

Villette Assistant Directors Omari and Tess give us an exclusive insight into life in the *Villette* rehearsal room – weeks one and two...

Week One

Imagine your first week at a new school... that's exactly what starting a new play is like, the only difference, we are all grown-ups. On Monday, our first day, the *Villette* company met for the first time. We call this initial meeting a meet and greet. After saying our hellos, we jumped right in and played some warm-up games – and yes when working in theatre you get to play games! The reason why we play games in a rehearsal is to get our bodies and our minds ready for a long day of hard work and they're a really good way for everyone to get to know one another in a relaxed and informal way. Once we were warmed-up and ready, it was time for the actors to learn about their characters and discover more about the play.



Movement Director Megan Kennedy, Laura Elsworth as Lucy Snowe and Amelia Donkor as Gin. Rehearsal Photography by Anthony Robling

Now, there are many ways a director can choose to tackle this big learning task, he or she could sit the company down and read through the script, the director could start by telling the actors the back story of the play, or the director could begin by encouraging the cast to physically act out what they will be doing on the play. Director **Mark Rosenblatt** decided that the best thing to do was to get the actors up on their feet and begin acting – in at the deep end!



Director Mark Rosenblatt with the Villette company. Rehearsal photography by Anthony Robling.

As this was our first week, the script was new to most of the team, so we spent time practicing and getting to know the script. Getting to know the script can be done in a number of different ways. Some days the company would spend a lot of time sat around the table, reading the script, asking questions and solving problems. Although reading the script may not be the most fun job in the world, it is important because it helps the actors, directors and everyone involved learn more about the play. On other occasions, the whole team would put what they discussed around the table into action; they would do this by getting up on their feet and **ACTING**.

Villette is packed with many songs and dance, composed and choreographed by our sound and movement directors.

Week Two

In week two, time was dedicated towards revisiting what was discovered during week one and adding more on top. Much of week two was spent with the actors up on their feet practising their lines and experimenting with different ways of performing. Because so much time was spent in week one learning about the story and characters of the play, in week two, everyone had a super strong understanding of *Villette*. This deep understanding allowed the director to experiment with different scenes and change how they were played out. For example, one day the director encouraged the actors to perform a scene standing still and then the next day the director asked the actors to do the same scene moving about. Outside of the rehearsal room, there are many exciting things that go on to help promote the show such as visits from photographers, interviews with cast members and filming.

On Friday, I worked alongside Laura – who plays Lucy Snow and cameraman Tom to record a trailer for the play. As the Assistant trainee director, I had to take everything that I had learned from watching Mark and direct Laura which was an exciting step. So that was week two...practice, practice, practice & build, build, build...

