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Peter King
Performance at
ACCA

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Sometimes words are not enough

I DEFINE theatre as collaboration rather than illustration," says director Peter King, whose latest work, *The Mind's Antipodes*, will be performed for four nights only this week at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.

The first in a series of collaborations between ACCA and the performance group Going Through Stages, *The Mind's Antipodes* focuses on the contiguity of physics and art, with particular reference to physicist Theodor Schwenk's book *Sensitive Chaos*.

Under the aegis of King, the show will involve performer David Roberts, composer Sam Mallet, acoustic designer Suenor Woon, architect and designer Peter Corrigan, writer and performer Simon Hughes (paperback columnist for this newspaper) and ACCA's director, Grazia Gunn.

Conceived through discussions with Hein Wagenfeld, head of physics at RMIT, and in collaboration with the RMIT's centre for design, the work was rehearsed in non-parallel acoustic chambers at RMIT.

"It's painful to talk in it (the chambers), with a reverberation time of about eight seconds, which absolutely guarantees that the piece is not going to be very verbal," says King. Language is often inorganic to the dramatic medium. In *The Mind's Antipodes*, words take on a highly musical, rhythmic role, sharing equal weight with the elements of movement, light and sound.

Inspired by a complex of ideas and sources, the performance enacts a dialectic between ob-

jects and the perception of objects; between the mind of the north, connected with the old world and with everyday consciousness, and the mind's antipodes — at once a metaphor for the upside-down, for the unconscious, and for Australia. Translated from the Greek, King points out, antipodes literally means creatures that have their hands and feet back to front.

Starting with Aldous Huxley's *Doors of Perception* and the *Gates of Heaven and Hell*, King traces a line of influence between the experiments of the 18th century scientist Sir Humphrey Davy with nitrous oxide (laughing gas), Cezanne's painting *Rocks at Garonne*, and the poet Allen Ginsberg's "apprehension of" Cezanne's work and his own experiments with drugs.

Emphatically positioned outside the arena of mainstream theatre, King scoffs at the tag enfant terrible. "I'd rather be called an old hack," he says.

"All we're doing as a performance group is trying to find a pure theatre which privileges the elements which are theatrical, rather than all those other things that turn up. It's not all that new."

■ *The Mind's Antipodes* will be performed on April 5-8 at 5.30 pm at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. Bookings and inquiries, phone 654 6422.



The team behind *The Mind's Antipodes* at rehearsals, from left: Peter King, Sam Mallet, Simon Hughes, Suenor Woon and David Roberts. Picture: John Feder