



Composer/Lyricist Ben Clark,
Choreographer Spencer Liff, and
Director Joe Calarco at Goodspeed's
first read-through of *The Circus in
Winter*. ©Diane Sobolewski.

What is your vision for *The Circus in Winter*? Tell us about your inspirations.

Well, the novel that the musical is based on covers a lot of territory. It takes place over many years and has many characters in it. That's exciting to me. It has a Dickensian quality in its episodic nature — I know when I read it, I thought of *The Thorn Birds* in terms of the sweep of it. Even though the show is set in the world of a circus, we're not looking to replicate that world, since that is not really what the show is about. It's about family, and home, and people trying to escape from the metaphorical cages that they feel trapped in. It is a period piece, but the score is contemporary. So I'm planning, visually, to give it an edge. To have those two styles rubbing up

against each other and pulling at each other is very exciting to me and has been fun to explore with the design team.

What plans do you have for working on your show at The Norma Terris Theatre? Do you expect to make many changes during the rehearsal period/run of show?

I expect there will be many changes. We just did a week-long reading of the show in New York, and the writing team made major changes every day. It's one of the wonderful things about working at The Norma Terris — the point is to develop the piece and continue to work on it.

Tell us what the audience can expect to see.

It's a very ambitious piece. The story itself is rather sprawling, covering many years and many characters. That's what is so wonderful about it. Trying to put a story that has the feeling of a novel on stage is difficult and demands a certain amount of theatricality. We're going to ask a lot of the audience in terms of using their imaginations. We don't plan to show actual circus acts — we're looking to find a more theatrical way of showing that world. And, of course, they should expect to see changes happening. There is nothing harder or more exciting than doing a new musical.