



DRAMA & COMEDY COMMISSIONING ROUND SPRING 2016

Proteus round: 2017 2018 – 5

1. TIMETABLE	2
2. HOW TO SUBMIT AN IDEA TO RADIO 4	3
3. DRAMA BRIEFS	8
14.15 DRAMA (AFTERNOON DRAMA)	10
14.30 DRAMA (SATURDAY) (SATURDAY DRAMA)	16
15 MINUTE DRAMA	19
15.02 DRAMA (SUNDAY) (CLASSIC SERIAL)	23
4. CHECKLIST FOR SUBMISSIONS AND SUPPORTING MATERIAL FOR DRAMA	27
5. COMEDY AND ENTERTAINMENT BRIEFS	30
6. CHECKLIST FOR SUBMISSIONS AND SUPPORTING MATERIAL FOR COMEDY	41
7. BBC EDITORIAL GUIDELINES & COMPLIANCE	43
8. THE BBC RADIO 4 AUDIENCE	44

1. TIMETABLE	
Week commencing 18 th January	Drama and Comedy Commissioning Guidelines published on the Radio 4 website
28 th January	Briefing for drama and comedy producers in Broadcasting House, London
27 th January	Briefing for drama and comedy producers in MediaCityUK, Salford
24 th February - 1200 noon	Drama and comedy pre-offers deadline
17 th March	Drama and comedy pre-offers results published
21 st April - 1200 noon	Drama and comedy final offers deadline
End July	Drama and comedy commissioning results published

IMPORTANT NOTE

These guidelines and commissioning timetable apply to the drama and comedy commissioning round only.

2. HOW TO SUBMIT AN IDEA TO RADIO 4

This round is open to all BBC departments and registered independent companies with the necessary expertise. Do not offer proposals unless you can demonstrate that you have this expertise.

Pre-offers

This first stage of the round invites you to submit very brief outlines of your ideas. They will be sifted by the commissioning team who will shortlist those they think most worth developing for the final offers stage.

All ideas must be entered in Proteus by the stated deadline. We do not require hard copies of any proposal.

Enter in: Radio 4 Round **2017 2018 - 5**

Please don't offer proposals unless you have the necessary expertise. For pre-offers we require only the minimum information to enable short-listing. The following must be entered for each proposal:

- **title** (of your proposal, not the slot)
- **commissioning brief number** Enter each proposal in one schedule slot only. If we consider it suitable for another slot, we will transfer it.
- **delivery date** Enter an estimated delivery date e.g. 01/03/2017
- **number of episodes**
- **duration (for drama, this is usually 14', 44', 57' or 87'; for comedy it is usually 28')**. This is the total allotted airtime, including continuity announcements
- **short synopsis:**
 - A maximum 100 word paragraph summarising the plot. ("*Brilliant 17th century Danish Prince seeks to revenge the mysterious death of his father and in so doing loses his mind, destroys his family and overturns the state of Denmark. Renaissance tragedy. Period verse drama.*" would do for Hamlet. 35 words.)
 - And a maximum 200 word paragraph telling us why you want to do it, how you want to do it and why it would work for Radio 4 ("*One of the greatest plays in the canon, we are proposing that we strip it across five Afternoon Dramas, which will make it feel fresh and uniquely Radio 4*" would sell Hamlet; 29 words).

Do not use the second paragraph to continue summarising the plot. Some information about the author would be useful, especially if he or she is a first time writer for radio.

- **Price per episode** This is automatically entered for each brief.

- **Long synopsis** Do not enter anything in the field at this stage. It will not be read.
- **Author of book field:** complete, if relevant.

When the commissioning editor has read all pre-offers and selected those he thinks worth further development, we release the results in Proteus. Proposals will show as either '**rejected**' or '**re-requested**'.

If your offer is 're-requested', this means we want to consider it in the final offers stage. You are invited to discuss short-listed ideas with commissioning editors. Time pressures may require this to be by phone rather than face to face.

A proposal re-requested in pre-offers should not be set up from scratch, just edited to reflect the fuller requirements for the final offers stage (see below).

Owing to the large number of submissions at this stage, we are unable to provide feedback on rejected pre-offers.

Final offers

Do not offer proposals unless you can demonstrate the necessary expertise.

Following conversations with the commissioning editor, the ideas you develop for final submission should be entered in Proteus. Generally, final submissions will be those which we "re-requested" at the pre-offers stage.

It is also possible to submit fresh offers which have not been discussed, but please be aware *that the earlier you get on the radar of the commissioning editor the better*. Experience shows that very few offers that haven't been pre-offered get commissions.

All proposals must be delivered in Proteus by the deadline.

Enter in: Radio 4 Round **2017 2018 - 5**

Please submit a realistic number of proposals in view of the slots available. You are more likely to prosper if you put in a few well thought through ideas than use the scatter gun approach. In some cases the number of commissions is far fewer than the number of individual programmes available, when each commission is for multiple episodes, eg 15.02 Sunday drama slot (aka Classic Serial) has 52 slots across the year but that is divided into roughly 20 commissioned titles across all suppliers.

The following must be submitted for each proposal:

- **title** If your idea is commissioned you must not subsequently change this title without written agreement of the commissioning editor.
- **commissioning brief number** Submit each proposal in one slot only. If we think it suitable for another slot, we will transfer it.
- **achievable delivery date (linked to anniversary / event dates where relevant)**

- **price per episode** Radio 4 has set prices that it expects to pay for programmes, as shown at the top of each commissioning brief. This is entered automatically in the guide price field. If your idea requires a budget significantly above or below the guide price, make this clear in the long synopsis and explain your reasoning. Although ideas submitted below the guide may increase your chance of a commission, the editorial proposition is always paramount in commissioning decisions.
- **producer**
- **executive producer** Include CV in long synopsis field, if the exec is new to Radio 4.
- **number of episodes**
- **duration (for drama, this is usually 14', 44', 57' or 87'; for comedy it is usually 28'). This is the total allotted airtime, including continuity announcements**
- **the short synopsis for the final proposal must be under 50 words. It should convey the essence of the programme. Think of it as a fledgling Radio Times Billing.**
- **the long synopsis must not exceed 2 x A4 pages of size 11 type.**
- **key talent** Any intended writer/abridger/performer/presenter etc should be shown in the long synopsis. You do not have to secure talent agreement before submitting an offer but you should let us know the degree to which named talent have expressed an interest in the project or have intellectual ownership of it.

Style guide

- Don't use the **Notes** field. Anything in this field will be deleted.
- Don't insert a space or dots or asterisks before beginning the title.
- Don't put double spaces in the title.
- Don't put quotation marks around the title.
- Don't start the title with a slot name, e.g. *15' Drama*.
- Do begin titles in Proteus with *The* or *A* as appropriate, e.g. *A Voyage Round My ...*
- If you are preparing proposals offline to cut and paste into Proteus, keep formatting simple: bold, underline and italic only. Proteus will remove other formatting, including bulleted and numbered points, as well as converting your font to the equivalent of Arial size 11.

Already commissioned or broadcast?

A list of plays and readings of published material is available on the commissioning website.

Please note that offers are read in hard copy so adding web links on an offer is a waste of time – they will never get read. Ever.

RESPONSES TO SUBMISSIONS – Final offers

Results will be released in Proteus. We do not send out hard copies.

Proteus will display one of five standard responses to each offer:

- rejection
- shortlist
- pilot
- conditional commission
- re-request

Rejection

We will provide brief feedback on our reasons for not commissioning a proposal.

Shortlist

Shortlisting happens for 3 principal reasons:

- We are seriously interested in the idea but feel more work is needed. In this case, the commissioning editor will be in touch to explain what we are looking for.
- Competing offers delay the commissioning decision. We need more information before deciding between them.
- We do not have space to commission the idea but want to keep it in reserve in case gaps appear in the schedule later.

We try to clear proposals from the shortlist quickly and we review it every 3 months or so to see whether we are in a position to move an idea forward or to reject it. If at any time you wish to withdraw an idea from our shortlist, please just let us know.

Pilot

We need to hear a pilot before committing ourselves. You should discuss this with the commissioning editor before doing further work.

Conditional commission

Acceptance of all ideas is conditional on the following issues. Radio 4 is not responsible for any costs incurred prior to the full agreement.

- **Price and rights**

Each conditional commission will be made with a fixed price offer that has been judged as value for money by the Commissioning and Finance and Business Affairs teams. It is intended that most will be at the published guide but we reserve the right to propose an alternative price if we believe it appropriate. If our price is accepted by you in writing there will be no need to submit a detailed budget. Contracts will be issued immediately to independent suppliers.

If, however, you wish to challenge the offer made then a detailed budget in Proteus will be requested and scrutinised by our Finance and Business Affairs team with the aim of reaching agreement.

Conditional acceptances may be withdrawn if agreement on price is not reached within a reasonable period.

Radio 4 requires an appropriate set of rights dependent on the type of programme. This will vary only in exceptional circumstances. The price quoted on the commissioning brief is based on buying the standard set of rights for that programme. If fewer rights are bought, the price may be reduced.

Digital platform use

Rights should be cleared for streaming, together with a 30-day “listen again” window and podcast. Independent suppliers are not required to clear the rights for podcast for any of the drama or comedy briefs, unless otherwise agreed between the BBC and the independent producer.

- **Schedule and delivery dates**

Each proposal should include your ideal delivery date, though our conditional acceptance will not necessarily be able to reflect this date. We will not issue precise transmission dates for programmes not pegged to a particular anniversary or season but will give the calendar quarter in which we intend to place them. If you cannot deliver to meet the given transmission quarter, notify Tony Pilgrim, Head of Planning and Scheduling. Precise delivery dates will be confirmed well before the start of each calendar quarter.

- **Editorial**

Conditional acceptance might have specific editorial conditions attached to it, e.g. that a particular actor is available, and fulfilment of them must be confirmed before the commission is finalised and before you start work.

THIS IS NEW! TAKE NOTE! ... Re-request (for the next commissioning round)

This is a new status for proposals entered into the main commissioning round.

This includes a small number of offers which interest us but which we are unable to buy before the next commissioning round.

They will have been moved to the next commissioning round for you so you will not have to re-enter a duplicate proposal but will still be editable should anything need editing before it is re-offered.

You will need to remember to send such an offer to the network again when the respective round re-opens.

If you have any questions about this, please contact Amanda Benson, Planning Manager.



3. DRAMA BRIEFS

Commissioning Editor: Jeremy Howe

Commissioning Co-ordinator: Sara Sund

14.15 Drama Brief number 47019

14.30 Drama (Saturday) Brief number 47080/47053

15 Minute Drama Brief number 47010

15.02 Drama (Sunday) Brief number 47112

Important things to note across all slots:

What drama really cut through last year? We took a slew of little known melodramatic novels about the French Second Empire, turned them into something approximating to *The Wire* and persuaded an Oscar winning actress to play the lead. *Emile Zola: Blood Sex and Money* has been a massive hit for us. What made it stand out?

Its boldness. We like editorial boldness.

But let's not forget other stand out moments - *Reading Europe*, the Chinese *Inspector Chen*, *The Stuarts*, *GF Newman's The Corrupted*, *The Price of Oil*, *The Barchester Chronicles* and *Unmade Movies* – all have helped put drama on the must listen to list.

We have the Primo Levi *Periodic Table*, *Tracks*, *The Forsytes*, Neil Gaiman's *Stardust*, Graham Greene and Defoe to look forward to.

Radio 4 likes big drama ideas, dramas that will cut through. We urge you to think big, to think bold and to challenge us.

Blockbusters do not need to be dramatisations, nor do they need to be period.

You come up with the idea, we will find the right slot or placing.

Easy.

In terms of offering these – offer them into the slot that feels like the best fit (e.g. if it is a dramatisation of a classic put it in for the Classic Serial) but flag up your ambitions in the opening line of the pitch.

These take forever to land – so we are interested in ideas that might play out in five years' time, as well as next year.

- We are keen to re commission *Dangerous Visions*, our exploration of contemporary dystopias, across all the drama slots, *Book at Bedtime* and the *Short Story*. Please put in offers for the drama component.
- We think *Fright Night* is a good idea, and are keen for full on horror and general creepiness to become a feature of the autumn drama and readings schedules.
- The 15' Drama guidelines have been totally revamped. Read with care and delight.
- The First World War is off limits – we have *Tommies & Home Front*. We are not interested in commissioning ANY dramas that cover the years from 1914-18 even if they have nothing to do with battles.

None. NONE!

With so much fighting on air the Second World War is also not a priority. That's enough war, thank you Ed.

- Although we have dropped most of the slot titles on air, editorially the slots retain their old identities.
- If you offer a dramatisation of a book or a stage play and do not submit a *hard copy* of the text with your final offer, it will be rejected.



**Programme type: 14.15 Drama
(formerly known as AFTERNOON DRAMA)**

Reference number: 47019

Day: Monday-Friday

Time: 1415-1500

Duration including opening and closing announcements: 44'

**Number of programmes: as per batch or Output Guarantee
Number of programmes available for open competition: 0 (see below)**

Transmission period: April 2017 – March 2018

Guide price (£): 18,300

**Enter into Proteus: 2017-2018, round 5, brief 47019
(n.b. this is a different round to the Factual briefs)**

EDITORIAL GUIDE

NB This slot is only open in this round to in-house suppliers with an Afternoon Drama Output Guarantee or Indie suppliers who have a batch.

***If you have a batch:* we will largely commission these through rolling commissioning (Sara will have the dates). If you want to pitch series/serial ideas these should be offered into this commissioning round.**

***If you have an in-house Output Guarantee:* series and serials will be commissioned through this commissioning round, the singles and new writing through prearranged dates.**

14.15 is where good writing meets its audience.

There is nothing in world theatre or broadcasting quite like the 14.15 slot, where we commission more single dramas than anyone in the known universe, and they play to a daily audience of not far short of a million people, i.e. a lot more people than have seen a seriously good movie like *The Bridge of Spies*.

What are we looking for?

- Nearly 100 singles from experienced writers.
- Over 30 singles by first or second time writers to radio. This is the slot on Radio 4 for new writing.
- 60 plus episodes of series and serials.
- The key to the slot is breadth and variety of style and subject matter. Your drama can be contemporary, period, comedy, tragedy, crime, thriller, domestic, drama doc, biographical, fantasy, horror, original writing, fiction, nonfiction, poetry, etc., etc.
- What it is not – or should ever be – is dull or familiar or routine. We want good storytelling to be at the heart of the slot. You can do virtually anything at 14.15 *as long as you are telling the listener a good story.*

Series and Serials -

Around a third of the slot will carry series and serials.

- GF Newman's *The Corrupted*, *Tumanbay* and *Tracks* are helping to change the complexion of the slot – big scale original returning series. We want ambition, outstanding returners and signature pieces by major writers. Think of the appeal of shows like *Game of Thrones*, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, *The Good Wife*, *Sherlock*: their ambition, their scale and their addictive quality is what makes them stand out, whether as series or serials. We want some of that. While we are happy to commission 3, 4, 5, and 6 parters, we are even happier to commission 10 parters - or more. Radio 4's policy towards series and serial is evolving: the more ambitious it is the more we are likely to go for it.
- In order to commission a new series we will have to decommission an existing returner, so it is a fiercely competitive arena.
- Our priorities are successors to *On Mardle Fen* and *Two Pipe Problems* – low concept character driven feelgood fiction, probably centred around a family, and drama that has next to nothing to do with crime or hospitals. Think *Last Tango in Halifax*, *At Home with the Braithwaites*, *Big Love* et al.
- We are in the market for a challenging successor to *McLevy*, which takes its final bow this year. What we are really looking for is a strikingly original contemporary crime series or serial. Naturally, we are envious of how shows like *The Bridge* and *The Killing* have thrilled audiences with their narrative while exposing the dark underbelly of Scandinavian society.

Commissioned Returners -

- **GF Newman's *The Corrupted*** – 10 part crime serial tracing the history of post war British crime through 3 families. Series 3 reaches the 1970s.

- **Pilgrim** – concludes. In my view our most original series – and we are looking for something equally ambitious and out there to fill its shoes. Now there is a challenge.
- **The Interrogation** – Roy Williams brilliantly simple police drama; ongoing.
- **Stone** – Danny Brocklehurst’s tough police drama about moral issues in policing; ongoing.
- **McLevy** – concludes.
- **Number One Ladies Detective Agency** – police; ongoing.
- **Behind Closed Doors** – Clara Glynn’s legal series about closed courts; second series aired, a third in the pipeline.
- **Brief Lives** – legal series – ongoing.
- **Rumpole** – legal; ongoing.
- **Curious Under the Stars** – Meic Povey’s series about two blow ins trying to run a pub in mystical West Wales.
- **Tommies** – World War One; ongoing.
- **Ferryhill Philosophy Institute** – series about adult education by Michael Chaplin.
- **Day Release** – Frank (played by Lenny Henry) is released from prison, having served a life sentence for murder. Readjusting to life on the outside is tough. By Peter Jukes.

One off series/ serials

- **Tracks** – Matt Broughton’s 9 part serial about an air disaster, and what spins out from it.
- **Tumanbay** – John Dryden’s 10 part serial just aired; an epic saga about the bloodstained rise of a Middle Eastern Empire.
- **Zola – Blood, Sex and Money** (see Classic Serial) - parts 2 (Sex) and 3 (Money) to come.
- **Stage Left** – Doug Lucie tells the history of Thatcherite and post-Thatcherite Britain through life in a fringe theatre.

- **School Drama** – 4 part serial about the vicissitudes of putting on a school play by Andy Mulligan.

Single Afternoon Drama

A random selection of some of the highlights amongst the 120 odd Singles broadcast over the last year -

- **Where This Train Will Terminate** – a *Brief Encounter* on a train rather than on a station, a beautiful and funny two hander (with a delightful cameo by Katherine Jakeways who wrote it).
- **The Road to St Davids** - The colourful celebrations of ancient myths at the St. David's Day festival are the setting for the story of two pilgrims seeking help from the city's two saints.
- **Mayday Mayday** - A true, life-affirming story, charting actor Tristan Sturrock's journey from the moment he broke his back to his recovery.
- **doyouwishtocontinue** – prizewinning comedy play about overcoming depression.
- **Triple Word Score** – utterly delightful play about the cult of Scrabble in Nigeria.
- **The Man Who Wore Sanitary Pads** – another utterly delightful play, based on the real story of Mr Muraga, who invented low cost sanitary pads for the Indian market.
- **The Len Continuum** – film maker Peter Strickland's compelling radio debut, a day in the life of a loser who lives in Reading.
- **The Far Side of the Moore** – Patrick Moore's life depicted very Patrick Mooreishly.
- **A Pact of Silence** – drama about the fate of the children of those people who the Argentinian Junta made to “disappear.”
- **A Greek Drama** - dramatised reconstruction of the series of euro summits that brought Greece to the brink of economic disaster.
- **Cuttin' It** – award winning play about female genital mutilation.
- **Eurydice and Orpheus/Orpheus and Eurydice** – a pair of plays retelling the myth of Orpheus in contemporary settings.
- **Time for One More Question** - a drama recorded at the Hay Literary Festival.
- **Quill** – Writers Guild Award winning first play, a comedy about a nineteenth century playwright who is tasked to write a blockbuster play for an ailing theatre. It must contain a ghost, a storm, a hero and a dog....

To get a feel for what the 14.15 Drama is please listen to the output.

What makes a good single?

- Strong story. Obviously.
- Strong characters who you have put in a potentially life changing situation is always a good starting point.
- Simplicity. Note how many of the above are two handers.

- Singularity. What makes an idea stand out? What is the hook that will grab the audience, make them want to listen?
- Good writing is paramount – on radio there isn't much between it and the listener.
- Your passion, the writers' passion.
- Does it reflect and give emotional insight into the way we live now?
- Is it about someone/something our listeners might be interested in? We would rather do a play about Patrick Moore (I have heard of him) than George Moore (who's he?)
- Be obvious not obscure, be current not historical.
- Range and diversity. Difference is crucial.
- We are Radio 4's storytellers not their social workers.
- Our audience doesn't want us to dumb down. A stand out listen was *A Greek Drama*, about the negotiations around the Greek debt crisis. To follow the economics you needed to concentrate. That is not a problem.
- I am not sure I can think of a subject we couldn't tackle in the slot – but you do need to find the right way to tackle it, the right approach and tone of voice. Listen to *Stone or Cuttin' It* – both really tough, both really work for the slot.
- We like risk taking, especially in the way you tell stories.
- We don't do soap.
- Or cliché.
- We do like feelgood and heartwarming.
- We don't do dramatisations unless they are very bold.
- We like stories that are driven by sound. Listen to *Mayday, Mayday*.

Please bear in mind these are not rules – they are observations. Anyway, all rules are there to be broken, but -

There are three rules you should not break –

Story.
Story.
Story.

PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE

The full offer (excluding the Proteus front page with the business details) must not be longer than two A4 sheets. Any supporting material must be submitted in hard copy and not entered on to Proteus.

Tell the story – the whole story - and state why you want to do this particular drama and how you want to do it. Your passion for an offer means a lot to us!

Please include details of the experience of the writer/writers and previous commissions. If the writer has not been commissioned in the last six years it is

probably likely that the commissioning editor does not know their work. Please submit supporting material as an mp3 or a script.

If the writer is new to radio you will need to submit a sample of their writing and/or sample scenes. You are advised to discuss what is exactly required at the offers meetings.

Please state in the short synopsis if this will be the writer's first or second commission for radio.

Casting information is **not** required at this stage unless this is a vehicle for named performers.

Don't compete against yourself. Look at the spread of your own ideas and ensure you are not overdeveloping in one area to the detriment of the other. At pre-offers, we will look not only at your individual ideas but also at the spread of material and will match that against the needs of the schedule. We do advise you to present all your pre-offers together.



**Programme type: 14.30 Drama (Saturday)
(Formerly known as SATURDAY DRAMA)**

Reference number: 47080/47053

Day: Saturday

Time: 1430-1530/1600

Duration including announcements: 57' or 87'

**Estimated number of programmes available for open competition:
6 x 57'; 9 x 87'**

Transmission period: April 2017- March 2018

Guide price: £23,200 (for 57')

**Enter into Proteus: 2017-2018 round 5, brief 47080 for 57' and brief 47053 for 87'
(n.b. this is a different round to the Factual briefs)**

EDITORIAL GUIDE

Please note

- (i) we will aim to commission all the titles for 2017/18 in this spring commissioning round**
- (ii) All 87' drama will be a part of the WOCC.**

+++++

We want this to be our noisiest slot.

Be massively ambitious.

If the idea doesn't stand up and shout then it probably isn't for Saturday.

Think Showbiz, but Radio 4 showbiz.

We want headline titles: if it is a stage play or a dramatisation and the title isn't in the public domain, chances are that we won't be interested. Unless it is by Alan Bennett.

Original plays are really tricky to land in this slot – the title, the subject and the author need to grab the audience. They are likely to be sandwiched between a new Alfred Hitchcock one week and Lenny Henry starring in *God of Carnage* the next.

What has stood out over the last twelve months?

- **Unmade Movies** – five unmade Hollywood screenplays, two by Pinter, one by Hitchcock, one by Arthur Miller & one by Orson Welles. Beat that if you can!
- **Fright Night** – Ring and the Stone Tape set a new benchmark for creepiness. We have belatedly discovered that no holds barred horror works really well on radio.
- **Inspector Chen** – Policing in contemporary China – great stories in an unfamiliar world. A worthy successor to our police detection series set in Sweden and Cuba. Our next stop will be a detective working in Palestine.
- **Calendar Girls** – a tricky play to pull off, because it is an ensemble piece – so we triumphantly ran it through *The Archers*.
- **Dead Girls Tell No Tales** – brilliant spin off from *The Archers* about the backstage story of Grace Archer.
- **Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell** starring John Hurt. Enough said.
- **The Norman Conquests** – Radio 4 does one of the great comic play cycles.
- **Diamonds are Forever** – more fun with James Bond.
- **The Raft of the Medusa** – haunting drama by Simon Armitage about the flooding of rural England – the soundtrack to an extraordinary film by Jarman's long term collaborator, Richard Heslop.
- **All That Fall** - Max Stafford Clark brings his celebrated stage production of Samuel Beckett's great radio play back to radio.

I hope this shows you the ambition we have for the 14.30 Drama on Saturday.

There are two elements to the slot

1) **57'**

The Saturday Drama is about compelling, narrative driven stories. *Plot is crucial.*

We are very interested in commissioning a big series across this slot like *Inspector Chen, The Havana Quartet, The Martin Beck Murders, etc.*

They should not be extended Afternoon Dramas.

This is not a slot for new writers.

We are not looking for old fashioned, old school radio drama – we want the Radio 4 equivalents of *The Big Short, The Hateful Eight, Steve Jobs, 007 in Spectre, The Revenant*, etc - i.e. must listen to popular high class entertainment.

Please – beware the rustle of crinolines – again we are more interested in the way we live now than doing a radio *Downton Abbey*.

2) 87'

We do a handful of ninety minuters. They need to be stand out titles, and are currently almost all stage dramas or unproduced screenplays.

We are very keen to commission major writers to write original 87's.

Unless it is as completely left field as *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* with a big name writer attached (Peter Flannery in this instance), we are not interested in dramatisations of novels unless we use them as a feature length opener to a series (as we have done with *Inspector Chen* and *The Forsytes*).

PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE

The full offer (excluding the Proteus front pages and any supporting script material) should not be longer than two A4 sheets.

Please include details of the experience of the writer/writers and previous dramas commissioned from them.

Casting information is not required at this stage unless this is a vehicle for named performers. If you suggest cast in the offer and the programme gets commissioned you will be under a contractual obligation to deliver that cast.

If it is a dramatisation you must include a copy of the book, if it is a published drama a copy of the drama. *If you do not the offer will be rejected.*



Programme type: 15 Minute Drama

Reference number: 47010

Day: Monday-Friday

Time: 1045-1100

Duration including opening and closing announcements: 14'

Repeat: 1945 weekdays

Estimated number of programmes available for open competition: 10 weeks (50 episodes), but SEE BELOW

Transmission period: April 2017 – March 2018

Guide price: £5,200 per episode

Enter into Proteus: 2017-2018, round 5, brief 47010 (n.b. this is a different round to the Factual briefs)

EDITORIAL GUIDE

PLEASE NOTE

- ***For indies most of the commissioning in this slot is likely to be returning series or original writing. There is very little scope for dramatisations unless they are truly remarkable – we have just commissioned Kitchen Confidential from an indie***
- **We will aim to fill Output Guarantees for in house production of 15 Minute Drama for 2016/17 in this round**

+++++

We want to up our game here.

Outside of *The Archers* this slot gets the biggest audience for drama on the Network, so we are keen for it to shout out more.

It is also the hardest to get right.

We want about **17 weeks** of stand-out originals.

We are looking for up to **17 weeks** of bold dramatisations of contemporary novels, with a smattering of classics.

We want about **17 weeks** of bold returners – the likes of *Incredible Women*, *How Does This Make You Feel*, *Lunch*, *D for Dexter*, *How to Have a Perfect Marriage* & *Darleen Fyles*.

We are very keen to have returners that keep on returning – *Pepys* and *The Cazalets* dominated the slot when they were on.

If you have an Output Guarantee we will expect your range of offers to reflect this editorial mix.

Things to think about:

Think of ways that will make the offers chime with the editorial concerns of Woman's Hour and Front Row.

The frequently returning returner:

We ran *Pepys* three or four times a year for several years.

Ditto *The Cazalets*.

They were the perfect returners, and because of their frequency our audience grew to be familiar with them, and loved them. We want more of these, either dramatisations (like *The Forsytes* coming up) or original dramas, programmes that will dominate the schedule.

Something contemporary would be number one on our shopping list.

Something that is entertaining would be number two.

The key here is characters the audience will fall in love with, but...

...have you thought of getting Radio 4 to try to replicate the success of *Serial* in this slot?

Simplicity: is key to good 15' drama, but is ferociously hard to achieve – *Lunch* is about two friends who take lunch once a month. What we know – and they don't – is that they are in love. But don't mistake the simplicity of the central idea with undeveloped thinking: the writer is very experienced, the characters and the elegant simplicity of the format were honed well before it was pitched to the Network. There is nothing accidental or underdeveloped about the simplicity of *Lunch*. Too many offers mistake lack of development with simplicity.

High Concept: delivering five strong fifteen minute episodes is a very tough ask. Often the best series are very formatted. They are high concept, but that doesn't mean complicated. *Lunch* is as high concept as it is simple: everything is filtered through two characters having lunch, episode after episode; there is nothing else for

the series to fall back on. This is very hard to achieve – the writing and the performances have to be of a very high order, but is one of the reasons for its success – the listener quickly understands the set-up, enjoys the variations and the tight parameters of the series. This works really well in short form fiction – and the lack of parameters, the lack of a format make many 15' series ideas feel baggy. Rebecca and Jeremy Front's *Incredible Women*, Shelagh Stephenson's *How Does This Make You Feel* and Robert Forrest's *Pillow Book* are three very successful highly formatted returners. Mike Bartlett's *The Core* – a one off which looked at the span of two people's lives through the lens of their experiences of education through five meetings – had a structure that worked brilliantly for the fifteen minute format.

It is no coincidence that the writers of these heavily formatted triumphs are very very experienced.

The one off: We want you to up our game here – really stand out one off originals are few and far between, but when they work they are like gold. In our opinion *The Core* and *Life in the Freezer* are two of the best dramas we have broadcast in the last 10 years.

It seems to me that the one offs that work well are either (i) serials that appear to be about nothing, but have enthralling characters at their centre (*Subterranean Homesick Blues*, a delicious two hander which we hope to turn into a returner) or (ii) have a very strong agenda: *Amicable* was about a couple who try to have an amicable divorce, *D is for Dexter* is about child carers (and is now a returner), *Welcome to Zaatari* is about life in a refugee camp in Jordan.

All of them cut through, partly because they are obviously about something that matters to our audience – refugees, homelessness, divorce, dealing with a gay husband, etc. The 15' drama slot offers an opportunity to be hard hitting, to deliver drama with a journalistic edge, to be drama about something other than the story.

Too many of the offers we get pitched feel like thin singles whose lack of a developing storyline means they wouldn't pass muster as a 45 minuter.

I think the key to getting commissions here is to challenge your very best writers to come up with something akin to a feature film or a TV drama serial that will work in fifteen minute episodes. The fifteen minuteness is fundamental to the way the story should be told.

Dramatisations – we want really stand out books. Because there are so many books read, dramatised and featured on Radio 4 we want to do the unexpected here, the different and the challenging.

Beloved is challenging.

CJ Sansom's continuing *Shardlake* series is doing well for us: classy popular fiction that we can return to. Popular fiction is an under represented species on Radio 4.

We are sure Erica de Jong's still controversial *Fear of Flying* will make an impact, and that *Jane Eyre* will play really well as a part of the Charlotte Bronte bicentenary: a Radio 4 treat.

Non-fiction - We are delighted that we are continuing the thread started with Nigel Slater's *Eating for England* - dramatising cookery - with a drama based on Jack Monroe's blog and then Anthony Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential*. Non-fiction works in drama. It is interesting to note just how many Hollywood movies are based on real stories, are dramatisations of non-fiction – *The Big Short*, *The Bridge of Spies*, *The Danish Girl*, *Joy*, *Eddie the Eagle*, etc. This is an ideal slot in which to dramatise non-fiction, but please don't recycle the *Book of the Week* rejects.

PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE

The full offer (excluding the Proteus front page with the business details) must not be longer than two A4 sheets. Any supporting material must be submitted in hard copy and not entered into Proteus.

A clear sense of how the style and tone fit into *Woman's Hour* and after *Front Row*.

A synopsis, an outline of potential characters and a sense of the structure, if the series is over several weeks. Proposals should also include suggested writers.

Proposals for the treatment of existing texts should explain why the work is suitable for this slot and how it will be treated in this format. *You must include the book with the offer, or it will be rejected.*

How you want to do it.

Why you want to do it – your passion is key!

BBC
RADIO



**Programme type: 15.02 Drama (Sunday)
(formerly known as CLASSIC SERIAL)**

Reference number: 47112

Day: Sunday

Time: 1502-1600

Duration including opening and closing announcements: 57'

Estimated number of programmes available for open competition: 14

Transmission period: April 2017 – March 2018

Guide price (£): 22,200

**Enter into Proteus: 2017-2018, round 5, brief 47112
(n.b. this is a different round to the Factual briefs)**

EDITORIAL GUIDE

NB we will be commissioning a full year's work.

What this slot is for:

Although we have dropped the slot title, which probably gives us more editorial freedom, this is still the place to play out dramatisations of Classic Literature.

We want B O L D ideas.

WHAT IS THE NEXT *Emile Zola: Blood Sex and Money*. THE NEXT *War and Peace*? THE NEXT *Smiley*?

This is number one on our shopping list – the title that will make a statement.

Do not be frightened of scale – we want The Big Title for 2017, and we want epic listening and landmark productions. These take an age to land – so we are happy to be looking far ahead.

We like Big.

We like Very Big.

Coming up we have:

- The conclusion of **Emile Zola - Blood, Sex and Money**. This, we hope, is a game changer: we have thrown the texts out of the window and gone for the spirit of the novels in a way that is startlingly contemporary, and has gone down a storm so far.

What is the next throw of the dice? Who else can we re-examine uncompromisingly, bring to life by being truly radical?

Because of Zola there won't be much of an appetite for nineteenth century French literature for a while.

- **Reading Europe** - this series of dramatisations and readings exploring contemporary European literature will conclude in this commissioning round; we have already explored France, Spain, Germany and Poland, will visit Italy, Greece and Scandinavia in 2016/17 (these are commissioned). In 2017/18 we will go to the Baltic States, Russia, Ukraine and end in Istanbul. We are interested in offers for this.

NB we will be serialising all four of the Elena Ferrante Neapolitan novels over the following two years as a part of Reading Europe.

We have little appetite for other twentieth century European titles and a limited appetite for contemporary fiction outside of Reading Europe.

- **Graham Greene** – we are doing four novels over the next year and are keen to do more, but unless we have already commissioned Greene titles from you, please don't offer.
- **Henry James** – we want to explore Henry James in this commissioning round – but unless you have already been talking to us it is unlikely we will commission you.
- **Russia of all the Tsars** – we are doing for Russian history what Mike Walker has previously done for The Stuarts, the Plantagenets and the Caesars – making history into rollicking good yarns, so we have very little appetite for history and not much for Russian literature beyond Reading Europe.
- **The Periodic Table** by Primo Levi: this iconic set of semi-autobiographical short stories by one of the twentieth century's great writers is being stripped across the schedule for greater impact. Are there other great books we can treat in this manner?
- **Defoe** a radical intertwining of the works and life of one of the most intriguing writers of the Seventeenth Century. Which other authors can we approach in a similar vein?

Radio 4 is emphatically NOT a museum for dusty old literature that we think the audience ought to be made to endure.

The strand is not exclusively about classics: it is about high-quality serialisations of literature in the widest possible sense that are *a good Sunday afternoon listen* – classics, modern and ancient, literature, poetry, non-fiction etc.

What we want is good storytelling. In our view -

- Ian Rankin is as much at home here as Charles Dickens.
- The upbeat Dodie Smith (*I Capture the Castle* was a delight) is as likely to get commissioned as the less than upbeat Virginia Woolf.
- Books like *The Searchers* – an iconic Western and a brilliant piece of popular fiction – are higher on our shopping list than titles like Kafka's differently brilliant but somewhat literary *Amerika*.
- Two episode versions of the plays of Ibsen and Shaw sit as comfortably in the schedule as dramatisations of Thomas Hardy – and they are much easier to listen to as they are not overpopulated like many novels.
- The poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning is as dramatisable as the prose of George Eliot.
- We like straight dramatisations - listen to the beautiful *East of Eden* that has just gone out – but we equally like bold reinterpretations of the classics – the delightful *Memsahib Emma*, a riff off Jane Austen, preceded it. Last year we did a comic version of *Macbeth*. We have just done nine novels by Walter Scott in nine hours.

The most important factors in our choices are likely to be –

- will it be a good Sunday afternoon listen.
- the passion you as producers and writers bring to the book.
- your arresting approach to bringing it to the airwaves.

NB

- Please refer to the *Full List of Published Titles* document on the commissioning website to find out if we have done a book recently. This should be your bible – **we will probably not commission a title that has been done on Radio 4 or 4 Extra in the last ten years. We also will not commission a title that has been done by TV or been made into a feature film over the same period – unless there is a compelling reason to do so.**

PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE

A copy of the text.

If you do not submit a hard copy of the book with the offer you will get the offer rejected.

A brief synopsis of the text. We want to know how the story ends.

A brief proposed treatment of the text. This should include an indication of the intended style and tone and a glimpse of how dialogue and characterisations will be handled.

How you want to do it.

Why you want to do it

CV of producer and dramatist.

The full offer (excluding the Proteus front page with the business details) must not be longer than two A4 sheets. Any supporting material must be submitted in hard copy and not entered on to Proteus.

4. CHECKLIST FOR SUBMISSIONS AND SUPPORTING MATERIAL FOR DRAMA

This is to ensure you don't forget the basics, either in the written offer or supporting material. If you are still unsure what to send, do not hesitate to contact the commissioning co-ordinator.

For single plays you need to tell us:

- what the play is about (this is not the same as a synopsis)
- the end of the story, if you know it.
- the *complete* (but succinct) synopsis for plot-driven works where the mechanics of the narrative are important – e.g., thrillers, detective fiction, mysteries
- how the story might be told.
- who the writer is, why they want to tell this story, what their track record is.
- whether you are submitting a script or sample scenes.

Additionally, for dramatisations or adaptations of stage plays tell us:

- how the story will be told for radio.
- why it is well-suited to radio and for the particular slot you are offering it

into.

And for serials or series...

- How will the work be structured? In other words, why is it a serial and not a longer single play?
- Have you given a fairly detailed synopsis which outlines the development of character and plot over the episodes and the plot lines you will be carrying?
- Have you indicated the tone of the work?

The writer...

- For writers new to radio (however experienced in another field), have you included a full script written on spec or sample scenes demonstrating that the writer can write for the medium? At the pre-offers meeting, should you get to that stage, the commissioning editor will discuss what exactly is needed from the writer for each offer.
- The offer should not exceed two sides of A4. Anything else must be sent electronically as supporting material. *Please do not submit the synopsis as supporting material – it is incredibly useful to have that on Proteus.*

If you submit a proposal in error, please contact Sara Sund and she can return it to you for editing. Do not create a duplicate proposal.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL FOR DRAMA

All of these must be delivered by the commissioning round deadline.
A complete inventory of materials supplied must be included. See the form below.

If you are suggesting a dramatisation of a book the offer **MUST** be supported by a **hard copy** of that book. If you don't the offer will be rejected.

- Submit **audio** only to sara.sund@bbc.co.uk on an online file-sharing service (e.g. wetransfer.com). Make clear which proposal it is for. Audio must be in mp3 format.
- Video must be supplied on DVD and sent to the commissioning co-ordinator at the address below. Downloads or streaming links will not be accepted.
- eBooks (PDFs, text files, Kindle books) are also not accepted. You must send hard copies.
- Unpublished written material (e.g. CVs, sample dialogue or scripts) should not be put in Proteus. Send it in **hard copy** to the commissioning co-ordinator at the address below.
- All physical supporting material (published books, DVDs etc.) must be delivered by the submissions deadline to:
Commissioning Co-ordinator
BBC Radio 4, Room 4028 Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA
- Label each item with your name, department / company, the title and the commissioning brief number of the offer.
- The package should be accompanied by a complete list of supporting material, using the form below.
- Indicate in the long synopsis that you are supplying supporting material.
- **With the exception of published books and videos, we cannot return supporting material to you.**

INVENTORY OF SUPPORTING MATERIAL FOR FINAL OFFERS

SUPPLIER DEPARTMENT / COMPANY		
COMMISSIONING BRIEF NUMBER	TITLE	SUPPORTING MATERIAL
e.g. 47112 Classic Serial	e.g. The Best Play Ever	e.g. Book: <i>The Best Story in the World</i>

SIGNATURE.....

CONTACT NAME

EMAIL

TEL

DATE.....



5. COMEDY & ENTERTAINMENT BRIEFS

Commissioning Editor: Sioned Wiliam

Commissioning Co-ordinator: Sara Sund

1130 Comedy **Brief number 47013**

1830 Comedy **Brief number 47031**

2302 Entertainment **Brief number 47058**

All briefs are open for this round. But please note that the round will not be fully commissioned, as we are keen to leave slots open for reactive programming. Space will also be left for series to be developed from pilots which were commissioned in the last round.

Duration: All slots are 28'. In the 2300 Entertainment slot we commission some 14' programmes.

Transmission period: approx. March 2017 – March 2018.

Guide price for all slots: £11,300 (28') £5,650 (14').

The Idea

Any offers must bring something distinctive to Radio 4.

Programmes that mimic programmes already on air in any slots (not just comedy) or have specifically not been requested in the following briefs will be turned down at pre-offers.

The producer

Your company or department will need to be able to demonstrate substantial and considerable experience in radio comedy and/or television comedy.

It's a long haul from pre-offer to broadcast.

The idea may have to be piloted; writers will need to be coaxed and supported to write a minimum of four scripts. Casting for a scripted comedy or a stand up show means your knowledge of performers and their skills has to be superb. You then need to be able to direct and produce the programme – a stand up can need as much production to help make the move from comedy club to radio as an actor reading someone else's lines.

Companies and departments with no radio comedy experience who are invited to a pre-offers meeting will be asked to name the experienced radio producer(s) who will work with them on developing and then producing the programme if it is commissioned.

Work online is useful and interesting but will not be enough to demonstrate you can provide broadcast quality programmes that meet the editorial, talent development, compliance and technical levels we require.

Diversity

We are determined to continue broadcasting comedy that reflects the rich diversity of modern Britain. So, please consider how your programme can help us achieve that.

Celebrity-guest shows

Do not offer.

We have many shows across the network that revolve around a different celebrity guest appearing or being interviewed in each programme; think of established programmes such as *Desert Island Discs*, *Great Lives*, *A Good Read*, *With Great Pleasure* and newer titles such as *Chain Reaction* and *My Teenage Diary*.

Series or serials?

We want series. Serials will be considered if the overarching story arc is strong enough to bring listeners back week after week.

In a series, programmes can, to a greater or lesser extent, be placed in any order and do not need a detailed explanation each week to explain what has happened so far. Serials do.

ARE YOU READY TO OFFER?

As you read through the following paragraphs please ask yourself – do I really have enough material, the commitment from the on-air talent and writer(s), and the rights, if appropriate, to offer in this round?

THE PURPOSE OF PRE-OFFERS

This stage of the process allows us to ensure we are developing the right mix and number of programmes and that we are not encouraging work that will be too close to programmes already in development or returning.

Obviously we cannot always judge the quality of the writer's work or talent's skills - but we can and will judge the subject matter.

We want to take audiences to the widest variety of places, through a myriad of emotional experiences and let them enjoy the greatest range of comedic talent. And make them laugh.

Nuanced differences to something already on air are not going to convince us there is not a clash.

Use your 200 words carefully to sum up what the show will be about.

Do not waste space describing how wonderful the show will be or how brilliant the talent is - that is taken as read!

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN PRE-OFFERS

Returning series

If your series is going out between March 2016 and April 2017 and you want to offer a further run it **must** be submitted at the pre-offers **and** main offers stage.

Offering work that has previously been rejected

If you have not been asked to re-offer it then we would politely suggest you don't.

Presenters and talent

If the programme is the talent's or the presenter's idea or they have been involved in its development, please make this clear to save possible confusion and awkwardness later.

Choice of talent

Unless you are building a show around a named individual you are **not** expected to approach performers at the pre-offers or final offers stage.

It is a waste of time and can cause embarrassment if the programme is

not commissioned. We also know that by the time a commissioned programme is ready to be recorded the chance of said individual still being available is negligible.

Audience or non-audience?

This is key. Please tell us at pre-offers if this is or is not an audience show.

And we will discuss this further if you are invited to a pre-offers meeting.

Very rarely is it an either/or. The writing, the speed of the jokes, the structure, the nuance of performance you may want to achieve, the importance of acoustic variety – all need to be taken into consideration when determining what is best for the show and the listeners.

Television ideas

It is perfectly ok to offer ideas that have been turned down by television. But do tell us.

It is perfectly ok to offer ideas that have been turned down by another radio station. Again, tell us.

AT PRE-OFFERS MEETINGS

If your offer gets through the initial pre-offers stage we will meet to discuss the idea in more depth and in particular focus on the following:

Your writer

Are they ready?

Have you actually seen samples of their radio writing?

If the writer has not written for radio before and you have not read anything they have written for radio how do you know they can write for Radio 4?

With your final offer you and your writer must be ready to submit:

- A full draft script or substantial scenes from the series specifically written for radio; this will differ from offer to offer and writer to writer and will be discussed at the pre-offers meeting.
- Storylines for following episodes.
- Character descriptions.

Talent

If your offer is built around named key talent, are you sure they want to work with you?

Have you asked them or their agent/management who else they are talking to?

It is not the end of the world if talent offer different ideas through different suppliers – but make sure it is not the same idea.

Rights and permissions

It is pointless to clear rights ahead of a commission. This wastes your time and money. It is not the end of the world if an offer falls over later because rights are not available.

However, where we know there are historical difficulties with the rights holders, we may ask you to clear them. We will agree this at the pre-offers meeting.

FOR FINAL OFFERS

Writers

Please include details of writers' past commissions for radio and/or experience elsewhere.

Please make it clear if television or radio programmes were pilots only or if they went to series.

Rights and permissions

If, as above, you were asked to clear rights in advance of the offer, please indicate if you have been able to do so.

Choice of talent

Unless you are building a show round a named individual you are **not** expected to approach performers at pre-offers or final offers stage.

But, for final offers, indicative names

are needed so that we can judge the tone or attitude of the programme.

Please consider these carefully and ensure that there is a spread of talent across your offers.

We take diversity seriously.

Too many of the same names are still cropping up again and again, most of whom are on the network already.

Offers for returning series

When offering these you **must** include your critical thoughts on the series to date and how you might develop the show further.

Length of the offer

The final offer's long synopsis must not be longer than two sides of A4.

WHICH SLOT SHOULD I OFFER TO?

All briefs are open in this round

	1130	1830	2302
Slot reference	47013	47031	47058
Price	11,300	11,300	11,300/5,650
Duration	28'	28'	28' or 14'
Estimated numbers for open competition	35	15	20
Range of output	Comedy drama Sketch shows Panel shows Monologues/playlets	Comedy drama Sketch shows Panel shows Stand up/lectures	Comedy drama Sketch shows Panel shows Stand up/lectures/storytelling
Slot details	<p>Audiences expect first class writing and performing talent.</p> <p>This is not a slot to test the boundaries of audience expectations.</p>	<p>Energetic comedy to engage listeners newly arrived from work or getting ready for the evening ahead.</p> <p>The audience expectations are particularly high here.</p> <p>Listeners will be particularly busy with other activities and the structure of shows must take this into account.</p>	<p>We're looking for projects that can absorb and entertain our audiences, taking them on imaginative flights of fancy whilst helping them unwind at the end of the day.</p> <p>This is also a time for comedy that may demand a late night placing either because of form or content.</p> <p>The slot is a safer haven for less experienced talent we wish to nurture who may later make the transition to 1130 or 1830.</p>
	1130	1830	2302
Audience/ Non audience	Both	Both	Both

SOME DETAILS ABOUT THE PROGRAMME SLOTS

Apologies to any of the many brilliant shows that I haven't (for reasons of space) mentioned below!

1130 Weekdays

Shows that play well in this slot are usually highly sophisticated, expertly produced and made by some of comedy's finest talents. They include sophisticated literary parodies such as Sue Limb's GLOOMSBURY and Jon Canter's BOSWELL'S LIVES; beautifully structured dialogues or monologues as in John Finnemore's DOUBLE ACTS or Michael Frayn's MATCHBOX THEATRE and sharply written sitcoms or comedy dramas like CLARE IN THE COMMUNITY by Harry Venning and David Ramsden and ED REARDON'S WEEK by Chris Douglas and Andrew Nickolds. They all feature rounded characters with distinctive attitudes, memorable one liners and a strong sense of place. Danny Robins's COLD SWEDISH WINTER shone a brilliantly funny light on the fate of an Englishman abroad, while Morwenna Banks and Rebecca Front's bonkers SHUSH! brought a surreal, knockabout quality to the slot. Detective series with a comedic tone (THE RIVALS or CHARLES PARIS) also work very well here, as do period pieces and vehicles for some of Radio 4's biggest stars such as Stanley Baxter and Pam Ayres.

I'm keen to build on this substantial inheritance with more of these literate and ambitious pieces and will also play some of the more popular shows at 18.30.

Comedy lectures and stand up shows can play in this slot, but they too need to be substantial and thought provoking, for example DEBORAH FRANCES WHITE ROLLS THE DICE was both informative and genuinely moving.

1830 Weekdays

From our Monday night panel shows to the topical offerings on Fridays, this is the slot that people listen to as they drive home from work, cook supper or put the kids to bed. The shows in this slot need to cut through! And I think it's a good thing that we have a variety of genres on offer here.

Traditionally there has been an emphasis on audience shows but the success of ED REARDON'S WEEK at 1830 suggests that pieces with strongly defined characters and top notch jokes can work here with, or without an audience. Characters are at the heart of the comedies that cut through. They need plenty of flesh on their bones and the comedy should arise from their complex and distinctive attitudes. And the same is true whether they revolve around the dilemmas of a memorable central character like Ed Reardon or a gallery of characters as in Clare in the Community.

1830 shows need to have a real energy about them however, and sketch shows or sitcoms performed in front of an audience do work very well here. Notable successes include the supremely silly and high octane CASEBOOK OF MAX AND IVAN and

Stephen K Amos's witty WHAT DOES THE K STAND FOR? Or the wonderfully surreal THANKS A LOT MILTON JONES and JOHN FINNEMORE'S SOUVENIR PROGRAMME. All have an energetic (and occasionally raucous) relationship with their live audiences.

But equally, John Lloyd's hugely brainy MUSEUM OF CURIOSITY thrives here too – with its blend of genuinely informative interviews and quirky comedy. In a similar vein Helen Keen scored a hit with her series of BIG PROBLEMS. And in last year's BEGINNERS GUIDE TO PAKISTAN (and indeed in LEMN SISSAY'S HOMECOMING), we were introduced to new places, people and ideas in a series of comic lectures, both of which felt very comfortable at 1830.

Tom Wrigglesworth and Lucy Beaumont have also given the slot a less metrocentric feel, creating two wonderfully funny northern families but with very different sensibilities. Mark Steel commands a huge and loyal following as he roams the UK getting to grips with municipal life and David Sedaris's witty and urbane pieces fit well here too. I'm keen to add more voices from around the UK and beyond in this slot.

I should note that I'm looking for distinctive and original comic ideas in any sketch shows that are offered here (or indeed in any of the times noted above). Funny voices, no matter how well observed, are not enough to sustain a long sketch unless there is a strong comic idea underpinning them. And I'm looking for shows that use the medium creatively, painting pictures in the imagination of the audience in a way that can only be done on the radio. Obviously all comedy rules can be broken, but I think there is a huge advantage to disciplining yourself and setting some fundamental ground rules about developing comic ideas satisfactorily and not over indulging a shapeless idea. Comic milestones and returning characters can add value to a show and build a relationship with the listener. And varying the pace and tone of a show will always help it feel like it's belting along – something we definitely need at 1830.

Lastly, panel games have long been a feature of the 1830 slot and it's been good to have slightly different pool of panellists on shows like DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH and IT'S NOT WHAT YOU KNOW (the next series of which will be presented by Joe Lycett). I suspect we're pretty well served for such shows at the moment, but if you feel that you have a genuinely original idea for a new kind of game and a pool of new panellists to draw on, then do feel free to offer it.

2302 Weekdays

In this slot we can try out new talent, explore comedic styles that feel a bit too exposed for 1830 and enjoy immersive comedy that bridges the gap between the workaday world and the end of the day. Terry Alderton's ALL CRAZY NOW and KEVIN ELDON WILL SEE YOU NOW worked well here, both full to the brim with rich comic conceits, fanciful sound pictures and beautifully pitched comedy. THE PIN deconstructed the sketch show with great originality while SMALL SCENES explored comic ideas with forensic skill.

John Moloney's delightful storytelling and Rob Newman's densely written and brilliantly subversive lectures both felt right at home at 2300. As did Jenny Éclair's poignant LITTLE LIFETIMES, deceptively simple monologues which were stunningly well performed by some of our finest actresses, that stayed with you for days after you'd heard them.

Here also, Patrick Marber and Peter Curran talk brilliant nonsense in their BUNK BEDS, whilst Katherine Parkinson and Frank Skinner's deliciously paced arguments make DON'T START a must listen.

This is a slot for innovation and originality. It's also one that can appeal to a younger audience.

1915 SUNDAYS

We have a limited number of slots for this time. The gleeful return of ABSOLUTELY worked very well here and it's a good place to put specials, or one off shows. This slot is one that we will fill ourselves when we have seen the full range of offers.

A WORD ABOUT DIGITAL

I recently attended some fascinating research sessions with some of our younger listeners and was struck by their genuine enthusiasm for Radio 4. It's clear however that the younger generation curate the channel to suit themselves, downloading our shows and clicking on to the Radio iPlayer at their convenience. With this in mind we're now considering the development of podcasts, short form comedies and new formats to keep up with the listening habits of our replenisher audience. Ideas in this area will be most welcome – we've just commissioned our first online only comedy and there is definitely room for expansion here. These ideas should be emailed directly to me or discussed in a face to face meeting.

I'm also keen to know details of how any conventional broadcast offers might have a digital life, so do make them part of your offer.

COMEDY EVENTS AND STUNTS

I'm considering the development of a comedy event this year or next and have begun discussions with the Controller on what might be possible. In the meantime, do let me know if you have any ideas that might chime in with this – a special season of shows or a themed collection perhaps. Or some way of taking over the network? Do drop me an email or give me a call if you have any thoughts on an exciting stunt or event.

A WORD ABOUT MONEY

As we all know these are tough times and as we are continually under budgetary pressure, we are particularly interested to know if there are offers that could be made at below guide price.

WHAT I DON'T WANT

I have yet to be convinced that Improv works well on the radio. Whose Line is it Anyway did very well in the 80's with games in which the rules were clearly set in front of the audience. Since then however, the dreary mechanics of reminding the audience of the cleverness of Improv seems to have hampered any further attempts to capture the brilliance of it as a live event. I'm more than happy to be proved wrong in this, but it's not top of my list at the moment.

We have several shows about siblings and families and we also have at least two shows featuring impressionists and won't be looking for any more.

Don't offer any comedy chat shows, topical or satirical shows; programmes about the media or creative industries; spoofs or parodies of broadcast shows.

There are many stand ups/comedy lecturers and poets currently on the network. There is very little space for any more in this round.

6. CHECKLIST FOR SUBMISSIONS AND SUPPORTING MATERIAL FOR COMEDY

This is only required for final offers.

Apart from published books and commercially published DVDs, all work must be sent electronically.

Examples of Presenters and Talent

If they have work online (YouTube, blogs, podcasts etc.) please include a link in your offer rather than sending in downloads etc.

Delivery of Supporting Written Material

Written material (e.g. CVs, sample dialogue or scripts) should not be put on Proteus. It must be sent by email to sara.sund@bbc.co.uk. **Please identify which offer it is for within the filename.**

Delivery of Supporting Audio and Video

Submit via an online file-sharing service (e.g. wetransfer.com) to sara.sund@bbc.co.uk. Audio must be .mp3 format. **Please identify which offer it is for within the filename.** You do not need to include audio for returning series as we already have access to the programmes.

These must be delivered by 1700 on the day of the commissioning round deadline.

A complete inventory of materials supplied must be included, using the form below.

- Any physical supporting material (published books, DVDs etc.) must be delivered by the submissions deadline to:
Commissioning Co-ordinator
BBC Radio 4, Room 4028 Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA
- Label each item with your name, department / company, the title and the commissioning brief number of the offer.
- Indicate in the long synopsis that you are supplying supporting material.
- **With the exception of published books and videos, we cannot return supporting material to you.**

INVENTORY OF SUPPORTING MATERIAL FOR FINAL OFFERS

SUPPLIER DEPARTMENT / COMPANY		
COMMISSIONING BRIEF NUMBER	TITLE	SUPPORTING MATERIAL
e.g. 47112 Classic Serial	e.g. The Best Play Ever	e.g. Book: <i>The Best Story in the World</i>

SIGNATURE.....

CONTACT NAME

EMAIL

TEL

DATE.....

7. BBC EDITORIAL GUIDELINES & COMPLIANCE

BBC Editorial Guidelines <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/>

All programmes, whether commissioned in-house or from an independent producer, are subject to the BBC Editorial Guidelines. These set out the BBC's editorial standards, policy on sensitive content, legal and political issues, and the system for consultation and referrals during the production of programmes. Failure to comply with these guidelines may lead to the commission being withdrawn and/or a claim for breach of contract.

Compliance

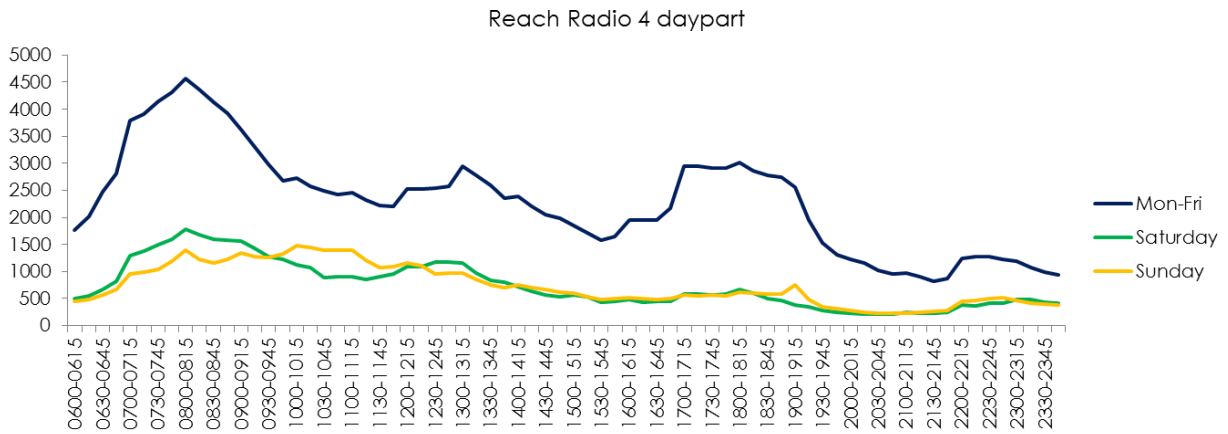
We require that every recorded programme be heard by a production person of appropriate seniority and formally signed off by them. BBC programmes are signed off by their executive producer or editor. But independent productions must be heard and approved prior to broadcast by Roger Mahony, Radio 4's Editor, Editorial Standards (sometimes referred to as the compliance editor).

These decisions are logged in a compliance form, where editorially sensitive content must be flagged. The form is available on Proteus.

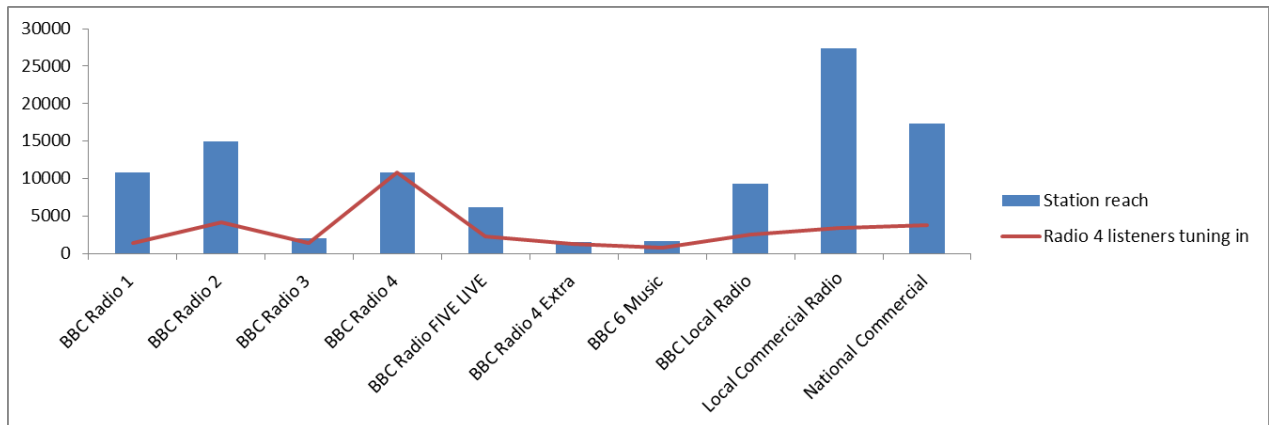
8. THE BBC RADIO 4 AUDIENCE

- **Reach:** 11.2 million or 1 in 5 adults listen to Radio 4 each week, 21% of the population.
- **Hours:** Radio 4 continues to have a very loyal audience. The average Radio 4 listener tunes in for 11 hours and 30 minutes each week. In total that makes 129 million hours every week.
- **Share:** Share takes all the minutes listened to any radio, and works out what proportion of this Radio 4 makes up. Radio 4's share of listening is 12.5%, or one in every 8 minutes of all radio consumed.
- **Genre:** News attracts the largest number of listeners, at 9.6m per week. Drama attracts a strong 7 million average listeners a week, and comedy reaches 5.5 million.
- **Online:** Radio 4 attracts 1 million unique browsers to its site each month, 2 in 5 of these on mobile or tablet. There are over 16 million iPlayer requests for Radio 4 programmes monthly, and a further 25 million podcasts around the world, providing Radio 4 with a huge digital footprint.
- The station continues to have a fairly balanced audience in terms of gender (51% male / 49% female) – however, our female listeners typically tune in for longer than our male listeners (13:18 vs. 09:47). The average age of the Radio 4 listener is 55 years old. The station also continues to have an upmarket bias – 75% of those tuning in fall into the ABC1 demographic.

When do they listen?



What other radio stations do they listen to?



For any questions about the Radio 4 audience, please contact Elizabeth Lane, Research Manager for Radio 4 and 4 Extra: Elizabeth.lane@bbc.co.uk.