

Scintillating baroque..



.. Serious **fun**



Director from the Continuo

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Early Harps & Research

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Action! Action! Action!

Period performance practices around the year 1600 show a strikingly close correlation to known gateways into trance (e.g. Ericksonian hypnosis). I hypothesise that singers in the first operas were inducing their audiences into an Altered State of Consciousness by means of regular rhythm, particular patterns of speech, persuasive suggestion and authoritative commands, in which deep relaxation in slow rhythm was mixed with sharp calls for attention.

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.