

Romeo & Juliet: Rehearsal Diary
Week Two

Having given individual attention to every section of the play - with the exception of the ending - over the first week we returned to the start and worked through the scenes again in chronological order. This allowed the actors to refine their ideas, whilst also introducing initial elements of staging. However, blocking wasn't set in stone to encourage the company to invite and explore multiple possibilities. The virtue of this was that the freedom present in the first week of rehearsal was retained.

There are a number of big set pieces at the beginning, middle and end of the production, and Tuesday saw an attempt at staging the first of these - the party at the Capulet mansion. This was difficult logistically as it involved all thirteen members of the company, many of whom had doubled roles, and contains sequences entirely set to music. We worked through a number of times, choreographing the multiple entrances and exits like a dance, whilst the company tried hard to commit the blocking to memory. Once a version had been sketched out and everyone had themselves organised, we welcomed Tom (Sound Designer) into the rehearsal room to get a feel for the timing and mood of the sections for which he is going to compose music.

On Wednesday, rehearsal photographs were taken and the photographer was treated to an epic - and slightly vicious - game of nine-square. Whilst Rob continued to work through chronologically in the main rehearsal room, the Green Room was appropriated for rehearsals with smaller groups or individuals on scenes which required extra care and attention. This was also a chance for some character meetings and work on soliloquies for those cast members who have them.

The Production Office became a hive of activity as the actors had their initial meetings and fittings with the Costume Supervisor, allowing the dots to be joined between the concept and reality of the design - from size to colour. It was also an important opportunity for the actors and designers alike to discuss the 'look' of each character in light of what had been 'discovered' over the initial week of rehearsals. The first production meeting on Thursday was a masterclass in diplomacy as all the departments - including Lighting, Sound, Wardrobe and Production, as well as the producers - descended on the rehearsal room to pool their collective information and progress thus far. Again, it was fascinating to see the sheer volume of people involved in bringing *Romeo & Juliet* to the stage, and the importance of maintaining a high level of communication between everyone involved, and an open channel of feedback from Robert (the director) ensuring we're all on the same page.

Along with the steady flow of cake and biscuits into the green room - and out as they were devoured - props began to appear so that the actors could get used to using them in practice. The most exciting of these was the rehearsal bed, which forms a focal point for parts of the production, and the company put the new addition to good use, clambering in and out, under and over it, and finding the most inventive ways to incorporate it into the scenes in which it appears. The energy of the rehearsal room remained fluid and interesting; with the components coming gradually together, fusing into a cohesive structure from beginning to end and revealing the light and shade in the play.