

WallisAnnenberg
Center for the
Performing Arts

Paul Crewes
Artistic Director

Rachel Fine
Managing Director

IN COLLABORATION WITH MARK AMIN PRESENT

Feathers of Fire

A Persian Epic

A PRODUCTION OF FICTIONVILLE STUDIO AND BANU PRODUCTIONS

**CONCEIVED, DESIGNED
AND DIRECTED BY**
Hamid Rahmanian

IN COLLABORATION WITH
Larry Reed and
ShadowLight Productions

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY
Loga Ramin Torkian
and Azam Ali

WRITTEN AND ADAPTED BY
Hamid Rahmanian

CO-WRITTEN BY
Vikas Menon

BASED ON THE BOOK
*Shahnameh: The Epic of
the Persian Kings*

**STORYBOARDS AND
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT BY**
Syd Fini

PUPPETS HANDCRAFTED BY
Neda Kazemifar and
Spica Wobbe

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Fred C. Riley III

**DIGITAL MEDIA DIRECTED
AND ORCHESTRATED BY**
Mohammad Talani

COSTUMES MADE BY
Dina Zarif

PERFORMED BY

Aureen Almario, Ya Wen Chien, Gabriela Garcia , Ariel Lauryn, Rose Nisker,
Jon Riddleberger, Fred C. Riley III, Lorna Velasco, and Dina Zarif

PRODUCED BY
Hamid Rahmanian, Melissa Hibbard
and Nasim Yazdani

CO-PRODUCED BY
Ahmad Kiarostami

A PROJECT OF
Two Chairs Inc.

OCTOBER 20-29, 2017
Bram Goldsmith Theater

Running time: 70 minute performance, followed by a 20 minute presentation

Projectors provided by: Canon USA
Community Sponsor: Farhang Foundation
Production Sponsor: Mercedes-Benz of Beverly Hills

About the Program



CAST OF CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

PERFORMANCE BY FRED C. RILEY III; VOICE BY CHARLIE VARON.....NARRATOR
PERFORMANCE AND VOICE BY FRED C. RILEY III.....SAUM/KNIGHT IN THE PERSIAN COURT
PERFORMANCE AND VOICE BY ROSE NISKER.....SIMORGH/MAGICAL BIRD
PERFORMANCE BY LORNA VELASCO GABRIELA GARCIA; VOICE BY RYAN TASKER....ZAUL/SON OF SAUM, HERO OF THE STORY
VOICE BY MARC THOMSON.....KING MANUCHEHR/KING OF PERSIA
PERFORMANCE BY AUREEN ALMARIO; VOICE BY MARC THOMPSON.....MEHRAB/GOVERNOR OF KABUL
PERFORMANCE BY ROSE NISKER; VOICE BY JERI LYNN COHEN.....SINDOKH/WIFE OF MEHRAB
PERFORMANCE BY DINA ZARIF; VOICE BY LISA HORI-GARCIA.....RUDABEH/DAUGHTER OF MEHRAB & SINDOKHT
LOGA RAMIN TORKIAN, AZAM ALI, SINAN CEM EROGLU,
HABIB MEFTAH BOUSHEHRI, OMER AVCI, AND DINA ZARIF.....MUSICIANS

MAJOR FUNDING PROVIDED BY

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Feathers of Fire is represented by
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A little over a thousand years ago a Persian poet named Ferdowsi of Tous collected and put into heroic verse the millennium old mythological and epic traditions of Iran.

It took him thirty years to write the sixty thousand verses that comprise the *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings). This monumental tome is one of the most important literary works of Iran and like other great epics, such as *Gilgamesh*, *The Odyssey*, *Nibelungenlied* and *Ramayana*, it is a record of the human imaginative consciousness. It is well known and has been adapted throughout the Near East, Central Asia and India but is mostly unknown in the West. *Feathers Of Fire* is one of the love stories in the *Shahnameh*.

There is a great power in live performance. *Feathers Of Fire: A Persian Epic* exposes children and adults to a broader view of this world. It introduces new characters

and places, teaches them about the history of civilization and reinforces the positive attributes of what it means embrace all of one's humanity. It is our intention to highlight the strength of the culture and promote a more complex and interesting view of Iran here in the United States.

Our goal is to present a more holistic view of Iran to wider audiences by presenting stories and aspects of *Shahnameh* in different media, which we are collectively calling "The Shahnameh Project."

The first of this project, *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings*, a 600-page illustrated new translation and adaptation and published in 2013, is now in its 2nd edition. We have created an elaborate pop-up book due out in 2018. We have also created a short shadow puppet show, based on the story of Zakhak, as well as an audiobook version of our *Shahnameh* book. *Feathers Of Fire: A Persian Epic*, the shadow play, is the fifth part of "The Shahnameh Project."



HAMID RAHMANIAN (Creator, Designer & Director,) a 2014 Guggenheim Fellow, is an award winning visual artist/filmmaker born and educated in Tehran, Iran. His work centers on film and graphic arts. His

narrative and documentary films have premiered at Venice, Sundance, Toronto, Tribeca and IDFA Film Festivals. He has won numerous international awards and his works have been televised on international networks including PBS, Sundance Channel, IFC, Channel 4, BBC, and Al Jazeera. Rahmanian undertook the immense task of illustrating and commissioning a new translation and adaptation of *Shahnameh* by Ferdowsi, entitled, *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings* (2013, Quantuck Lane Press), which is now in its second edition and available as an audiobook. Rahmanian has created a pop-up book based on his *Shahnameh*, which is due out in 2018.



LARRY REED (Shadow Master) is an internationally recognized theater director and is one of the few American dalangs ("shadow masters") of traditional Balinese shadow theater known as Wayang Kulit.

The founder and artistic director of ShadowLight Productions, Reed has pioneered contemporary shadow theater by integrating traditional shadow theater techniques with film, modern theater, and dance styles. A true multidisciplinary artist, Reed has also written, directed, and produced films in the US and Mexico. *Shadow Master* (1979) has been shown on the PBS and the Discovery Channel. Reed has garnered numerous awards and honors, and was named one of Top 50 Artists in the SF Bay Area by *Metropolitan Magazine* in 1995 and 1996.



LOGA RAMIN TORKIAN (Composer) is an Iranian-born multi-instrumentalist and composer. He is recognized internationally for his ground-breaking work with World Music groups Niyaz and Axiom Of

Choice, both of which he co-founded. A highly-gifted composer and a visionary, Loga is greatly respected for his ability to adapt the Persian classical repertoire to his own unique and modern compositions. In 2014 Loga was nominated for a Canadian JUNO Award in the Category of "Best World Music Album" for the album he recorded with musical partner Azam Ali titled, "Lamentation of Swans." He continues to produce albums and tour worldwide with NIYAZ.



AZAM ALI (Composer) is one of the most prolific, versatile, and gifted singers/ composers on the international music stage today. Azam's most notable work is with the cutting-edge world music electro-acoustic

project NIYAZ. Her distinctive voice can be heard on myriad film and television scores including "Thor-The Dark World", "Matrix- Revolutions", "Prince of Persia- The Sands of Time", "The Fight Club", "True Blood", "Alias", "The Agency, and "Prison Break". Azam has also collaborated with numerous musicians such as Serj Tankian of System of a Down, Peter Murphy of Bauhaus, Dredg, Chris Vrenna formerly of Nine Inch Nails, Kodo, Zakir Hussain, and Mickey Hart.



AUREEN B. ALMARIO (Ensemble) is an actor, performance artist and educator. She is a resident artist at Bindlestiff Studio in San Francisco, CA and the co-founder of all female sketch

group Granny Cart Gangstas. She is currently the lead in *Chasing Papeles*, written by her sister Andrea Almario, a play which explores the undocumented experiences of Filipina caregivers.



YA WEN (WINNIE) CHIEN (Ensemble) was born in Taiwan and currently lives and works in San Francisco. She studied MA digital Media in University of the West of England, Bristol. Her practice and teaching

experience spans painting, drawing, photography, printmaking and book art. She has been involved in theaters in Taiwan and also ShadowLight Productions company in San Francisco.



GABRIELA GARCIA (Ensemble) completed of her MFA Acting degree from the USC where she trained in Le Coq and Grotowsky movement techniques under Andy Robinson and David Bridel. She

has had success in commercials and independent films appearing in spots for YouTube, Conde Nast, Credit Karma, One West Bank, USA Network and more, as well as indie film *Actors Anonymous* directed by James Franco, and *Case 347* starring Maya Stojan, out in 2018. Gabriela also works as a movement teacher and talent scout for acting conservatories in the greater Los Angeles area.



ARIEL LAURYN (Ensemble) is a puppeteer, physical comedian, and theater maker based in Brooklyn. She has performed with *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show* (Off Broadway), Puppet Kitchen, Trusty Sidekick,

Columbia Stages, Physical Comedy Lab, and LES Shakespeare. Her original works have been produced by CalArts, Fringe Festivals, Dixon Place, Triskelion Arts, The Pit Loft, and The Tank. MFA Physical Theater (Dell'Arte International).



ROSE NISKER (Ensemble) is a dancer, theater performer, and aerial rope/fabric artist. She's performed at venues across the globe including 6 tours to Indonesia, EXPO '86 Vancouver, and the World Festival of Sacred

Music at the Hollywood Bowl. She holds a BA from UCLA in World Arts and Cultures, is a principal artist with renowned Balinese performing arts company Gamelan Sekar Jaya, and the Artistic Director of Les Aerielles, an Oakland-based aerial youth arts troupe.



JON RIDDLEBERGER (Ensemble) is a NYC based actor, puppeteer, and teacher. He has performed around the world as a puppeteer and is an artistic associate of Theater Reconstruction Ensemble in NYC.

He has been a puppeteer with Dead Puppet Society, Handspring Puppet Company, Mettawee River Theatre Company, Our Voices, InkFish Productions and toured with the North American and Japanese tour of *War Horse* as well as various other projects around NYC.



FRED C RILEY III (Assistant Director/ Ensemble) has honed his skills writing, directing, choreographing, building and performing for such companies as Imago, Tear of Joy Theatre, The Center for Puppetry Arts,

Shadowlight Productions, and Ping Chong and Company. Skilled in many forms of puppetry from Czech black to marionettes, intimate to spectacle, he is ready for any challenge. He is proud to have worked with great directors such as Janie Geiser, Jon Ludwig, Ping Chong, Josef Krofta, and Larry Reed.

About the Artists



MOHAMMAD TALANI

(Digital Media Director/ Ensemble) Born in Iran, Mohammad is a Berkeley-based musician, actor, and videographer. He has

collaborated in several fields as an actor, editor, music performer, and producer with different artists including Bahram Beyzaei, Mohsen Namjoo, Babak Jalali, and others. He is a member of the band Kiosk, a pioneering Iranian rock band.



LORNA VELASCO

(Ensemble) is a San Francisco theatre artist whose training began at Bindlestiff Studio with founding director Chrystene Ells. She continued her theater training at UC Berkeley, and at

the Arts Institute of Indonesia, where she was trained in classical dance, mask making, puppetry, and music. She is both principal puppeteer and teaching artist for Larry Reed's Shadowlight Productions.



DINA ZARIF (Costumes/ Ensemble) is a performer musician and vocalist. She has co-composed original music and sung in *Home*, a theatrical dance performance. Zarif also performed classical repertoire

at venues such as Red Poppy Art House, MAPP and Mission culture center. Her recent music project is *Love Song From Around The World*, a duet with harp. She performed in a reading of Beyzaie's *Ardaviraf's Report* and most recently she performed the role of "Dancer/Singer" in Mr Beyzaie's newest play *Tarabnameh* a Persian traditional musical in Stanford.

MARK AMIN is the founder and CEO of Sobini Films, a film production and financing company. Most recently, Amin produced Sony Picture Classics' *Miles Ahead* starring Don Cheadle and IFC's *Good Kill* starring Ethan Hawke. Amin's upcoming projects include a theatrical reboot of the *Zorro* franchise and *Russ & Roger*, starring Will Ferrell and Josh Gad. Prior to Sobini, Amin served as Vice Chairman of Lionsgate Entertainment. During his nine-year term, Lionsgate produced and distributed such films as *Monster's Ball*, which earned Halle Barry an Academy Award for Best Actress, and *Crash*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. Previously, Amin founded Trimark Pictures and served as Chairman and CEO until the company merged with Lionsgate. Amin's past credits include the critically acclaimed *Eve's Bayou* starring Samuel Jackson, the Emmy® Award-winning *The Simple Life of Noah Dearborn* starring Sidney Poitier, and *Frida*, which garnered six Academy Award nominations.

FICTIONVILLE STUDIO is the production company of husband and wife team, Hamid Rahmadian and Melissa Hibbard. Together they have created film, book, graphic and fine art, photography and theater projects that span two decades. Their work has won numerous awards, been selected to premiere at prestigious venues including the Sundance Film Festival, Venice Film Festival, Toronto Film Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Honolulu Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Their films have been seen around the world on BBC, Channel 4, Al Jazeera, and PBS among other international outlets. They have always strived to create work that is multi-dimensional and provocative, offering a unique glimpse into worlds that are otherwise unknown and little explored. Their recent works include the seminal work *Shahnameh the Epic of the Persian Kings*, a 600-page tome that retells the stories of the *Persian Book of Kings* by the poet Ferdowsi.

BANU PRODUCTIONS is a production and event management company owned by Nasim Yazdani based in Dubai, UAE. Banu is active in promoting, engaging and fostering cross-cultural dialogues and inspiration to showcase ethnic diversity by supporting and creating different art and cultural programs. Banu has advanced into further meaningful artistic projects and activities to achieve the goal of connecting the world through a cultural, intellectual, and educational experience with fundraising for selected charity organization.

SHADOWLIGHT PRODUCTIONS was founded in San Francisco in 1972 by Larry Reed to nurture indigenous shadow theatre traditions, expand the possibilities of the shadow theatre medium, and reflect the cultural diversity and complexity of the modern world through its works. It is one of the very few companies dedicated solely to the art of shadow theatre, and fills a distinctively unique role in the American Theatre scene. The company's work has been presented internationally and the company has received Citations for Excellence from the International Puppetry Association, as well as having been nominated for the American Theater Wing Design Award. www.shadowlight.org