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**THE AMERICAN THEATRE WING
TO CELEBRATE
THE LEGACY OF
JONATHAN LARSON & THE LARSON FAMILY
AT ITS ANNUAL GALA**

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2019
CIPRIANI 42ND STREET**

New York, NY (July 18, 2019) – **The American Theatre Wing** (Heather Hitchens, President & CEO) is pleased to announce that it will celebrate the legacy of **Jonathan Larson and the Larson family** at its annual gala, dubbed “Say YES to Artists Gala,” which will be held on Monday, September 16, 2019 at Cipriani 42nd Street (110 East 42nd Street). In celebration of the musical theater creatives who have been impacted by his legacy, the evening will feature one-of-a-kind performances by some of the most vibrant and exciting artists of our time.

Honorary Co-Chairs include **Michael Greif, Patti LuPone, the Miranda family, James L. Nederlander, Benj Pasek, Justin Paul, Jordan Roth, Nick Scandalios, Philip Smith, Jennifer Ashley Tepper, Brisa Trincherro, Sergio Trujillo, Aaron Tveit, and Robert Wankel. Pamela Barbey, CeCe Black, Meg Fofonoff, Lawrence Otis Graham and Pamela Thomas-Graham, Anki Leeds, Evan Shapiro, and Nadine Wong** will serve as Gala Chairs.

“Few individuals have truly changed the theater industry as Jonathan Larson did. Though his scope of work, as well as his life, was cut tragically short, the connection that the theater community and fans across the world made to his work is unmeasurable. He challenged us all to love deeper and bridge the gaps that divide us,” said **Heather Hitchens**, President and CEO of the American Theatre Wing. “At the Wing, we celebrate Jonathan every year by bestowing young and upcoming musical writers with his namesake Jonathan Larson® Grant, giving them the unrestricted support they need to further their creative endeavors. As we approach what would have been his 60th year of life, we see no better way than honoring him and the work that his family has done to ensure that his legacy continues for generations to come.”

“During the 15 years that my brother Jonathan struggled with his art, he received a number of small awards which gave him encouragement to continuing pursuing his dreams. In that spirit, our family formed The Jonathan Larson Performing Arts Foundation to encourage the next generation of theatre artists. This vision was also shared by The American Theatre Wing and partnering with them has helped us expand the ways in which we’re able to support our recipients through what has

become The Jonathan Larson® Grants,” said **Julie Larson**, sister of the late Jonathan Larson. “It has been a wonderful collaboration and we are grateful to The American Theatre Wing for helping us say ‘yes’ to promising artists. We are honored that the Wing has chosen to celebrate Jonathan’s legacy at this year’s Gala.”

Jonathan Larson’s dream was to infuse musical theatre with a contemporary, joyful, urban vitality, but like every creative artist just starting out, he faced a litany of rejections. For years, Julie, Nan, and Al Larson watched their brother and son struggle with constantly being told “No” as he tried to make it as a composer in New York City. His dream finally seemed to be coming true when *RENT* was produced on Broadway, but tragically, he didn’t live to see it happen as he passed away the night before the show’s first preview. Upon his death, the Larson family felt the best way to honor his legacy was to say “YES” to young musical theatre writers providing both money and encouragement at a critical moment in their careers.

The family came to the American Theatre Wing in 2009 and in the last 22 years, The Jonathan Larson® Grants have said “YES” to more than 135 artists and invested over \$730,000 in the future voices of the theatre. Those artists have gone on to garner 20 Tony nominations, 3 Tony Awards, 6 Obie Awards, 2 Golden Globes, 2 Grammys, and 1 Academy Award. Past recipients include Pasek & Paul (*Dear Evan Hansen*), Dave Malloy (*The Great Comet*), Tom Kitt & Brian Yorkey (*Next to Normal*), and many others.

The funds raised at the Gala will provide vital support for the Wing’s programs, which champion theatrical excellence at every stage and ensure that American Theatre has a dynamic and diverse future. The goal for this year’s gala is to provide the Jonathan Larson® Grants with a fresh infusion of funds to match what his family invested over two decades ago.

Past honorees have included **Andrew Lloyd Webber, James Earl Jones, Dame Angela Lansbury, Harold Prince, the Redgrave Family, Sir Howard Stringer, Frank Loesser, Jerry Herman, Carol Channing, Tommy Tune, Matthew Broderick, Nathan Lane, Les Moonves, Isabelle Stevenson, Jerry Bock, Cy Coleman, John Kander, Fred Ebb, Betty Comden, Adolph Green, Marvin Hamlisch, Sheldon Harnick, Stephen Sondheim, Charles Strouse, Graciela Daniele, Kathleen Marshall, Susan Stroman, Julie Taymor**, and many more.

The evening includes cocktails, dinner, and performances. For tickets and more information, please contact Laura Talbot by calling 212.765.0606 or emailing gala@americantheatrewing.org.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN THEATRE WING

One hundred years ago, on the eve of America’s entry into World War I, seven suffragists—all women of the theatre—came together to form The Stage Women’s War Relief. A century later, the spirit and vision behind the founding of **American Theatre Wing** remains a touchstone for all we do. The Wing continues to champion bravery, with a focus on developing the next generation of brave artists. The Wing advances the future of American Theatre by celebrating excellence and nurturing the next generation: on stage, behind the scenes, and in the audience. We envision an American Theatre that is as vital, multi-faceted, and diverse as the American people.

The Wing's programs span the nation to invest in the growth and evolution of American Theatre. We provide theatre education opportunities for underserved students through the Andrew Lloyd Webber Initiative, develop the next generation of theatre professionals through the SpringboardNYC and Theatre Intern Network programs, incubate innovative theatre across the country through the National Theatre Company Grants, foster the song of American Theatre through the Jonathan Larson® Grants, and illuminate the creative process through the Emmy-nominated "Working in the Theatre" documentary series. In addition to founding the Tony Awards® which are co-presented with The Broadway League, the American Theatre Wing co-presents the Obie Awards®, Off Broadway's Highest Honor, with *The Village Voice*.

Visitors to AmericanTheatreWing.org can gain inspiration and insight into the artistic process through the Wing's extensive media collection, and learn more about its programming for students, aspiring and working professionals, and audiences. Follow the Wing on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) @TheWing, and on Facebook.com/TheAmericanTheatreWing.

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