

# A Quarter Century of Summer Theater

Cabrillo Stage and Shakespeare Santa Cruz celebrate 25 years of amazing productions BY



**STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT** Tommy Marquez credits Cabrillo Stage with helping a Mexican boy from Watsonville make it in the entertainment industry.

Forget the Thomas Wolfe adage about not being able to go home again: Tommy Marquez is taking a month out of his fast-paced costume-designing career in L.A. to come back where he got his start: Cabrillo Stage.

"It's still the same company that a Mexican boy from Watsonville came up through," says the celebrated costume designer as the company celebrates its 25th year of recruiting community talent for top-quality musical theater productions. "It hasn't changed for me; I came home."

Marquez also dismisses the conventional wisdom about who can succeed in the entertainment industry. "You don't have to come from a rich family, or be from New York or L.A.," he says. "You can come from Prunedale!"

Indeed, Marquez has gone from dancing in the chorus line at Cabrillo College (before it was called Cabrillo Stage) to designing costumes for *The Wonder Years*, *Third Rock From the Sun*, *That Eighties Show*, and *What I Like About You*.

"I really feel the Cabrillo Stage and the dancing is important for poor kids in poor

neighborhoods to experience something else. They get a chance to dream and have it come true."

Marquez came back to his hometown especially to participate in Cabrillo Stage's anniversary celebration production of the classic Broadway musical *Gypsy* and *Dolls*, performing July 7 through Aug. 13 at the Cabrillo Theater in Aptos.

And Marquez isn't the only big fish hopping back to the pond this summer. Also working on the production are Broadway veteran Janie Scott and set designer Skip Epperson, collaborating with a new face at Cabrillo Stage: Jon Nordgren as producing artistic director and music director.

"Janie Scott and Jon decided to do a take on *Dick Tracy*, the movie, and a more cartoonish look for *Gypsy* and *Dolls*," says Marquez, describing the visual components of the show. "The costumes have bright colors and patterns; they're a little over the top."

"Skip Epperson's set is beautiful and colorful. Again, just visually 'whoa,'" says Marquez.

Marquez feels optimistic that the performance will be impressive. "I think it's going to be a beautiful show. People are really going to leave their troubles outside, enjoy the show and walk out singing the songs."

Marquez far prefers working on musicals to dramas, and feels passionately about what his role is in the industry.

"I'm here to entertain, to make people laugh and forget about their troubles for a while. All the dramas have a message, not that the musicals don't... but I'd rather have tears of joy from a production than get depressed by it, and tears of joy can come from a beautiful skirt that flows when someone's dancing."

It was during his days at Cabrillo that Marquez developed and cultivated the talent and craft of costume design that have served him rest of his life.

"Whether it's for a film or television, or whether it's for my god-daughter's little hot-pink party dress," says Marquez, "I'm still sweating over it: 'Is it good enough, is it good enough?'"