

Magic as the Art of Hope
By Dr. Larry Hass

Eugene Burger said many times that the primary metaphor of magic was transformation. Yes! And, I think there is something else that I'd like to draw your attention to. I don't know if it's a metaphor of magic, but it's something deeply essential in the art itself.

I believe, on some foundational level, magic is the art of hope. The reason I think this is because every time we create an impossibility, we are reminding the audience, we're affecting the audience, we're telling the audience that the world is bigger than they thought. That what they might have assumed was impossible is actually possible. And not just symbolically possible, but actually possible: "It happened right here in my hand! It happened right here in this theater!"

Magic is the art of impossibility, and when we present these things well—and effectively—they have this ecstatic quality. People feel energy, delight, and wonder, and I believe part of that is because we are giving a message of hope: the world is bigger than we knew before, and that feels great! . . .

So much of what we hear about magic is that it is the art of deception, and lying, and tricking, and blah, blah, blah! I think it's important to "ring that bell" in a different direction. You know, you can take a bell and ring it one way, and it clanks. But if you just release the hand a little bit and ring it another way, it chimes. And, I think the idea of magic as the art of hope—as one art of hope—is something that resonates with me in a powerful way, and I hope it does with you.

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