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At the Quai Branly museum, the renewal of the Persian shadow theater by Hamid Rahmanian

The Iranian artist uses animated movies techniques to magnify his adaptation of the celebrated "Book of the Kings."

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For the world premiere of his new creation, "Song of the North," Hamid Rahmanian has chosen France and the Musée du quai Branly- Jacques-Chirac. In December 2018, he had already presented his creation "Shâhnameh: A Persian epic (Feathers of Fire)", the first part of his work around the shadow theater adaptation of the Book of Kings, an epic poem written in the 10th century by Ferdowsi (around 940-1020), a founding text of the Iranian literature.

Born in 1968 in Tehran and living in the United States since the 1990s, Hamid Rahmanian has worked for a long time as a graphic designer and director of documentaries and animated films that have won awards at several festivals. Since 2013, he has devoted himself to transmitting to the general public the cultural heritage of his native country, Iran, of which the Book of Kings is one of the key works.

The scenic device is based mainly on a huge screen placed in front of the stage. The approximately 500 puppets and 200 animated landscapes, as well as the ten actors and manipulators are behind this screen, only their silhouettes and images are visible to the public, projected in Chinese shadows. This immediately provides a feeling of total immersion, transporting the viewer to the heart of a beautifully illustrated book of Persian illuminated manuscript. The soundtrack, composed by musician Loga Ramin Torkian and performed by singer Azam Ali, also contributes to this immersion in the traditional Iranian culture.

Like any epic worthy of the name, from the tales of Homer to the Indian Mahabharata, the show tells of the thwarted loves of the brave knight Bijan and the beautiful princess Manijeh, with a charming voice, belonging to enemy kingdoms, at war for centuries. Despite the hatred of their fathers, the jealousy of their rivals, betrayals, demons and other obstacles put in their way, the lovers will eventually overcome the trials to make their passion triumph. Arrived at the end of this breathtaking fireworks of creativity (about an hour and a half) and colorful images, frantic cavalcades, epic battles, the spectator has only one desire: that the story never ends, like the one told every evening by Scheherazade to the sultan, in "The Thousand and One Nights," another mythical story.