

# All local musical to take audiences north

ONE of our region's most celebrated musicians just happened to say during a concert that he'd love for his songs to be used in a musical. One of our region's best-known theatrical producers just happened to be in the audience. The rest, as they say, is history – or it soon will be.

Heading North, a one-hour taster musical featuring the music of Graeme Connors, will make its world premiere on Friday, July 9, 2021 at the Mackay Festival of Arts.

Producer and creator Joel Bow said he first saw Graeme Connors perform his album North at the MECC in 1988 with his parents.

"Thirty years later he (Connors) did a 30th anniversary show, and I was there at the MECC again having a wonderful time when Graeme offhandedly said, 'I've always wanted to put my songs into a musical,'" Mr Bow said.

"Then he started playing A Little Further North Each Year, which is just breathtaking," he said.

"For me, it literally began then – the story of Heading North started happening."

Mr Bow said the story was a homage to the north, the fabulous upbringing he'd had here and the amazing regional community.

"It's not about Graeme, it's not about Joel – I'm just using these beautiful songs to weave a story we can all relate to," he said.

"It's an original story, set in the 60s on a North Queensland beach. These two fabulous families, who have never met each other, have neighbouring beach houses for the summer and it's about them growing up and having a great summer."

Excitement is already building, with subsequent shows on Saturday (July 10) and Sunday (July 11) selling fast.

And few ticket holders are as excited as the man behind the lyrics himself.

"I'm so excited that Friday, July 9, is fast approaching," Graeme Connors said.

"On opening night, you can be sure the bloke with the beaming smile who is singing along with every song will be none other than me!" he said.

"From my first exposure to Joel's vision and reading Samantha's (local writer S.K Munt) script, through to sharing song selection and casting/production details – it has been a delightful journey.

"Like everyone in the audience on Friday and succeeding performances, I will be filled with anticipation and wonder at where my songs have taken the team.

"To have the support of the MECC and the Mackay Festival of Arts for the performance of this truly 'local' production is both heart-warming and humbling."

Mr Bow described this year's four Festival of Arts shows as workshop performances in the more intimate MECC Lynette Denny Space.

"It's new, we are creating the content and using this as a really beautiful platform to get more funding to hopefully expand for next year's Festival and make it into a two-act show.

"I hope audiences enjoy seeing a beautiful new musical that's been created during the pandemic in North Queensland, with North Queensland money, by North Queensland people, in their theatre.

"We've got 10 amazing local performers who have all worked professionally and audiences are in for an amazing hour of entertainment and a really nice show."

🎟️ **Tickets for Heading North are available now online at [themecc.com.au](http://themecc.com.au) or from the box office.**

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**Friday, July 9, Opening Night  
VIP Function 6.30pm / show 7.30pm  
Saturday, July 10, 2pm and 7.30pm  
Sunday, July 11, 2pm**

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*Heading North is supported by the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF). RADF is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Mackay Regional Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.*



Some of the creative team behind Heading North pictured at the 2021 Mackay Festival of Arts launch [L-R]: Lyn Connors, Mayor Greg Williamson, Graeme Connors, Samantha Munt (S.K Munt), James Munt, Joel Bow and Greg Sugden. PHOTO: Supplied