



Writer's note

It's almost four years since *CUSP* had her world premiere at Brown's Mart Theatre in Darwin. Produced by ATYP and Brown's Mart, *CUSP* was directed with nuance and love by Fraser Corfield. Following its Darwin season, *CUSP* transferred - in March 2020 - to The Stables Theatre at Griffin.

There had been whisperings since late January 2020 of a virus sweeping the globe. The first Covid-related death in Australia was recorded on March 1. March 2 revealed 30 cases, including the first community transmission.

The official opening at Griffin on March 13 2020, was an absolute cracker. My siblings and nieces travelled a long way to see the show on the 14th March, an act which meant the world to me. A few days later theatres went dark across the country, and the season of *CUSP* was closed down. That darkness hit many people: industries, lives and livelihoods. The timing for *CUSP* was atrocious, but so many people suffered so much more.

It's always a privilege for a new Australian play to go more than one round on the ferris wheel, and it's an absolute joy to see *CUSP* back on stage in 2023 – this time at Darwin Festival following a season at ATYP's Rebel Theatre, again under Fraser's energising directorial hand, and brought back by a collaboration between Artback NT, ATYP, Darwin Festival and Brown's Mart. The same incredible Northern Territory design team has once again rendered vivid the Top End landscape: capturing its glorious light, unique sounds, and the ubiquitous louvres which open up every Top End home to the natural elements. Joshua McElroy once again nails the role of Elvis, joining two new cast members: Larrakia woman Lakesha Grant, and Abbey Morgan.

Many thanks to Fraser Corfield and Jenny Medway for commissioning me to write *CUSP*, way back in 2017. And to Fraser – thanks for staying so true to this story, and giving it more of your deft, nuanced touch. Thanks to dramaturg Jane Fitzgerald who was pivotal in finessing *CUSP*'s complex timeline and picking up script inconsistencies. Special thanks to Rosealee Grimes [nee Pearson] for cultural input and advice which helped craft Rosie's life out at Yirrkala: making real her life on Country, and helping to problematise the choices she faces as a strong young Indigenous woman torn between living on Country, and moving to the city to study medicine.

CUSP merges the Northern Territory's vast Top End landscape with three teenagers teetering at the CUSP of their adult lives, juggling choice and chance in a world where, as the character of Elvis says, "Some people get better choices to choose from". It is a love letter to the people and landscape of Australia's Top End: in particular our youth, who hold the future so delicately and respectfully in their more-than-capable hands.

We hope you enjoy the ride.

Mary Anne Butler

Mary Anne Butler's plays have won the Victorian Prize for Literature, Victorian Premier's Award for Drama, Shane and Cathryn Brennan Prize for Playwriting, an AWGIE and two NT Chief Minister's Book of the Year Awards.

She's been nominated for the Griffin Theatre Award and twice for the Nick Enright Award [NSW Literary Awards]. Mary Anne is a Sidney Myer Creative Fellow, Arts NT Fellow, Winston Churchill Fellow, Regional Arts Fellow and Asialink Fellow. She holds an MPhil in Creative Writing, MEd in Arts Education, and is undertaking a PhD in Literature, investigating how we write hope into the realist fiction of the Anthropocene.