



Manijeh, a heroine from ancient Persia, uses all her strengths and talents to rescue her beloved from a perilous predicament of her own making.

“Total Immersion... At the end of this breathtaking fireworks of creativity and colorful images, the spectator has only one desire: that the story never ends.” – *Le Monde*

“The Persian soul and culture vibrate in this original and poetic show... An innovative fairy tale.” – *Toute La Culture*

“Out of the ordinary!” – *Les Echos*

Project Info:

Creator, Writer, Director: Hamid Rahmanian

Producer: Melissa Hibbard

Contact: info@kingorama.com / www.kingorama.com

Duration: 80 minutes, no intermission

US & International availability: Spring 2022 onwards

Audience: Family-friendly, age 7+

Prosceniums Venues

House Size: 500-3,000+ seats

Representation: Laura Colby, Elsie Management (laurac@elsieman.org)

Publicist: Jonathon Slaff (js@jsnyc.com)

2022 Performances:

- World Premiere February 9-13, 2022, **Musée du quai Branly**, Paris France
- US Premiere March 5-12, 2022: Harvey Theater, **Brooklyn Academy of Music**
- April 15-17, 2022: **XVIII Festival de Teatro de Bogotá**, Bogotá, Colombia

Story Synopsis

Song of the North is a large-scale, cinematic performance combining the manual art of shadow puppetry with projected animation to tell the courageous tale of Manijeh, a heroine from ancient Persia, who must use all her strengths and talents to rescue her beloved from a perilous predicament of her own making and help prevent a war. This epic love story employs a cast of 500 handmade puppets and a talented ensemble of nine actors and puppeteers, all of which come together to create a spectacular experience that advances the themes of unity, collaboration, and experimentation through performance and story. *Song of the North*, adapted from the Book of Kings (*Shahnameh*), challenges the Eurocentric worldview of art and storytelling through a contemporary multimedia experience of this classic Persian tale.

The story follows an Iranian knight who crosses the boarder to Turan – Iran’s sworn enemy – to attend a festival and falls madly in love with Princess Manijeh. As the festival comes to an end, Manijeh leans over her forlorn love and sings an enchanted melody, putting him to sleep. Bijan wakes up inside the Turanian castle with Manijeh by his side. They innocently enjoy their time together until her father, the king of Turan, learns of the intruder’s presence. Irate, King Afrasayb has Bijan thrown into a well and strips his daughter of her titles and property.

At the well's edge, an impoverished Manijeh sings and entertains Bijan with stories of yore and begs for food scraps from local villagers. Manijeh learns that an Iranian merchant is in a nearby town. She tells Bijan not to give up hope and sets off to get help. Upon greeting the merchant, she learns he is the great hero Rostam, sent from Iran to find Bijan. Together they devise a plan to rescue the knight. Rostam heads to the well and Manijeh sets off to confront her father, as spies informed the king of Rostam's arrival in Turan. Manijeh reproaches her father for his impetuous and heartless act then sings out a magical melody that puts the king's army to sleep. She returns to the well where Rostam has rescued Bijan. The band crosses the border before the Turanian army can regroup. Safe in Iran, Manijeh is commended for her strength and determination and the two lovers live happily ever after.

Project Description

Using our last shadow theater piece, *Feathers OF Fire* as a jumping off point, *Song of the North* is in some ways a continuation in both form and story. The story is adapted from *Shahnameh*, which is considered a national treasure in Iran. The work incorporates the visual traditions of Iran as the vehicle to tell this story about a woman whose strength and perseverance has made her a cherished heroine of Iran.

The graphics are inspired by the visual culture that evolved around *Shahnameh*, with influences from miniature paintings and etchings. The puppetry style has roots in Indonesian-style shadow play. In terms of style, inspiration is drawn from Lotte Reiniger's "Adventures of Prince Achmed", the choreography of the performers adapts Persianesque gesticulations and composers Ramin Torkian and Azam Ali create a Persian-nuanced bright and bold soundtrack. The storytelling is modern, implementing cinematic tricks like cuts, zooms, tilts, pans, and tracking shots.

The show uses a combination of almost 500 handmade puppets, 9 performers, and audio/visual components that create the environments where in the puppets and actors interact. All of this action is performed behind a giant screen (16x35) set up at the edge of a proscenium. The audience watches the entire show projected onto the screen, giving them the feeling of being immersed in a live animation adventure.







