

Shareholder Profile

An Artful Lawyer

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Jennifer Dixon



The instant you speak with **Jennifer Dixon** about the arts, her eyes quickly light up, and it becomes very evident that this has always been the case. Born and raised on the seacoast of New Hampshire, Jennifer was drawn to music and theatre from a young age, spending much of her youth acting, singing, playing the flute, and playing the guitar. She was the first in her family to graduate from college, earning a bachelor's degree from Berklee College of Music in Boston.

After college, Jennifer did what many music majors do — anything that would pay the bills. She worked as a sound engineer, actress, stage manager, studio singer, high school drama teacher, costumed theme park character, and even managed a sports radio station before starting her legal career. If a job touched the arts and entertainment, Jennifer would do it. Seeking a challenge when she turned 30, Jennifer decided to undertake two things that intimidated her. She competed in a triathlon and took the LSAT. When she performed far better on the LSAT than the triathlon, Jennifer was inspired. She applied and was admitted to the Florida State University College of Law. It was there that Jennifer realized her first career in the arts had laid the groundwork for a second career in the law. Her theatrical experience proved to be an asset as she competed on the moot court team, for which she was commended on her persuasiveness in the courtroom, and a new passion for legal writing and advocacy was born. Jennifer graduated from Florida State *cum laude* in 2004. Immediately after graduation, she moved to Orlando to accept a position at Lowndes, where she has developed a litigation practice with a focus on civil and administrative appeals, civil litigation, and family law matters.



Jennifer, who is a shareholder at the firm, draws on her experience in the arts in counseling clients, especially those in creative fields. “Generally, artists and designers process information and communicate differently than scientists and engineers,” she notes. “I find I can be a better counselor and advocate when I am able to speak their language.”

In addition to her legal work, Jennifer has served on the Board of Directors of the Orlando Repertory Theatre (The REP) since 2010. The REP is the only professional theatre in Central Florida solely focused on theatre for young audiences. “Although I found my professional calling in law, I still appreciate the extraordinary impact the arts can have on young people and the community as a whole,” said Jennifer. As a board member, Jennifer assists The REP in its community outreach, development, governance, and strategic planning efforts — ensuring that The REP has the resources to create experiences that enlighten, entertain, and enrich the lives of family and young audiences.

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“Knowing what has been discovered about how the arts can positively impact child development and education, you can’t overemphasize the importance of the performing arts to the future of our community,” she said. “Orlando is so fortunate to have The REP to fill in the gaps or to even supplement arts education. I feel very fortunate to work for a firm that appreciates and supports The REP’s mission.” Jennifer knows from personal experience that exposure to the arts can lay the crucial groundwork for any number of professional careers. “If not for my arts education, I may never have developed the confidence or skills to embark on a legal career.”

When she is not working for clients or volunteering at The REP, Jennifer and her husband, Brian, a commercial real estate broker, can often be found (and heard) cheering on their son, Silas, at little league and flag football games. When asked if Silas will follow in his mother’s footsteps by taking to the stage, Jennifer said, “he is much more sports oriented than I was as a child, but we enjoy seeing shows as a family. I will consider it a parenting ‘win’ if he develops his own appreciation of arts, whether it’s as a performer, volunteer or a patron.” ■



From left to right: Jennifer, son Silas and husband Brian.

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Preuptial Agreements — Who Needs Them?

By **Crystal Espinosa Buit** crystal.buit@lowndes-law.com

Crystal Espinosa Buit



A prenuptial agreement is a contract between prospective spouses before they marry, which governs certain issues in the event of divorce or death, such as property division, spousal support, and rights of a surviving spouse. No doubt, this is not the sort of topic one ordinarily wants to discuss while picking out floral arrangements and color patterns for upcoming nuptials. However, prenuptial agreements (PNAs) are often vital to protecting yourself, and your family, in the long-run. Additionally, open communication is a crucial component to any successful relationship. Dealing with many of these issues in the beginning guarantees everyone is on the same page as to how finances and other critical areas will be handled during the marriage. So who really needs a PNA and why? What do they entail, and how can they protect you? Let's briefly discuss.



WHO? Most often, we think of a celebrity or wealthy individual when envisioning who needs a PNA. But PNAs are not limited to a select few, and can often help many with their long-term strategic financial planning. By way of example, those who are in the process of solidifying their career or establishing a business — and, along the way, building a notable net worth — will often secure a PNA in order to protect their assets, such as business interests, real estate, or pensions and other retirement plans, not just as they are today, but for the future. These assets will inevitably increase in value during the course of the marriage, often due to “marital effort,” thereby conceivably making them subject to equitable distribution during a divorce proceeding. Those who have previously been married or have children from a prior relationship may also want a PNA in order to protect their children's interests. Similarly, parents or family members will often help a child secure a PNA before a marriage in order to protect family assets, such as a family trust or business, as well as potential inheritances.

WHAT? People also often have misconceptions about what a PNA entails, but the truth is that a PNA can be as expansive or limited as you want. Most often, PNAs do cover as much as possible, including (i) how assets will be divided in the event of divorce, usually with all assets acquired before the marriage and even during the marriage remaining that individual's separate, “non-marital” asset; (ii) waiver of alimony or an agreement of a set amount of such support; and (iii) waiver or other contemplation of a surviving spouse's rights in the event of the other party's death, such as to elective share and other statutorily protected rights. But, PNAs don't have to be this expansive, and instead can be tailored to each individual's needs and preferences. Only want to protect the family business or a potential inheritance? The PNA can be limited solely to that asset or occurrence. Want to address assets, but not income earned during the marriage? That can also be accomplished. By way of

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