Family matters in Queens

Wyatt Bernard (center) as Little Joey is joined by the cast of “Escaping Queens,” which opens on Aug. 10.

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Photo by K.R. James

Little Joey is born

As the idea began to grow, Ortiz and director Greg Fritsch decided that more characters needed to be added. Ortiz originally planned not to tell the story through the eyes of his younger self.

“Maybe I was afraid of getting myself involved,” he recalled.

Eventually, the character of Little Joey, played by 13-year-old Wyatt Bernard, was created and turned into a full-blown character with many scenes.

Although Little Joey grows from age 9 to 12 throughout the span of the play, Bernard still finds himself having to play a younger person.

“Being younger than myself is a challenge,” he said.

Bernard, from Santa Cruz, is performing in his first Cabrillo Stage production. He previously performed in West End Theater productions, including “Peter Pan,” where he played Captain Hook, and “Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy” at ShartHaHa’s.

Set in the 1950s and in Queens, New York, Bernard has to make another adjustment.

“I have to take in the idea that it’s not modern day,” he said. “Everything’s different, from the clothing to the hairstyles.”

Bernard also said he is working on his imitation of a New York accent.

Working out kinks in the script

The crew started working to stop the production in 2011, adding more characters and scenes, and found that it “grew and grew and grew,” according to Fritsch.

“It very quickly went from a book to a musical,” Fritsch said. “(Ortiz) couldn’t

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