

The Amish Project

Theatre Silco

Sound Concept

By Harley Roché

The world of this play is complex. The story itself sits between fiction and reality. There is a struggle and a fight between so many emotions but mostly devastation, anger, and hope.

Sara First Designer Meeting, "Our job is to **not** make sense of this tragedy."

Broad Notes:

- Public tragedy private community
- Memory play
- Sounds of the story are low, distant, and distorted. My thought about this is because we are sitting between reality and fiction, soundscapes will help us enter these new spaces, but I don't want it to feel too *real*.
- Localized sound. Multiple Speakers in corners, about the stage, under the seating, etc. I want there to be a variety of sound textures and placement to elevate the differing environments.
- The playwright also states, "Several Transitions have been listed throughout the script. These are simply moments when a sound cue or pause in the action may enhance the storytelling." For each transition, I have listed my ideas below. However, I know when shows have too many transition cues, this slows down the momentum. So, I pulled all the transition ideas, but if there is a better blocking, lighting, etc. moment, then that is totally fine! I just wanted to give options.
- I want there to be a sound that can represent Eddie's presence when he's on stage, or when he's felt and not seen. Either way, I like the idea of using a sub under the seating and pushing through low rumbling. The playwright said we should be able to feel Eddie on stage even before his entrance.
- I really liked also what the playwright said about Aaron's presence. "Additionally, Aaron, the invisible Amish father, is a powerful presence in the play, particularly for Bill North; the more the audience can feel him too, the better." With this note, I like the idea of Eddie having that dark

rumble/heartbeat/etc. and in contrary having Aaron (as well as the Amish community) can be represented with sweet nature sounds, horses walking, simple life sound effects type. I want these sounds to feel light to have a better contrast with Eddie's.

- There are a lot of clips from the local news in this play. I like the idea of recording voice overs and layering these on top of the actress speaking. I am not suggesting cutting the lines for the actress, but rather the actress's voice to sit on the recordings. This sound effect would also be distorted and put in the distance.
- On Page 35, we have the beginning of the shooting sequence. This is where I want the first sound tantrum to really start building, so we have that stark contrast to the silence to follow.
- I like the idea of the soundscape building through the show. We start soft and the more we travel through the script the sounds get slowly increasing louder and more present. I want it to be built up so much that on page 38, when Eddie says, "Then I shot myself", the sounds drop out completely and we sit in silence which will make the room feel empty after having so much sound. Following the silent moment, we hear Velda start singing the sweet Amish hymn.

Questions for Sara:

- Are you wanting transitions to be as quick as possible? Or will there be a little time for the actress to get into the new character?
- The more I read the play, the more I liked this idea of a rumbling to represent Eddie and a heartbeat to represent Carol.

POSSIBLE CUES I HAVE PULLED OUT:

Before the show – I would like the pre-show to be sweet nature sounds, children playing, maybe horses walking in the distance. The typical Amish community and I want to keep it light. Maybe 5 minutes before the show we can introduce that low Eddie sound under the seats, but not enough to hear, just to be felt.

Page 9 – The show begins on such a heavy line. "Man Enters Amish Schoolhouse. And Opens Fire." As the script says, this is the darkness and then the lights come up. If this is what the director and lighting designer want to keep, I think this would be interesting to maybe have the different news casts bouncing around overlapping of just "Man Enters Amish Schoolhouse." And then after 5-7 seconds of it building up, the actress in the darkness says, "And opens fire." I know this a

big idea, but when I read it, that what I kept hearing! It's okay if it's a no though 😊

Page 10- When we 'see' Anna for the first time, the sound of sweet nature sounds, similar to pre-show, fades up.

Page 11- The transition into Carol, we hear a TV come on low and in the background. I like the idea while she is talking the channel can even flip a few times.

Page 11- When Carol says, "This just in!" we hear a newscaster say this with Carol.

Page 11- When Carol says, "We don't watch TV anymore." We hear the TV get turned off.

Page 14 – We transition into Bill North, where he is leading a press conference. While the actress is turning into Bill North, there could be chatter from the press conference coming from the audience and fades out when he begins to talk.

Page 15- When Carol says, "This just end", I like the idea of us hearing a news reporting sound.

Page 18- For the Sherry Local Transition, I feel like this is the moment where the sound really begins to pick up, leading us to the tragedy. I like the idea of the tv fading slowly up the background and when we get to Sherry's line "Man Enters Amish Schoolhouse and Open Fires," we hear the pre-recorded line from the beginning of the show. As she continues her monologue onto **page 19**, because there are so many one-line clips she is hearing from the news. She says, "Amish Families, white ambulances, Birds eye, etc." I like the idea of have these popcorning around to the different speakers while the actress speaks over the audio. These would be low, and distorted and by multiple different voices.

Page 20- On this page, I want the news voices to slowly fade out to just the Sherry by herself saying man enters Amish school house and opens fire." However, when she says the word "gunman" for the first time, this is when we start to hear a heartbeat VERY low.

Page 20- While Carol begins this monologue, the heartbeat is felt. It is at a normal pace, but it slowly gets faster as she continues talking.

Page 21- When Anna and Velda have their small lines, the heartbeat is faster. And then it disappears.

Page 23- When transitioning into America's monologue, while the actress is changing characters, we hear a grocery store distorted in the distance that can fade out slowly while she talks.

Page 27- When Carol begins speaking of Eddie again, I think this would be a good time to slowly reintroduce the Eddie sound effect so when he appears on **page 28**, it is present. I think this would be a prime time to

Page 28- When we transition into Sherry, the rumbling drops out and we hear the grocery store fade back up.

Page 28- When carol says, "I laughed," the grocery store cuts out.

Page 29- Local news cast over the speakers again, "Man Enters Amish Schoolhouse. And open fires." Then the low rumbling begins again. Slow and low. Prepping for Eddie's entrance. The rumbling will grow through the next pages as we get closer to the tragedy.

Page 30- When we hear carol start to say "sicko" repeatedly, I like the idea of whispers of sicko coming from all directions. This happens again on **Page 32**.

Page 31- When Eddie starts talking about the semi crash, we hear that in the distance, low and distorted.

Page 32- As America is saying, we hear the recorded whispers of "sicko" again and Carol comes out on top of it with her line.

Page 35- When we get to the transition into Eddie's monologue, I want to introduce a small clock ticking sound in the distance. Counting down to the tragedy. This is the point in the script where I want to zero in on that sound tantrum. It's a slow build over the pages 35-38. The rumbling will have been building, we have a clock ticking, we can have the heartbeat slowly get faster, and when the line "man enters Amish schoolhouse" we hear the clip of the news on top of the actor's voice.

Page 38- When Eddie says, "Then I shot myself," every sound drops out and we sit in silence.

Page 40- Up until this point, we have been sitting in silence. Then as Anna appears, we begin to hear the sweet nature sounds from the beginning.

Page 41- When Carol begins her monologue, we bring the heartbeat back. Slow, normal pace. On **page 42**, as she starts working herself up and rejecting

the Amish's kindness, the heartbeat gets faster, and the sweet nature sounds slowly disappear. This is an anxiety attack.

Page 44- When Carol says the line, "is a—word. One word." The heartbeat decreases and she calms down.

Page 46- When America starts her line, the heartbeat goes away completely. And then when the Velda and Anna start talking again, the nature sounds come back slowly. I want these to be night sounds.

Pages 49 to 51- I want the show to end soft as it started in the pre-show.