps reach an open, curious, culturally engaged audience. Participating in their events will give you access to their marketing and promotion platforms. Events may also come with written or broadcast review or access to funders.

<https://eunic.eu/about>

## **Independent Producers and Creative Networks**

Participation in networks is a very effective and low cost form of collaboration. Peer support can be very helpful in building an audience. Most networks are social media based and online. They are strongest in the US and UK.

## **Language and Translation Partnerships**

Providing subtitles, translated scripts, bilingual adaptations, or new-language recordings allow work to reach an audience across Europe and beyond. When work is translated through a partnership that partnership will bring expertise beyond language – access to cultural understanding; other contacts; their own followers, clients, audiences.

Partnerships are not only distribution channels. They shape how audiences interpret and contextualise the work.

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# **5. Create a Strategy**

So, the next step is to bring all this together and create a strategy – a process which needs to start as soon as the project is initiated

### **Key steps:**

1. Define your target audience in concrete terms
2. Clarify identity and positioning
3. Identify partners and platforms early
4. Write down planned actions and objectives
5. Create a realistic budget (which includes a budget for time and human resources)
6. Set measurable targets

### **Examples of measurable targets:**

- Two broadcast partners confirmed before production
- One live listening event in each participating country
- 5,000 downloads in first six months
- Three educational partnerships

- Translation into one additional language

Targets need to be researched – what is reasonable? What have other producers of work like this achieved? Do we have funders with specific expectations? How long do we have to achieve this?

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## **6. Plan Across the Lifecycle**

There are distinct stages in the creation of an audience development plan.

### **Before Production**

- Set an audience development budget
- Audience research and definition.
- Identify and define where the anticipated audience is (social media platforms, other broadcast media, print media, events etc)
- Early partnership conversations
- Pilot sharing or concept teasers
- Clear communication of theme and purpose
- Definition of sound signature and visual identity
- Set targets – note whether you want a mass market or recognition of artistic or cultural quality (not of course mutually exclusive)

### **During Production**

- Sharing selected behind-the-scenes insights
- Building anticipation
- Engaging early supporters

### **At Release**

- Coordinated promotion
- Press outreach
- Live events and discussions
- Cross-posting with partners

### **After Release**

- Continued engagement
- Touring and educational use
- Re-releases or translations
- Measurement of results against targets
- Documentation of impact

A project does not end at release. In audio, work can have a long life.

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## 7. Evaluate and Sustain

Evaluation helps you understand impact and refine future work.

### **Possible indicators include:**

- Listens and downloads
- Completion rate (percentage of listeners who reach the end)
- Engagement (comments, shares, feedback, attendance)
- Invitations for rebroadcast, translation, or adaptation
- New partnerships formed

Quantitative data (numbers) and qualitative feedback (what people say) are both valuable.

For example:

- A smaller but highly engaged audience may be more sustainable than a large but passive one.
- Invitations to festivals or acceptances into them or awards indicate cultural and artistic impact.

Use evaluation to:

- Refine future projects
- Strengthen relationships
- Identify audiences to retain and grow

Audience development is cumulative. Each project builds a longer relationship between creators, listeners, and partners.

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## Common Challenges

- Beginning promotion only at release
- Having no budget for engagement activities
- Failing to identify clear partners
- Defining the audience too broadly
- Not documenting impact

Avoiding these pitfalls significantly strengthens sustainability.

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## Conclusion

Successful audio drama productions remember that the audience is a crucial partner in the process and always has them firmly in mind – which is why knowing who they are is so important. Having them firmly in mind does not mean they cannot be challenged or stretched. It does mean that connecting with them is vital.

When creators understand who their work is for, how it sounds, and why it matters to the audience — and when they collaborate across borders and communities — audience development becomes part of the artistic process itself. And it is important to see it that way – not as a separate activity, preferably subcontracted to others.



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## Appendix

### Sample Audience Development strategy

This is an example of a real audience development strategy.

## Marketing Plan



### THIS DAY IS HISTORIC

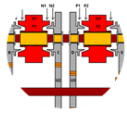
Maro Makashvili – ‘Don't be afraid’

Lilian Bland – ‘Catch a rare bird in flight’

Musine Kokalari – ‘Laugh a lot, but also shed a tear’

*Three extraordinary women show a pioneering spirit that inspires a nation. A war hero in Georgia, an aviator in Northern Ireland and an activist in Albania confront assumptions about the limitations of their sex by pushing the boundaries of human bravery, science and politics. These are the true stories of Maro Makashvili, Musine Kokalari and Lilian Bland, related by them, based on their writing – scattered memoirs that make history come alive. United by a refusal to accept the status quo, these individuals all made a decisive impact on their societies, just by being themselves.*

This project – supported by the Creative Europe Programme as part of the Synchronesh season – features a multicultural team of emerging European artists. Written and recorded in Georgia, Albania and Northern Ireland respectively, these historic fragments are linked by a single sentence – ‘this day is historic’. As separate pieces, they can work as standalone dramas, but are best heard together as a record of these inspiring women and their significant contribution to world culture.



### **Starring:**

**‘Don't be afraid’**, the story of Maro Makashvili, was written by Mamuka Maghularia, directed by Tazo Kandelaki, produced by Zurab Kandelaki and Elene Gabashvili, with research by Nathia Khostaria and Gvantsa Pipia, and music by Orsolya Farkas:

Maro Makashvili – Mariam Mghebrishvili

Narrator – Tazo Kandelaki

**‘Catch a Rare Bird in flight’**, the story of Lilian Bland, was written by Karis Kelly, directed by Kate Guelke, produced by Kate Guelke, Niall Doran and the Start Together Studios, with music by Orsolya Farkas:

Lilian Bland – Nicky Harley

Aunt Sarah / Woman on Train – Carol Moore

Joe Blain / Patronising Fellow – Matthew Cavan

John Bland / RUC Officer / Angry Man – Tony Flynn

**‘Laugh a lot, but also shed a tear’**, the story of Musine Kokalari, was written and directed by Kate Guelke / Iris Canaj, with an English-language / Albanian-language cast, produced by Still Studio, with music by Orsolya Farkas:

The Moderator – Tony Flynn / Ermir Hoxhaj

Musine Kokalari – Carol Moore / Lejda Çeli

Ernest Koliqi / Robert Elsie – Matthew Cavan / Ermir Hoxhaj

Shenisha Libohova – Nicky Harley / Lejda Çeli

### **Objectives**

- **Reach 20,000+ listeners/viewers within 6 months** across audio, video, and festival platforms, leveraging multi-format storytelling to engage diverse regional and international audiences.
- **Establish *This Day is Historic* as a breakout success in historical period drama**, with 5,000+ active followers across platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook—targeting history buffs, educators, and drama fans.
- **Achieve critical recognition** through 10+ media features, coverage in cultural press and podcast/radio platforms, 3+ nominations or awards at audio/film festivals, and over 100 verified listener/viewer reviews.

- **Foster cultural conversation and community participation** with interactive campaigns (e.g., “Women of History” spotlights), behind-the-scenes content, and live online events or Q&As with historians and creators.
- **Boost visibility and credibility for the creative team**, using a mix of grassroots initiatives (e.g., school and university outreach, heritage organisation tie-ins) and strategic press/industry connections (e.g., interviews, speaking events, panel invites).

### Who is our audience?

She is a middle aged woman with a strong interest in feminist history and culture but is also quite conventional – married with a young family, holds down a conventional office job. Enjoys travel both to relax but also to widen her horizons and speaks a couple of languages reasonably well. She is part of a book club, goes to the cinema and wishes she could make it to more than two plays per year. She has social media accounts but doesn’t have much time to spend on them. She listens to audio drama mainly on the car system.

Phase	Key Activities
Pre-Launch (May–July 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social media teasers (Instagram/TikTok/Facebook)</li> <li>- ‘Did you know’ countdown with weekly ‘amazing facts’ about our three extraordinary historical heroines</li> <li>- Exclusive 10-minute preview for newsletter subscribers</li> </ul>
Soft Launch (15 May 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Release digital press kit + microsite (<a href="http://www.kateguelke.com/thisdayishistoric">www.kateguelke.com/thisdayishistoric</a>)</li> <li>- Partner with 5+ indie podcasts for trailer swaps</li> <li>- Submit to Podchaser’s “Upcoming Shows” list</li> </ul>
Festival Push (June–Sept 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Submit to 8+ festivals</li> <li>- Secure 2+ panel appearances for the creative team</li> </ul>
Live Events (August 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ireland premiere with creative team Q&amp;A, as part of the East Belfast Festival</li> <li>- Virtual ‘listening party’ + director commentary, Feile An Phobail Festival</li> </ul>

Full Launch (August 2025)	- Release on 5+ platforms
Post-Launch (Sept 2025–Feb 2026)	- "Director's Cut" Patreon exclusives - Pitch to university drama courses for curriculum integration

## Platforms to publish and distribute “THIS DAY IS HISTORIC”

### Distribution Platforms:

- **Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Amazon/Audible** – Prioritised for global algorithm-driven discovery
- **YouTube** – Animated audiograms
- **Audioteria, SoundCloud** – niche audiences, easy embedding and sharing
- **RTSH Radio Tirana (Albania), Radio Kontakt** – Albanian national and diaspora reach
- **RTÉ Radio 1 Extra, Newstalk, Dublin City FM** – Main Irish radio platforms
- **BBC Radio Ulster, Q Radio** – Northern Ireland-focused audiences
- **Radio Tavisupleba (RFE/RL Georgian Service), Radio Palitra, Fortuna+** – Georgian language and regional outreach
- **Community Radio Networks (e.g. Near FM, Flirt FM in Ireland)** – Local engagement, student and grassroots access
- **Synchromesh project website** – dedicated listening page with bios, credits, and transcripts

### Marketing Strategy

#### 1. Social Media (Lead: Kate Guelke)

Platforms: Instagram, Facebook, TikTok

#### **Content Plan Includes:**

- Audiogram teasers and 60-second trailer
- ‘Meet the character’ weekly posts with actor portraits and voice clips
- Behind-the-scenes photos from the productions
- User engagement: ‘the more you know’ historical background:
  - write your own ‘femifesto’
  - build the best ever paper aeroplane
  - tell us about a time you were brave

#### **TikTok Deep Dive:**

Who was Lilian Bland – Maro Makashvili – Musine Kokalari? Any why these women were significant and what was there legacy?

***Instagram:***

The women behind the iconic stamps.

***Innovative Tactic:***

Launch a campaign tailored to each figure’s notoriety, and how they challenged the prevailing social mores of the time:

*The socialist political party leader who got arrested*

*The trousers-wearing, jiu jitsu practicing Edwardian gentlewomen who built planes and scandalised polite society*

*The young girl who lost her life volunteering to fight the Red Army*

If you disagreed with the status quo, how far would you go to stand up for what you believed in?

Responses could be visual or written and shared via social media.

**2. PR & Media Blitz**

**Audience Reach & Media Targets (Historically-Inspired & Educational-Focused)**

**Regional Heroine-Oriented & Historical Podcasts:**

*Herstory Ireland Podcast* (Ireland) – Focused on Irish women’s lives and legacies.

- *Women Who Were* – Global stories of influential but lesser-known women.
- *Daughters of the Diaspora* – Excellent fit for Musine Kokalari’s narrative and themes of exile/resistance.
- *History Tea Time* with Lindsay Holiday – Widely followed, digestible takes on global women in history.
- *Georgian Chronicles* (GE) – Educational content on Georgian culture and historical figures, ripe for partnership or crossover.
- *Tirana Talks* (AL) – Albania-based podcast with youth and cultural angle.

### **Educational & Academic Podcasting Platforms:**

- *New Books Network* – *Women’s History* and *History of the Second World War* for academic-style breakdowns of themes.
- *Edgecast (Ireland)* – Student-oriented platform tied to Irish universities.
- *EUScreen* – European media heritage platform, ideal for contextual rollout or subtitled episodes.

### **Global & Regional Broadcast Distribution:**

- *BBC Sounds* – Especially *Drama on 3* or *The Documentary Podcast*.
- *RFE/RL’s Radio Tavisupleba* (Georgian Service) – Local adaptation and storytelling format.
- *RTÉ Documentary on One* (Ireland), *RTÉ Radio 1 Extra*.
- *Radio Tirana 1, Top Albania Radio* – National coverage and youth engagement.

### **Enhanced Press Kit:**

- Include a 1-minute **sizzle reel**, **character art** competition and brief **classroom-ready explainers**.

### **3. Press and Public Relations**

Distribute tailored press releases in **English, Albanian, Georgian, and Irish media** markets. Target publications, podcasts, and radio programs that highlight:

- Feminist narratives
- Historical storytelling
- Regional arts & culture
- Educational innovation in media

### ***Recommended Media Outlets & Platforms (Updated & Regionally Focused)*** ***Podcasting & Audio Drama Press***

**Podnews** – Global podcast industry newsletter

**The Podcast Host** – For guest posts on audio drama production and cross-border storytelling

**PodBible (UK)** – Feature the trilogy as a unique cultural production

**Discover Pods** – For interviews and educational storytelling angles

**Radio Drama Revival** – Perfect fit for narrative-driven audio fiction

**Bello Collective** – For essays on feminist and regional storytelling

**PlayMe (CBC)** – A drama podcast that turns stage plays into audio dramas

**Irish Podcast Awards Newsletter** – For Irish-based visibility

**Tirana Talks** – Albania-based youth podcast with a culture focus

**Georgian Chronicles (GE)** – Regional storytelling platform open to collaboration

### *Theatre, Arts & Culture Media*

**The Guardian Culture / The Stage (UK)** – For features on the craft and international nature of the series

**BroadwayWorld** – Leverage the audio theatre section for broader reach

**ArtForum / Frieze** – Position the project as an intersection of historical storytelling and experimental form

**Creative Europe Stories / Newsletter** – Highlight cross-border cooperation and cultural funding

**Visual Arts News Sheet (Ireland) / Obieqtivi (Georgia)** – Regional art magazines for heritage and storytelling initiatives

**Revista Kult (Albania)** – Covers arts, history, and cultural debate

### *Broadcast Media & National Press*

**BBC Radio 4 Extra, RTÉ Radio 1 Extra, Radio Tirana, Radio Tavisupleba (RFE/RL Georgian Service)** – Suitable for historical documentary-style segments or rebroadcast

**NPR – Snap Judgment, Deutsche Welle, France 24, RAI Radio 3, CBC Ideas** – For reaching wider, culturally engaged audiences

**Time Out (Tbilisi, Dublin, Tirana editions)** – For local event and arts coverage

**Diaspora & Academic Networks** – Pitch to university media departments, diaspora newsletters, and women’s history networks

[Launch PR Campaign: 15 May 2025](#)

### *Success Metrics*

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Target</b>
Downloads/Streams	15,000+ (6 mos)
Social Followers	3,000+
Press Features	7+

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Target</b>
Festival Wins/Noms	3+
Listener Reviews	50+
Event Attendance	500+ (IRL + virtual)