

SPEAKEASY STAGE REINVENTS ITSELF FOR A NEW ERA, WITH EXPANDED PROGRAMMING, NEW WORK INITIATIVES, AND A REIMAGINED AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE FOR 2026/27

Mainstage productions include recent hit plays COVENANT, 2026 Tony Award nominee for Best Play LITTLE BEAR RIDGE ROAD, and the World Premiere musical BY ANY OTHER NAME

New “Stage Door Sessions” performance series brings fresh additions to the season.

Commitment to new plays and musicals reaffirmed with two initiatives.

(BOSTON) – May 6, 2026 – Responding to a shifting landscape for the performing arts, SpeakEasy Stage Company will revise its artistic and audience engagement model in its upcoming season. The 2026/27 Season expands the company’s work to encompass mainstage performances, introduce a new performance series, deepen audience experiences, and renew investment in creating original work.

At the center of this reinvention is a broader vision of what a theater company can be: not only a producer of plays and musicals but also a hub for connection, experimentation and creative exchange. In addition to mainstage productions and its subscription and ticketed offerings, SpeakEasy will:

- inaugurate **“Stage Door Sessions,” a new cabaret-style series** of music, theater and expanded performances focused on building community;
- reignite its commitment to develop new theatrical works with **The Boston Project** initiative that commissions new plays about Boston by New England playwrights;
- develop and produce new musicals with **At Rise! Boston’s New Musicals Partnership**, a collaboration with **Somerled Arts**;
- offer **opportunities to “SuperSize” a subscription or ticket**, which unlocks access to special events and experiences related to each mainstage show including script readings, rehearsal access, and cocktail receptions with artists.

Artistic Director Dawn M. Simmons (r.) says the company is leading the charge to reshape what a theater company can be at this moment. “As we continue to produce Boston’s boldest theater, we’re also embracing new approaches to storytelling, artist/audience interactions, and more opportunities to ‘play,’” Simmons says.

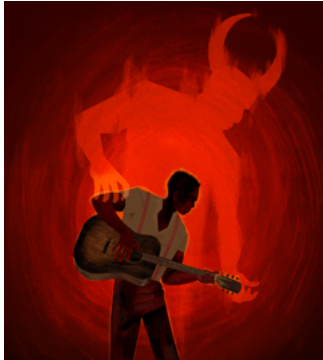
“It’s no secret this is a challenging time for performing arts organizations,” Simmons says. “We’ve looked hard at subscription trends, audiences’ interest in closer connection to artists and



art-making, and the desire to experience art in new ways. I'm excited our board supports SpeakEasy reinventing itself, and doing it in ways that invite deeper engagement, greater access, and stronger community building."

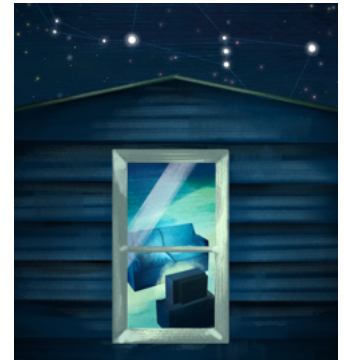
MAINSTAGE SEASON

Next season, SpeakEasy Stage will produce three mainstage performances at its long-time home at the Boston Center for the Arts' Calderwood Pavilion. On the roster are:



COVENANT by **York Walker**, directed by **Dawn M. Simmons**, opens the season with performances **Sep. 25-Oct. 17, 2026** (press performance Sun., Sep. 27) in the Roberts Studio Theater. In this gothic thriller, Johnny "Honeycomb" James returns to his home town famous, changed, and with an air of suspicion around him. His return cracks open old stories and new accusations. **COVENANT** is a Southern Gothic thriller. But more than a scary story, it's a reflection on family, legacy and what gets passed down, whether you want it or not.

LITTLE BEAR RIDGE ROAD, directed by **Bryn Boice**, comes to the Roberts Studio Theatre **Jan. 29-Feb. 20, 2027** (press performance Sun., Jan. 31). This 2026 Tony Award nominee for Best Play marked the Broadway debut of Idaho playwright **Samuel D. Hunter**, whose *A Case For The Existence Of God* garnered rapturous reviews and was an audience favorite at SpeakEasy in 2024. On the outskirts of a small Idaho town, an aunt and a nephew who barely know each other find themselves sharing a house after a sudden loss. She's blunt, guarded and set in her routines. He's grieving, adrift and not sure why he came back. As they sort through a lifetime of things left behind, they find something less than resolution, but exactly what they need. A spare, funny play about grief, distance and the uneasy work of letting others in.



BY ANY OTHER NAME (in association with Somerled Arts), a World Premiere musical with book and lyrics by **Deborah Zoe Laufer**, and music and lyrics by **Daniel Green**, comes to the Roberts Studio Theater in a production directed by **M. Bevin O'Gara** from **May 7-29, 2027** (press performance Wed., May 12). Shakespeare's heroines are going off-script after being fed up with dying, marrying, and behaving properly. In this witty, surprising (and slightly feral) work, the Bard's iconic women collide in a magically glitched storyline and start questioning everything about their stories. A fresh, music-filled take on breaking the rules, finding one's people, and choosing one's own ending.

Produced and presented as part of At Rise! Boston's New Musicals Partnership, a collaboration between SpeakEasy and Somerled Arts.

DEEPER EXPERIENCES FOR THEATER-GOERS

Next season SpeakEasy introduces “SuperSize,” a subscription and single ticket add-on to subscriptions designed to deepen audiences’ connection to each production by inviting them inside the creative process. Available to subscribers and single-ticket buyers, SuperSize unlocks a suite of behind-the-scenes experiences including:

- **Script Reading Club**, where participants receive the script in advance and join a facilitated discussion with SpeakEasy’s artistic team;
- **Rehearsal Sneak Peek**, offering access to the room where the show takes shape; and
- **The After Party**, an intimate post-show gathering where SuperSizers reflect on the full journey – from page to rehearsal to performance – while connecting directly with artists and hearing backstage stories.

Simmons says these offerings transform the typical “night at the theater” into an extended, multi-layered engagement with the art form.

NEW PLAYS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In its 36th season, SpeakEasy reaffirms its role as a vital regional incubator for new work with renewed investment in plays and musicals. Together, these efforts signal a bold recommitment to nurturing original stories, from first idea to fully realized production, and positioning SpeakEasy as a leading force in launching the next generation of American theater.

Anchored by the relaunch of The Boston Project, a commissioning initiative made possible with support from the **Steinberg Foundation**, SpeakEasy will commission a New England playwright to create a new play rooted in Boston, and support its development for a year.

SpeakEasy expands the musical theater pipeline through At Rise! Boston’s New Musicals Partnership. This ongoing initiative with Somerled Arts includes concerts highlighting new writers, development workshops (including public readings), and world premiere productions. Next spring’s *By Any Other Name* is undergoing its final development work in this initiative.

“We have spent the past several months crafting the ‘At Rise’ program with Dawn and her team, discovering brilliant writers and groundbreaking musical theater works to enrich the theatrical landscape in Boston and beyond – and exploring how best to support their development from page to stage,” says Somerled Arts Artistic Director Scott Evans. “We’re proud to be a part of SpeakEasy’s vision for theatre rooted in bold, new storytelling approaches, and can’t wait to share the first projects in this collaboration with the Boston community.”

A NEW LIVE PERFORMANCE SERIES

SpeakEasy’s new “Stage Door Sessions” series turns off-nights into some of the most creatively charged moments of the season, with an open invitation to audience members of all kinds to engage with the performing arts in ways that are social, participatory and unconventional.

The rotating series of one-night experiences cracks open the artistic process: **Listening Room** transforms a rehearsal hall into an intimate music salon, where artists share the songs that shape their work. **VS: Opera vs. Musical Theater** brings playful, smartly curated face-offs between paired selections from works like *La bohème* and *Rent*, or *Carmen* and *Carmen Jones*, with artistic context and commentary. **Public Response** channels civic energy into performance, inviting participants to write letters to politicians or anyone else and watch them come to life in real time. **Bound for Boston** is a concert spinoff of the At Rise! initiative, also produced in conjunction with Somerled Arts and featuring songs from several shows under consideration for ongoing development.

Other events deepen connections between audience and artist. The **Director Roundtable Live** offers a behind-the-scenes look at the season ahead through conversations with SpeakEasy directors. **Cold Read Club** invites audiences into the rehearsal room to read new or widely known scripts alongside professional actors.

Simmons sees “Stage Door Sessions” participants as “culturally curious audience members who want a low-pressure, high-reward creative experience without committing to a full production. It’s theater as gathering, as conversation, as experiment. Less about sitting in the dark and more about being part of something unfolding in real time. In a moment when audiences seek connection as much as content, ‘Stage Door Sessions’ makes us more than just a producing theater. We become a cultural hub where every visit offers new ways in.”

SUBSCRIPTIONS and TICKETS

Subscriptions to SpeakEasy Stage Company’s 2026/27 Season are now on sale. Subscribers can buy two-show or three-show packages, Flex Pass tickets in quantities up to six, and the new SuperSize option for all mainstage shows.

Early Bird Pricing is available through Monday, June 15. Subscriptions can be purchased:

- by phone at BostonTheatreScene Audience Services at 617-933-8600;
- online at SpeakEasyStage.com;
- or in person at the Calderwood Pavilion, 527 Tremont Street in Boston’s South End.

More information about SpeakEasy 2026-2027 productions is available at SpeakEasyStage.com. Tickets to individual shows go on sale in August.

Press inquiries can be directed to **Jim Torres, Director of Press & External Relations**.

Cell 617-529-1670 (not for publication) and email JimTorres@SpeakEasyStage.com

#

ABOUT SPEAKEASY STAGE

Founded in 1992, SpeakEasy Stage is an award-winning, not-for-profit, professional theatre company in residence at the Stanford Calderwood Pavilion at the Boston Center for the Arts. The company has consistently won acclaim for its intimate, top-quality, original productions of bold contemporary plays and musicals that challenge, connect and inspire its audiences and the Greater Boston community. In addition, as part of its mission to build and support a thriving local theatre scene, SpeakEasy works with

hundreds of Massachusetts-based actors, directors, designers, and technicians each year. From its humble 40-seat beginnings, the company has emerged as a leader in Boston's theatre community, a champion of diverse and emerging voices, and a staunch proponent of the transformative power of theatre to bring about social change. SpeakEasyStage.com

ABOUT SOMERLED ARTS

Somerled Arts is a non-profit dedicated to the development of new dramatic and musical works, and the artists who create them. Somerled has produced on Broadway, Off-Broadway and at NYMF. They have developed works at regional theatres and prestigious development organizations in the U.S. and Canada including Theatre Calgary, Theatre Aspen, the Eugene O'Neill National Music Theater Conference, American Music Theatre Project, Human Rights New Works Festival, and Vanguard Arts Fund at Olney Theatre Center. Additionally, Somerled has developed new works independently in New York, Chicago, Boston, the U.K. and Japan. Current projects include *The Museum of Broken Relationships* and *The Tale of the Gifted Prince*, which had its world premiere at Theatre Calgary in 2026. Somerled is a member of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre (NAMT).