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.. Serious **fun**



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Action! Action! Action!

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### *The Theatre of Dreams:* Operatic Performance as an Early-modern REM-state Activator

Griffin's *The Origin of Dreams* (1997 & 2004) proposed a new Organising Idea with wide applications across many fields, which led to the founding of a new school of Psychology, *Human Givens* (2003).

Griffin claims that the function of Dreams is to process unresolved expectations (whether positive or negative). Emotionally charged and unresolved situations are dealt with in Dreams by means of Metaphors – characters, objects and abstract concepts do not appear directly.

Dreaming is associated with the Rapid Eye Motion phase of sleep. The REM-state can also be accessed whilst awake, in daydreaming, trance, hypnosis or psychotic states. Griffin suggests that the establishment of waking access to REM-state was linked to the evolutionary development of language, and to conscious awareness of past, present and future. His metaphor for the REM-state is the Theatre of Dreams.

The centrality of Metaphor connects with my historical investigation of *Enargeia: Visions in Performance*. Griffin's theory offers an explanation of how detailed visual description can have such a powerful emotional effect. Period performance practices around the year 1600 show a strikingly close correlation to known gateways into trance (e.g. Ericksonian hypnosis).

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Of course, in many periods and many cultures, we would accept that fine performers 'cast a spell' over their audience. Griffin's model can explain precisely how that spell functions. With case studies of Monteverdi's and Landi's settings of *Orfeo*, I argue that circa-1600 performance practices were particularly closely aligned with trance-induction processes, in order to create the psychological conditions in which the audience's passions could indeed be moved.