Tenaya Carr as Oliver (from left), Andrew Ceglio as Fagin and Devon DeLeon as Artful Dodger star in Cabrillo Stage's production of "Oliver!"

Cabrillo Stage readies largest production

‘Oliver!’ opens July 25

By ERIK CHALHOUB
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APTOOS — Oliver Twist in Charles Dickens' novel once famously asked for more, and if he was able to witness Cabrillo Stage's production of his story, he would have said that his request was granted in a big way.

"Oliver!", which opens July 25 at the Cabrillo College Crocker Theater, will feature the largest cast of any Cabrillo Stage production to date, said Artistic Director Jon Nordgren.

"With 'Oliver!,' you’re going to be impressed with the amount of the people on stage," he said.

Among the 67 performers are 36 children, which director Dustin Leonard said provides a "gateway" for the young talent as they are working with seasoned professionals.

"It's also an enormous undertaking, he noted.

"From a directing standpoint, there's always a challenge in a mixed room with young actors and seasoned professionals," Leonard said.

"Oliver!" is Lionel Bart's musical based on the novel by Charles Dickens, which follows Oliver Twist in his plight around Victorian London. Orphaned Oliver goes from mistreatment in the London workhouses to being recruited by the Artful Dodger to pick pockets for the Fagin, Nancy, and Bill Sykes, before finally finding a home.

The production features songs such as "Food, Glorious Food," "I’ve Done Everything,"

Cabrillo Stage last performed "Oliver!" in the 1990s, according to Nordgren. Led by Leonard, who Nordgren said is a "darker director than most," this year's production should be a reflection of his style.

"Oliver!" serves as Cabrillo Stage's "anchor" production for the four-show season, Nordgren said, a large show that is flanked by smaller productions.

"Altar Boys" kicked off the season on June 27 and concluded July 13. Currently running is "Putting It Together," a musical review of Stephen Sondheim's songs, which ends Sunday.

"Oliver!" opens July 25 and runs through Aug. 17 at the Cabrillo Crocker Theater, 6500 Soquel Drive in Aptos. Shows times are 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are $18-$45 and can be purchased at www.cabrillostage.com or by calling 831-761-7300.