

SPEAKEASY
A NEW MUSICAL

The title 'SPEAKEASY' is rendered in a large, glowing neon font with a double outline. Below it, 'A NEW MUSICAL' is in a smaller, similar neon font. A glowing neon martini glass icon is positioned to the right of a curved neon line that arches over the word 'SPEAKEASY'. The entire central graphic is framed by a glowing neon border with Art Deco geometric patterns in the corners.

Book, Music & Lyrics
by Waymon Hudson

Submission Packet
2026

Table of Contents

Logline & At a Glance.....	3
Why Now.....	4
Full Synopsis.....	5
Creator’s Statement.....	7
Core Themes & The Ecosystem.....	8
Song List.....	9
Character Breakdown.....	10
Key Character Arcs.....	12
Tone, Style, Staging, & Production Notes.....	13
About the Creator.....	14
Development Status & Contact.....	15

Logline

Speakeasy is a jazz-fueled original musical about a queer sanctuary built from nothing in Prohibition-era Chicago, where joy itself has become an act of resistance. It draws its architecture from *Romeo and Juliet* and its subject from something bigger: what a community pays to keep its joy alive.

At a Glance

Genre: Musical drama, jazz-infused original score

Setting: 1927, Chicago. The Velvet Boot (a queer speakeasy) and the streets divided by Prohibition, prejudice, and power.

Cast: 10 principal roles, flexible ensemble (8 to 12, doubling possible)

Running Time: Approximately 2 hours, one intermission

Orchestration: 6 to 10 piece jazz ensemble (piano, upright bass, drums, reeds, brass, optional light strings). Fully producible with a small combo; expandable to full orchestral strength.

Development Status: Full libretto complete. Full score composed and demoed by the writer. Available now for readings, festival consideration, and development.

Primary Development Targets: NAMT Festival of New Musicals, the O'Neill National Music Theater Conference

Seeking: Production partners, developmental readings, and, where useful, a collaborator for orchestration and music direction.

Why Now

Set a century ago, aimed at this exact moment. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, a real explosion of queer nightlife burst into the open across American cities, the Pansy Craze, drag performers headlining major clubs, queer joy visible and adored. Then Prohibition ended, morality laws tightened, and in less than a decade it was raided, padlocked, and erased so completely that most people, including most queer people, have never heard it happened.

Speakeasy is set inside that world and lands in a moment that rhymes with it, almost move for move. Anti-drag laws echo the century-old bans on female impersonation. Books are pulled from shelves. The same joy is legislated against by the same fear. *Speakeasy* does not whisper about any of it. It belts.

The antagonist of this show is not a person. It is a machine: state violence, religious certainty, compulsory masculinity, racism, homophobia, and the silence they all demand. That is what makes a 1920s musical read as contemporary theatre, not period piece.

One of our characters could have quoted Zora Neale Hurston: if you are silent about your pain, they will kill you and say you enjoyed it. That is the spine of this show. *Speakeasy* mourns the past, defies the present, and insists on one thing: we were always here, singing, loving, surviving.

Full Synopsis

Act One. 1927, Prohibition-era Chicago. Behind an unmarked door, the Velvet Boot is a queer speakeasy in full roar: jazz, drag, bootleg gin, and a found family of the people the world has pushed to the margins. Merc, quick-witted and generous, is the heart of the room. Miss Addie, a Black queer woman who has survived by staying quiet, keeps everyone safe. Frankie works the bar. Among the revelers, unseen at the edges, a nervous young cop named Ty watches Merc shine, drawn to a light he is not allowed near.

Jules Delaney, daughter of a police sergeant and a temperance crusader, has been raised to make herself small. Pulled toward a life she cannot name, she follows the music into the Velvet Boot and, for the first time, fits. There she meets Rome Moretti, the poet son of bootlegging kingpin Marco. They fall for each other across every line meant to keep them apart.

Their worlds close in from both sides. Marco demands Rome take his place in the family's violent business. Jules's parents, certain they are saving her, work to shame and control her back into the fold. The Velvet Boot's joy has become visible, and visibility is dangerous. Act One ends with a police raid tearing through the club. In the chaos, Ty and Merc lock eyes across the line of uniforms, and Ty cannot bring himself to raise his baton.

Full Synopsis

Act Two. In the ruins, the community refuses to break. Rome is arrested, and in the interrogation room his father offers to make it all disappear if Rome will come home and become the weapon Marco raised him to be. Rome refuses, the first no of his life. Merc and Ty engineer his escape. Miss Addie and Merc, the elders who have watched over everyone else, share a quiet reckoning of all they gave up to keep others safe. Jules chooses herself, and the community reclaims the wrecked Velvet Boot by hand, crowning Addie as its heart. Rome and Jules marry in secret in the reclaimed club,

Jules in a white suit that is finally, fully her own. To protect Rome, Merc takes a dangerous run in his place, and in an alley, the machinery of the law kills him. Rome's grief hardens into rage.

The community gathers to memorialize Merc. The mourning is still breathing when the raid crashes in. Marco bursts from the back room, armed. Rome wrenches the gun away and, for one terrible moment, holds his father's violence in his hands, aimed at the sergeant who let Merc die. Then he lowers it, choosing tenderness over the inheritance meant to consume him, and is killed for the choice. Jules, in men's clothes, reveals herself to the parents who never wanted to see her, refuses to disappear, and is killed too. As they die, Merc's own instrument, a lone trumpet, carries the harmony Rome can no longer sing.

The institution vanishes, the way it always does. But the community returns. Miss Addie, the one who stayed, takes up the story the world tried to bury, and the Velvet Boot's light stays on. Speakeasy ends not on the lovers' deaths but on the survivor who carries them forward, and on a community that refuses, still, to go quietly.

Creator's Statement

When I began writing *Speakeasy*, I wasn't just trying to set an old love story to jazz. I was writing a rebellion.

Set in a 1920s speakeasy but rooted in today's fight for visibility, *Speakeasy* is my attempt to reclaim joy as a political act, especially for queer people, for people of color, for anyone who has ever been told to shrink themselves. I wanted to explore how love, forbidden love, queer love, found-family love, revolutionary love, can be just as defiant and dangerous as protest.

I am a queer writer and a longtime activist. I'm also Deaf, late-deafened as an adult, and I wrote every note of this score without hearing a second of it, composing through vibration, memory, and the physical sense of rhythm in a room. That is not incidental to the show. *Speakeasy* is, at its core, about people who found a way to be heard when the world refused to listen. I built it the same way I had to build everything else: by feeling for it.

Musically, I am drawn to the tension between polish and chaos. The score swings between explosive jazz numbers, aching ballads, and intimate, whispered confessions. Sacred and sinful, silken and sharp, roaring and still. That is where truth lives.

I wrote *Speakeasy* for the kid who snuck into a bar and saw someone like them sing for the first time. For the elder who survived when others did not. For anyone who has ever had to build a sanctuary from nothing because the world left them outside. This is not just a story of love in hiding. It is a story of choosing joy, and choosing each other, out loud.

Waymon Hudson

Core Themes & The Ecosystem

The romance is the spark. The community is the fire. Rome and Jules ignite the story, but the show belongs to the whole room.

Every major character asks a different version of one question:

- **Jules:** Who am I if I stop living the life chosen for me?
- **Rome:** Can tenderness survive the violence I inherited?
- **Merc:** Can I spend my life protecting a happiness I may never get to have?
- **Miss Addie:** What does a generation owe the one that comes after it?
- **Ty:** What happens when duty and identity cannot both survive?
- **Marco:** Is power the only inheritance worth leaving?
- **Miriam and Sgt. Delaney:** What happens when certainty curdles into cruelty?

That is not a love triangle. That is an ecosystem.

The title is the theme. Speakeasy names the club and the survival strategy.

Everyone in this show is speaking easy, carrying something they cannot safely say out loud. The Velvet Boot matters not because it is illegal, but because it is one of the only places these people are allowed to tell the truth.

Additional themes: found family and chosen truth, breaking generational cycles, love in defiance of law and legacy, joy as resistance.

Song List

Act I

1. Come to the Speakeasy – Merc & Ensemble
2. Something Brewing – Jules
3. Inside – Jules, Merc, & Ensemble
4. Stolen Glances – Rome & Jules
5. Family Business – Marco, Merc, & Bootleggers
6. Girl in the Margins – Rome
7. Dens of Sin – Miriam, Sgt. Delaney, & Ensemble
8. Two Different Worlds – Rome & Jules
9. Stolen Glances (Reprise) – Miss Addie
10. Family Business (Reprise) – Marco, Miriam, Sgt. Delaney, & Company
11. Two Different Worlds (Reprise) – Rome & Jules

Act II

1. Cracked Bottles, Broken Hearts – Company
2. One More Hour – Rome, Jules, Merc, & Miss Addie
3. The Watchers – Merc & Miss Addie
4. I Choose This – Jules
5. I Carried the Sound – Miss Addie
6. The Vow – Rome & Jules
7. Inside (Reprise) – Ensemble
8. All That I Am – Merc
9. Last Call – Rome
10. Come to the Speakeasy (Reprise) – Jules & Ensemble
11. The Watchers (Reprise) – Miss Addie
12. Somewhere in the Smoke – Rome & Jules
13. The Watchers (Reprise II) – Miss Addie & Company

Character Breakdown

Juliet “Jules” Delaney, 19. Daughter of a police sergeant and a temperance activist; questioning her place in a repressive world. Fierce, poetic, quietly rebellious. Vocal type: Mezzo-Soprano / Alto. Lead, strong dramatic and vocal arc.

Romeo “Rome” Moretti, 20. Son of a powerful bootlegger. Poetic, thoughtful, a reluctant heir to violence, torn between loyalty and love. Vocal type: Tenor / Bari-tenor. Lead, emotional balladeer and romantic anchor.

Merc, 22. Rome’s best friend. Witty, queer, loyal, hiding unspoken love and grief beneath flamboyance. Vocal type: Tenor. High emotional range; comic timing plus deep sincerity required. The heart of the show.

Miss Addie, 50s. Black, queer housekeeper and protector of Jules. Wise, warm, world-weary but fierce. Vocal type: Alto / Mezzo. The show’s emotional compass. A legendary-role opportunity for an older actor: not the wise caretaker, but the memory of the movement.

Frankie “The Tank” Johnson, 30s to 40s. Butch bartender at the Velvet Boot. Handsome, dry-witted, quietly protective, the steady hands that keep the room standing. Vocal type: Alto / Mezzo (belt). Tends the bar from the opening number; grows into Miss Addie’s late-blooming love across the show.

Character Breakdown

Marco Moretti, 60s. Rome's father. Bootlegging kingpin, old-school patriarch, hardened by survival, controlling, charismatic. Vocal type: Baritone.

Authoritative, with real menace and presence.

Sgt. Delaney, 60s. Jules's father. Stern, religious, a proud protector of law and order who cannot see nuance or change. Vocal type: Baritone. Repressed power; must show cracks beneath the surface.

Miriam Delaney, 60s. Jules's mother. A temperance crusader, polished and pious, convinced she is saving her daughter from sin. Vocal type: Mezzo / Soprano. Comic timing plus righteous intensity; capable of one genuine crack of humanity before the iron returns.

Officer Ty O'Hara, 25. A closeted cop with a secret pull toward Merc, torn between duty and truth. Vocal type: Tenor. Small role, massive emotional impact; needs to carry deep unspoken intensity.

The Priest, 30s. A young priest with a secret, who plays piano at the Velvet Boot. Vocal type: Baritone. Small but pivotal; cast with warmth.

Ensemble (8 to 12). Club performers, bootleggers, police, protesters, vigil attendees. Queer, Black, brown, poor, working-class, gender-nonconforming. This ensemble is the story's witness, conscience, and chorus, and offers powerful roles for BIPOC, queer, gender-expansive, and Deaf and disabled performers. Doubling is built in by design (protesters double as churchgoers or police; club performers double as revue acts or mourners; bootleggers double as musicians or wedding guests).

Key Character Arcs

Jules begins physically and socially contained, shoulders drawn in, made small by design. Across the show her body and her costume tell the same story in parallel: prim, high-collared dresses give way to a borrowed flapper dress, then a borrowed white dress, then a white suit she claims with joy at her own wedding, and finally her own slacks and jacket, worn with her hair loose, the moment she reveals herself fully to the parents who never wanted to see her. The dresses come off as the self comes forward.

Rome is a soft-hearted poet raised to be a weapon. His arc turns on two refusals of his father's violence: once in an interrogation room, once with a gun in his hand at the climax. He chooses tenderness both times, and the second time, it costs him everything.

Merc is the moral center of the show, not comic relief. He understands that love is not possession, and he spends the show protecting a happiness he may never get to keep, including a real, unspoken pull toward a closeted young cop. His death is not only personal loss. It is the loss of one of the people actively holding the community together, and it echoes: a lone trumpet carries his sound through the finale, in the place where a missing voice should be.

Miss Addie moves from the woman who survived by watching to the woman who refuses to only watch. She ends the show as its surviving heart, having earned one of the genuinely rare things in new musical theatre: a legendary role for an older performer.

Tone, Style, Staging, & Production Notes

Tone: *Hadestown* and *Ragtime* by way of *Cabaret*, with smoke, sweat, and sequins. Its closest emotional relative may be *Ragtime*: private love colliding with public history, where history moves whether the lovers are ready or not.

Musical style: Big band swing, torch balladry, and gospel-inflected belting inside one contemporary theatrical voice. The score reads as fresh but classic Broadway.

Staging: A single, flexible speakeasy set (the Velvet Boot) that transforms across the show, dazzling and whole, then raided and broken, then rebuilt by hand. Designed to work as a unit set with lighting and minimal reconfiguration, producible in an intimate space and scalable to a full proscenium.

Physical language: The show has a consistent movement vocabulary. Outside the Velvet Boot, in a world that punishes visibility, bodies are made small. Inside it, people stand upright, open, unafraid. The club is the one place the community gets its inches back.

Production: *Speakeasy* is Broadway-sized in ambition and fully producible at any scale. The jazz score charts for a small combo (as few as 6 pieces) or expands to a full orchestra. The ensemble is flexible and built for doubling. The single-set world is a designer's friend, not a budget risk.

Detailed staging and design notes, including the costume and physical arc for Jules and the visual logic of the Velvet Boot across its three states (whole, ruined, reclaimed), are available in the full production notes accompanying the libretto.

About the Creator

Waymon Hudson is a Deaf writer, musician, and longtime LGBTQ+ activist, late-deafened as an adult. He composes through vibration, memory, and physical sensation rather than hearing, the lens his work is built through, not a limitation it overcomes.

His work has appeared in *HuffPost*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and *Encyclopedia Britannica*'s blog, and he founded and led Fight Out Loud, an LGBTQ+ advocacy organization, from 2007 to 2017, with coverage from CNN, MSNBC, and *The New York Times*. He served as Midwest Regional Co-Chair for The Trevor Project. That activist foundation is not background color for *Speakeasy*; it is why the show's defiance reads as conviction rather than aesthetic.

Speakeasy is his first musical, written in full, book, music, and lyrics, and performed in demo by the writer himself. He also writes literary horror and personal essay, and records original music as a singer-songwriter, all under one guiding idea: stories people feel in their body, not just hear.

Full biography available on request

Developmental Status & Contact

Status: Full libretto complete. Full score composed and demoed.
Submission-ready.

Seeking: Developmental readings, festival consideration (NAMT, O'Neill), and production partners. Open to a collaborator for orchestration and music direction.

Available materials: Full libretto, demo recordings, sheet music samples, pitch and visual packet, creator bio.

Contact: Waymon Hudson info@waymonhudson.com /
waymonhudson.com/speakeasy

Creator of Speakeasy, an original queer jazz musical