THE ‘BOYZ’ OF SUMMER

Gabriel Stage’s summer musical season opens with the laughs of ‘Altar Boyz’ and closes with the music of ‘Oliver!’

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It’s part of the DNA of Gabriel Stage to take chances. Where other theater companies might stick close to the proven crowd pleasers of the musical theater canon—‘Says and Bells’ anybody?—Gabriel Stage has, from its beginnings under the charismatic Lisa Grass, refused to be disengaged to bring provocative or lesser known works to the stage.

NON-SCRIPTED

Yes, you are in the right place when you enter the lobby at 1717 Main Street in the house of Gabriel Stage, for this is a non-scripted world. ‘Altar Boyz’ and ‘Oliver!’ are the only two performances not to be script-driven.

‘Altar Boyz’

Altar Boyz opens the summer season of the theater, which will continue through Sept. 22 at the stage’s downtown location.

‘Altar Boyz’ is a musical about the boys in the Catholic choir, who begin to develop feelings for one another and begin to question their faith. The boys are led in song and dance by Imam Abdi (played by Anthony Pecora), who is not a part of the boys’ lives in real life.

The show, which opened on Broadway in 2004 and won a Tony Award for Best Musical in 2005, was created by the New York-based theatre company, Image Theater, and is based on a true story.

The show is directed by Gabriel Stage’s artistic director, Joe Arciero, who says he was drawn to the show because of its “uniqueness.”

‘Oliver!’

The company’s final offering of the summer season will be the classic musical ‘Oliver!’ by Lionel Bart, which opened on Broadway in 1960 and won the Tony Award for Best Musical in 1961.

‘Oliver!’ is an English boy named Oliver Twist, who is born in a workhouse and raised by the evil Sikes. Oliver runs away from his life of despair to the city of London, where he meets Fagin, a charlatan and thief, and his gang of Artful Dodgers.

Oliver is scooped up by Fagin’s gang and learns the ways of the thieves. He begins to steal from the rich to give to the poor. The show is set against the background of Victorian London, where poverty and wealth coexist.

The show is directed by Gabriel Stage’s music director, Tony DiCesare, who says he was drawn to the show because of its “sensational score.”

‘Altar Boyz’ and ‘Oliver!’ are the only two performances not to be script-driven. The rest of the theater’s offerings are all script-driven, which means that the actors are given a specific set of lines to say and actions to perform.

‘Altar Boyz’ opens on July 5 and runs through July 21. ‘Oliver!’ opens on Aug. 2 and runs through Aug. 25.

For more information on Gabriel Stage, visit www.gabrielsestage.org.