



We asked playwright Marcus Youssef to tell us a little more about history of Jabber.

*How was JABBER developed? Did you work with any advisors from Muslim communities? Does the play draw on any experiences your life? How have different community leaders guided the process?*

**Marcus Youssef:** I am an Egyptian Canadian, like Fatima, and it is very much based on my experience and that of folks I know. Although my family is Coptic Christian, 90% of Egypt's population is Muslim, and so the majority of Egyptian and Arabic immigrants I'm connected to in Canada are Muslim. When developing the play, I worked with them through a local community group: ADALA (the Canadian Arab Justice Committee based here in Vancouver) and consulted with advisors as I wrote and rewrote the script. My principle three script advisors were:

Female Muslim academic (from Vancouver, now at Columbia University) - Sumayya Kassamali. Info on her here. <http://www.wennergren.org/grantees/kassamali-sumayya>. Sumayya in many ways inspired the story - she has been a longtime cultural consultant for me (on my Alcan award winner *Adrift*, among others). Since I have known her she has gone back and forth between wearing hijab and not. This experience and our long conversations/debate.

My second script consultant was Muslim-Canadian-Egyptian art historian and activist and long time collaborator Liliane Karnouk. She is a globally recognized expert on contemporary Egyptian and Islamic art, author of numerous books, and a key advisor in relationship to representations of women in contemporary Muslim art. She was a professor at the American University in Cairo for many years. [http://www.abcbookworld.com/view\\_author.php?id=8596](http://www.abcbookworld.com/view_author.php?id=8596)[http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmcc/exhibitions/cultur/cespays/pay2\\_10e.shtml](http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmcc/exhibitions/cultur/cespays/pay2_10e.shtml)

My last consultant was Maryse Warda, the Egyptian-Canadian Muslim translator. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maryse\\_Warda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maryse_Warda). She is a fierce opponent of hijab and a long-time collaborator. She also translated the work into French.

#### MARCUS YOUSSEF BIO

Marcus Youssef's dozen plays and performance events have been produced in theatres and festivals across North America, Europe and Australia, from New York to Dublin to Berlin. His awards include Rio-Tinto Alcan Performing Arts, Chalmer's Canadian Play, Arts Club Silver Commission, Seattle Times Footlight, Vancouver Critics' Choice Innovation (three times), as well as numerous local awards and nominations for best new play, production, and director in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. Marcus has been artistic director of Vancouver's Newworld Theatre since 2005, where he also co-founded Progress Lab 1422, a collaboratively managed, six-thousand-square-foot studio and production hub. Youssef has served as an assistant professor at Montreal's Concordia University and implemented Canada's first joint Bachelor of Performing Arts degree program at Capilano University. He was the inaugural chair of Vancouver's Arts and Culture Policy Council, teaches regularly at the National Theatre School of Canada and Langara College's Studio 58, and is an editorial advisor to Canadian Theatre Review. Youssef lives in East Vancouver with his partner, teacher Amanda Fritzlán, and their sons Oscar and Zak.