

The Laramie Project Sound Design Concept and Approach

The Laramie Project is the story of the aftermath when an innocent young man was beaten to death because of his sexual preference. This story is relevant because it reminds us that we need to accept other people no matter what their differences. It shows us that people still care when a crime is committed and will support one another when surviving a horrific act. It reminds us that a single occurrence can affect the entire nation not just one little town.

Initially for sound, I was going to reproduce specific sound effects that would enhance the time and places during each moment of the show. Short sound clips would be used like birds outside, raindrops, dishes inside the diner, and people singing in church. But after re-reading, listening to rehearsals, and discovering the actual tempo and speed of the show, I felt it would be unwise to add another element that was presented in pieces. My revised approach was to find instrumental music appropriate to the moments in the play that gave us backgrounds that helped to tie the show together – perhaps running through more than one moment. In discussions with the director, it was determined that guitar music was the closest representation of how she saw the show. We decided that the section in Act 3 that requested live music for the song Amazing Grace would indeed be live guitar music played by one of the actors onstage. The challenge then was to find recorded guitar music that evolved in its song in the same manner that the moments in *The Laramie Project* did and time them to match up appropriately. I would try to find instrumentalists that are similar in style so that the overall feel is cohesive. The pre-show, intermissions, and post-show music would be songs appropriate for the time period. In my research, I discovered many songs written by artists specifically about this event, and it was decided that these songs could be used for pre-show, intermission, or post-show. After attending more rehearsals and playing music in the background, it was determined that the absence of music was a very powerful tool also. There are several short sections throughout the play that are more powerful without background music so it was cut accordingly. Also, act 3 is set in the courtroom several times and this sterile environment became more intense without background music. After the live guitar music at the beginning of scene 3, it also seemed inappropriate to reintroduce recorded guitar music into the show so we continued without music until the final moment of the play. This production evolved as a play that used music as a powerful background tying pieces together, but became as powerful in its absence of background music at other times.

All of the music in *The Laramie Project*, are as the songs were originally recorded except when the length of the piece fell short in time for an appropriate stopping point or changed drastically not matching the scene. If short, then I would cut and paste additional sections of the song into itself where it sounded like it could repeat using the Sound Forge program to accomplish this. Some music cues are sections of the song, not necessarily the beginning, and have been repeated as needed for time.