

WARNER MUSIC GROUP ACQUIRES FIRST NIGHT RECORDS

Deal adds the leading independent musical theatre label to WMG's growing portfolio of family entertainment brands under Arts Music

LONDON, JULY 15TH 2019 – Warner Music Group (WMG) has acquired First Night Records Ltd, the leading independent record label for West End and Broadway musical theatre cast recordings.

The company will be overseen by WMG's Arts Music Division led by President Kevin Gore. First Night co-founder John Craig will join the Arts Music team under a multi-year consulting agreement to identify and record musical theatre productions in the UK.

The deal is the latest in a series of acquisitions and partnerships that have seen Arts Music build a significant presence in the areas of musical theatre and family entertainment. These genres appeal to a hugely passionate core audience and the lower barriers to discovery in the streaming age create new opportunities to attract more casual listeners as well.

"First Night Records is not just a record company, it represents almost all of my working life," says John Craig. "I am pleased that the catalogue is going to WMG, who in the last few years have shown they want to be in the cast recording business. It will be nice to see some of our iconic recordings given a new lease of life through WMG's aggressive marketing. Kevin Gore is a real record man, someone who has come up through the ranks and embraced the new media and all its benefits. I think it will be a wonderful partnership."

Sir Cameron Mackintosh adds: "John Craig was the only record producer to see the potential of the *Les Misérables* score when it first opened at the Barbican Theatre in London 34 years ago. Every other label turned the show down, partly because, at the time, there was no guarantee the show would even transfer to the West End. The record he made, at considerable risk, became an instant classic and established First Night Records as a major player in recording cast albums. John and I became partners on all my subsequent shows and *Les Misérables*, in many different recordings, went on to become one of the most successful and multi-recorded shows of all time.

"John has served the musical theatre brilliantly and tirelessly promoting new talents through his association with the Brit School and many other charities. It is great news for both our industry and me personally that he has now sold his company to Warner Music, and will continue to contribute artistically to the running of that company alongside Kevin Gore. We are already working on three new projects together, details of which will be announced shortly."

Kevin Gore, President of Arts Music, WMG concludes: "I've known John Craig for more than two decades, and I've long admired him personally, the business he's built and the fantastic reputation he's developed over his 35 years running First Night Records. He's recorded some of musical theatre's most iconic shows, we've already collaborated on four new cast recordings over the last 18 months, and I look

forward to our continued partnership for years to come. To also have the support of Sir Cameron Mackintosh means the world to me.”

First Night Records was founded by music business veterans and avid theatre-goers John Craig and Tony Edwards in 1984 with their recording of *Singin' in the Rain*. Since then, First Night has recorded more than 150 productions from small shows to large symphonic versions of blockbuster musicals.

Following the global success of the Original London Cast Recording of *Les Misérables*, First Night has recorded every show that Sir Cameron Mackintosh has produced in London including *Follies*, *Martin Guerre*, *Mary Poppins*, *Miss Saigon*, *My Fair Lady*, *Oliver*, *The Witches of Eastwick* and more.

This deal will see First Night Records become part of the growing portfolio of labels under Arts Music, joining the recently relaunched Sesame Street Records and imprints with Cloudco Entertainment and Build-A-Bear Workshop.

The acquisition follows the establishment of the joint venture with Sh-K-Boom/Ghostlight Records, the multi-Grammy award-winning musical theatre label founded and run by Kurt Deutsch, to create an exceptionally strong catalogue of commercially successful and critically acclaimed cast recordings from London and New York, the two biggest theatre hubs in the world.