

# God and Cell Phones Are Big Themes in the Humorous New Play '2012'

By [Jonathan Curiel](#) | Nov 06, 2012



In Farzam Farrokhi's play, *2012*, three people meet up at an unremarkable cafe in an unnamed city to chat -- about God, about mobile phones, about other subjects that matter to them. Each person happens to represent a major monotheistic religion, but Jesus, the Messiah, and the Mahdi are taking a break from more pressing duties to revel in what Farrokhi calls an atmosphere of "dry humor." At one point, God calls the cafe to gab, and the Messiah says out loud, "Got the call. Was told to punch in."

Can a first-time playwright turn a religious meeting of the minds into theatrical entertainment? Farrokhi is finding out. *2012* is being performed at ReOrient, the annual San Francisco showcase of Middle East-themed plays that opened November 1 and continues through November 18. The stakes are high for Farrokhi, a professed non-practitioner who wants *2012* to provoke laughter and reflection in audiences.

The prophets in Farrokhi's play get along like best friends, and even dress alike, with long-sleeved camel-colored shirts and dark pants. (No flowing robes for these three.) The Messiah, who religious Jews believe will restore their faith to a new purity, is portrayed by an actress, Roneet Rahamim. God is a woman in *2012*, and the cafe's waiter is the biblical progenitor Adam. While Farrokhi was born and raised in Iran, where Islam is widely practiced, Farrokhi is not religious himself, which gives him leeway, he says, to imagine a "what if" scenario that has fun with language, plot twists and small details, like what kind of phone the prophets use. In *2012*, Jesus prefers an Android phone because it gives him more choices, al-Mahdi loves his iPhone, and the Messiah trumpets her Blackberry.

"Two-thirds of the planet believe that a representative of their religion will, at some point, just show up and change things," Farrokhi says, "and I wondered what that would look like, and I thought it would be fun to tell that through contemporary themes."

Farrokhi says that "the similarities among major religions are 90 percent, and the differences are 10 percent, and we zone in on that 10 percent, which is why we're in a mess right now." Farrokhi disagrees with the adage that God created humans in his/her own image, saying, "I think it's man who created God based on his own image." The 43-year-old Farrokhi, who moved to the United States for high school at age 15, is a data-base engineer by profession. A longtime theater-goer, he's lived in the Bay Area for 17 years, and would "scribble on the side" in the hope of writing a play someday. Farrokhi submitted an edited version of a play he'd written several years ago to Golden Thread Productions, which puts on ReOrient. Much to his delight, the group accepted *2012*, which is one of ten short plays at this year's festival. Other ReOrient works include *City of Grubs*, by Naomi Wallace, a MacArthur "Genius Grant" recipient, who has an Arab Jewish immigrant confess his life to a dead body; *War and Peace*, by the late Egyptian playwright Tawfiq al-Hakim, which centers on a woman who must choose between two men symbolizing extremes; and *Stuck*, by Iraqi playwright Amir al-Azraki, about the Kafkaesque world of visa requirements and other hurdles that Iraqis face to take an international flight.

Attending rehearsals and seeing the casting of *2012*, Farrokhi became even more excited about what could be his future full-time profession. "You never know -- until you share your work -- if other people connect to your writing," Farrokhi says. "Golden Thread has been very supportive. It's been great. It's been an amazing experience." *2012* is performed Nov. 8-11 and Nov. 15-18 as one of a series of short plays in the ReOrient Festival at NOH Space in San Francisco. For [tickets and more information](#), visit [goldenthread.org](http://goldenthread.org).