

# *Nice Work If You Can Get It CSHS 2023*

## *Audition Information*

### Synopsis

A new take on the 1920s musical farce, *Nice Work If You Can Get It* is a hilarious, tongue-in-cheek satire, featuring the iconic music of George and Ira Gershwin.

Billie Bendix, a tough-as-nails bootlegger, and wealthy playboy Jimmy Winter, meet on the weekend of his impending wedding. Twice married before, Jimmy needs to settle down with a respectable girl so his mother will hand over the family business. His fiancé, Eileen Evergreen, is the daughter of a wealthy senator and the self-proclaimed finest interpreter of modern dance in the world.

Billie, needing somewhere to stash 400 bottles of gin, swipes Jimmy's wallet and together with her hapless band of bootleggers, hides her stash in his supposedly empty Long Island beach house.

But when the wedding party arrives unexpectedly, the bootleggers find themselves juggling the guests, the impending wedding, the bride's aunt (a famous prohibitionist), the Police Chief and their Vice Squad in order to protect their stash and their business.

The usual musical comedy fun ensues as love stories and ridiculous situations twist and turn into an unexpected but happy ending.

### Lead Characters

- **JIMMY WINTER** — Jimmy, our main male lead and protagonist, is a wealthy playboy, dripping with charm and charisma. Jimmy is a great role, with great songs to sing and is a real character for an actor to enjoy playing with. He is guileless and clueless at times, but always fun and lovable. Baritone, Tenor.
- **BILLIE BENDIX** — Billie is the main female lead in the show. She is a tough, feisty and street-wise young woman, but with a soft side. This is a wonderful role for a singer and strong actor who can move well. Billie has beautiful solo songs, two different accents (American and Cockney) to master, and a range of heartfelt emotions to portray – from tough to smitten to angry to heart-broken and back to being smitten again. Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano.
- **COOKIE MCGEE** — A fast-talking, wise-cracking bootlegger, Cookie brings much of the comedic gold to this show. Great comedic timing is a real asset in this role. Cookie is a fantastic character for a comic actor to get their teeth into. Baritone.

- **EILEEN EVERGREEN** — Daughter of wealthy senator and self-proclaimed finest interpreter of interpretive dance in the world. A funny, at times over-the-top goofy, role to have a ton of fun with. Soprano.
- **DUKE MAHONEY** — Cookie's sidekick. Not the brightest guy around, but has heart of gold. Duke falls crazily, over the moon in love and has his heart broken before Jeannie finally decides she loves him after all. Baritone.
- **SENATOR MAX EVERGREEN** — Eileen's father. This role is a parody of a career politician. Serious and stern on the surface, judgmental while being immoral himself, and often clueless to hilarious effect. A great non-singing role for a strong actor.
- **DUCHESS ESTONIA DULWORTH** — Duchess of Woodford. A po-faced, noted prohibitionist and bejewelled dowager, who accidentally drinks too much one day at lunch and becomes humbled and love sick. A range of acting fun in this role. Soprano.
- **JEANNIE MULDOON** — A dippy chorus girl from Brooklyn on the lookout for a rich husband. Jeannie is impetuous and highly strung, and changes mood in an instant. Mezzo-Soprano.
- **CHIEF BERRY** — Chief of the Long Island Police Department. Chief Berry tries so hard to be fiercely dedicated to his job, but is a gullible soft-heart and bit of a hopeless goof ball. Baritone.
- **MILLICENT WINTER** — A wealthy matron with great strength and style. Millicent is Jimmy's mother. She has real presence and is the bearer of the information that provides the 'big twist' at the end. A great non-singing role for a strong actor, but can double as part of the ensemble until the final scene.

## Ensemble

There is a lot of fun to be had for the Ensemble in this piece.

All vocal ranges - Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Baritone, Bass.

The Ensemble is made up of:

- **CHORUS GIRLS** – General crowd scenes are varied and fun and will utilise a range of acting and singing skills to bring the lovely, full-stage extravaganza vibe to this colourful show. There are some minor roles to be cast among the chorus girls with solo lines to sing.
- **DANCERS** – Featured throughout in various scenes with Jimmy's chorus girls and as Eileen's Bubble girls in the bath scene.
- **THE VICE SQUAD** – Estonia's henchmen and Chief Berry's Vice squad. They are goofy and funny.

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## All About the Plot

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In a speakeasy in 1920s New York City, wealthy **JIMMY** is having a high-society, high-energy bachelor party, complete with **CHORUS GIRLS** (*Sweet and Lowdown*). Outside the speakeasy, **BILLIE**, a bootlegger, makes a sale to the **SPEAKEASY MANAGER**. Jimmy leaves the speakeasy and tells Billie about his upcoming wedding, vast wealth, and desire to take over the family business, yet admits he longs for true love above all else (*Nice Work If You Can Get It*). Billie thinks love is “for suckers,” but Jimmy’s passion makes her reconsider (*Nice Work If You Can Get It – Reprise*). **CHIEF BERRY** and his police officers interrupt her musings when they raid the speakeasy. **SENATOR EVERGREEN** and his sister **DUCHESS ESTONIA DULWORTH** are among the officers. The Duchess is a staunch prohibitionist (*Demon Rum*).

Billie escapes the scene with a valuable asset: Jimmy’s wallet. The next day, along with her cohorts, **COOKIE** and **DUKE**, she makes her way to Jimmy’s empty beach house, and the smugglers use the beach house’s cellar as a spot to hide their cases of booze. However, when Jimmy and his new wife, **EILEEN**, walk through the door, Cookie must improvise and pretends to be the couple’s butler. Upon seeing Billie again, Jimmy vaguely remembers her from the night before. When she tells him she’s never been kissed, he kisses her “for educational purposes only.” Sparks fly, but Billie is left alone (*Someone to Watch Over Me*). Eileen, meanwhile, pampers herself in the bathroom for several hours, soaking in a tub and vainly singing her own praises (*Delishious*).

Chief Berry shows up inquiring about bootleggers on the property, and Cookie, still disguised as a butler, gets nervous. He and Billie plot to keep Jimmy away from the cellar by distracting him with his greatest weakness: “dames.” Several Chorus Girls from the speakeasy arrive, asking Jimmy to go for a swim (*I’ve Got to Be There*). The Chorus Girls hide when Eileen finally emerges from the bathroom, but when Jimmy receives a telegram stating his previous wife refused to sign the annulment papers, the Chorus Girls reveal themselves, and Eileen storms out (*I’ve Got to Be There – Reprise*). That evening, Billie climbs through a window into Jimmy’s room in an attempt to woo him, but Chief Berry spots her. He reveals to Jimmy that Billie is a bootlegger, but Jimmy improvises and says she is his new wife. He urges her to play along (*Let’s Call the Whole Thing Off*). Convinced, Chief Berry leaves, wishing them well. Jimmy admits he is in love with Billie.

The next day, Cookie sets Duke up with **JEANNIE**, one of the Chorus Girls from the speakeasy, and leads her to believe that Duke is an important person in the English peerage (the “Duke of England”). Jeannie is instantly interested in Duke (*Do It Again*). Meanwhile, Jimmy’s previous wife has signed the annulment papers, and Billie admits the full truth of her bootlegging life to Jimmy. She expects him to be angry, but he says he wants to spend his life with her (*’S Wonderful*). However, Eileen returns with her aunt, the Duchess, and her father, the Senator, threatening to arrest Jimmy. Billie rushes off and returns in a maid costume, claiming that Jimmy is no longer married

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and that she is the Cockney wife of the butler, Cookie. The lie works... until Jimmy's marriage to Eileen is back on, and Eileen intends to get the good china from the cellar. Jimmy and Cookie distract the group with a little song and dance (*Fascinating Rhythm*).

Jimmy reveals his predicament to Billie: he has to marry Eileen or he will be arrested and disinherited. Billie is clearly upset, but Cookie encourages her to keep it together and help with the wedding so they can sneak away with the booze. The Duchess approaches Cookie with a list of tasks (*By Strauss/Sweet And Lowdown – Reprise*).

The wedding luncheon begins, and after a speech from the Senator, Billie indulges in "a special Cockney tribute" to Jimmy, which involves angrily singing to him and pouring soup in his lap (*Hangin' Around With You – Part 1*). While Cookie spikes the Duchess's drink, Billie returns for another soup attack against Jimmy (*Hangin' Around With You – Part 2*). However, when Billie tries for a third soup attack, she accidentally pours it on Eileen (*Hangin' Around With You – Part 3*). Eileen fires Billie, but Jimmy defends the "maid," making Eileen suspicious. As the situation escalates, the Duchess interrupts, confessing that she is looking for love (*Looking for a Boy*).

After arguing with Jimmy about his upcoming nuptials, Billie is left alone to sulk. Jeannie sympathizes, but Billie accidentally reveals that Duke is not the Duke of England. Jeannie is angry with Duke, but by way of apology, he sings to her (*Blah, Blah, Blah*). As Cookie helps Jimmy prepare for the wedding, Billie returns Jimmy's wallet and says goodbye (*Let's Call the Whole Thing Off – Reprise*). Billie and Jimmy both lament their

predicament, but Cookie has a plan (*Will You Remember Me?*). The Chorus Girls and the **VICE SQUAD** have just finished preparing the living room for the wedding as Jimmy enters (*We've Got To Be There – Reprise*). Eileen follows, reading her wedding vows (*I've Got A Crush On You*).

Cookie and Duke, impersonating undercover prohibition agents, interrupt the wedding, claiming that Jimmy is the notorious bootlegger, Brownbeard. Chief Berry quickly dispels this theory, revealing the bootleggers' true identities and arresting them. Jeannie stops the officers, confessing her love for Duke (*Blah, Blah, Blah – Reprise*). However, when they continue to haul the men away, the Duchess confesses her love for Cookie, who reluctantly reciprocates (*Looking for a Boy – Reprise*). The officers are not swayed until Jimmy's mother, **MILLCENT**, enters the room with a shocking confession: the Senator is Jimmy's father. This means Jimmy and Eileen are related, which instantly halts the wedding. The Senator is thrilled to have a new son and calls off the arrests. Jimmy rushes away to win Billie back, and Chief Berry admits that he thinks Eileen is "delicious" (*Delicious – Reprise*).

Jimmy reaches the boathouse just as Billie is preparing to row away. Millicent and the Senator follow, and Millicent has yet another shocking confession: she is Brownbeard! She approves of her son's desire to marry Billie, and she wants Billie to take over the family business. The Senator offers his Senate seat to Jimmy. Billie and Jimmy share a kiss, happy to be together again (*Someone to Watch Over Me – Reprise*). The cast takes to the stage in "roaring-twenties style" (*Finale*).

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*"Life is one long jubilee."*

— **GEORGE GERSHWIN**

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