

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

Local firm Guzman Law Group ushers visionary Broadway musical *RENT* into a new season of love by fans around the globe.

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Under the leadership of founder Denise M. Guzman, Guzman Law Group of Manhattan Beach has been advocating for the Los Angeles community—and clients from the West Coast to the East Coast—for more than 30 years. In addition to handling numerous business law matters, with its close proximity to Hollywood it comes as no surprise that Guzman Law Group also focuses on entertainment law—an area that attorney Carol T. Contes has practiced her entire career.

“The practice of entertainment law has given me the opportunity to work with creative people in a dynamic, worldwide business,” says Carol, who for the past 10 years has been the entertainment counsel for the Guzman Law. “I also enjoy being of service to people and helping them with their business transactions. Let’s tell the truth—show business is fun!”

One of the firm’s long-standing clients is the estate of Jonathan Larson—the composer of *RENT*, a critically acclaimed rock musical that won a Pulitzer Prize and four Tony Awards and ran on Broadway for 12 years—and the Larson family. Sadly Jonathan passed away unexpectedly the night before the show’s off-Broadway premiere in 1996, at the age of 35.

After the show’s years on Broadway, there were several national tours, numerous foreign



Left to right:
Denise M. Guzman, Business, Estate Planning & Trust Attorney
Carol T. Contes, Entertainment, Copyright & Trademark Attorney

productions and it was adapted into a movie in 2005. In January this year Fox aired a live television production of *RENT*—an arrangement brokered by the Larson estate's agency, Paradigm, and Guzman Law Group.

"The most enjoyable part of working with the Larson estate has been seeing Jonathan's work produced for audiences around the world and adapted for all media," says Carol. "It's so wonderful to see how much he is part of our culture."

Jonathan's family members, who run his estate, concur. "We are absolutely thrilled to be continuing Jonathan's legacy and the still-relevant themes of the show in this way," share Julie Larson, who is a producer and Jonathan's sister, and Allan Larson, his father.

Denise Guzman was first introduced to Julie through family members who worked with her. After Jonathan's death, when Julie needed to immediately prepare a trust and estate plans, she remembered a simple favor Denise had done for her and turned to Guzman Law Group to represent the rights of her brother's estate and the musical *RENT*. Not long after, Denise also began to represent Julie's parents, Al and Nan Larson.

Over the course of 20+ years, the firm has handled the family's entertainment

and business transactions—from negotiating music publishing rights to protecting the estate's trademark and copyright. The Guzman Law team has worked closely with Paradigm and the Larson family to guide the play's pursuits throughout the world and to protect the valuable intellectual property of the estate for future generations.

"Doing a simple favor grew into this meaningful experience," says Denise. "Working with the Larson family has been one of the highlights of my career. I have gotten to be a part of the New York theatre world—something that, as a Los Angeles lawyer, I would never have been able to do." She even attended opening night of *RENT* in Milan, Italy in 2000.

In 2008 Denise played an integral role in transferring the Jonathan Larson Performing Arts Foundation to the American Theatre Wing. "We were very fortunate to have found a home in the American Theatre Wing," she says, "and they have carried on the tradition and the administration of the Jonathan Larson Grants."

These grants, given annually to honor emerging composers, lyricists and book writers, help continue Jonathan's love of musical theatre by supporting and safeguarding the

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recipients' artistic careers. The American Theatre Wing awards the Larson Grants to artists to recognize and showcase their work with no strings attached—except to put it to the best use possible to help further the artists' creative endeavors. The four 2018 grants of \$10,000 each included additional support in the form of residencies, concerts and recording grants, totaling more than \$48,000.

It was recently announced that another of Jonathan's plays, *Tick, Tick... Boom!*, will be adapted for film by the acclaimed writer/actor/director Lin-Manuel Miranda in association with Imagine Entertainment's Ron Howard and Brian Grazer. Julie Larson will be executive producer.

The sky is the limit for the future of *RENT* and other works of Jonathan Larson, as well as the grants awarded in his name. As his work continues to touch lives around the world, the team of Guzman Law Group will continue to support his family and his vision, while the message of *RENT* continues to be relevant and find an audience with a new generation of fans.

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Far left: Denise Guzman with Allan Larson, Jonathan's father. Near left, top: 2018 Jonathan Larson Grant recipients performing at the grants presentation. Near left, bottom: *RENT* 10-year anniversary performance after party.

