

**PRESS RELEASE / Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

## **“Master Musicians Of the Middle East Perform In Ojai”**

The newly formed **Salaam Ensemble**, performing music of Near and Middle East, will have its Ojai premiere on **March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007** at the **Matilija Jr. High School Auditorium at 7:30pm**. The concert performance is co-sponsored by The Ojai Music Festival and Performances To Grow On.

The ensemble was created by award-winning Ojai composer and renowned World Music artist John Zerezke. It includes some of the most famous musicians from Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Armenia, Israel and other Middle Eastern countries. “These are the best of the best,” says Zerezke. “Most of the Salaam ensembles musicians are on soundtracks many people have already heard before, such as *Aladdin, The Mummy, Mission Impossible, Prince Of Egypt, The Black Stallion, Syrianna, The Hulk, PBS - The Arabs*...the list goes on and on”.

Zerezke formed the group in 2005 when approached by Music Center Of Los Angeles Artistic Director Barbara Leonard to form a musical educational show to tour the schools in southern California. “I just knew that I had to do create this group. Very few groups represent a mix of musical styles quite like Salaam, especially with the level of mastery that these musicians bring to the concert stage.” Salaam Ensemble has been receiving praise everywhere they perform; concert venues, schools, libraries and community concerts.

“The Salaam Ensemble performance was one of our most popular ever”, said Michael Alexander, Managing Director of the Music Center of Los Angeles Education Division and Director of World City at Disney Hall, where Salaam performed last season.

“Audience members found the music mesmerizing. Personally, I was amazed at the artistry of each musician”.

The ensemble has already performed for over 20,000 students in southern California in just this last school season and since the group’s creation. It’s not easy to get up so early and drive to schools all over the southland to perform, but the musicians take pride in the artistry and cultural musical roots they are bringing to students and the schools.

The musicians perform on such ancient instruments such as the oud (string lute), ney (cane flute), kemence’ (bowed spike-fiddle), Egyptian tabla (drum), daf (frame drum), santur (ancient dulcimer) and many other exotic instruments. The ensemble will include Persian master musicians Mashid Mirzadeh and Houman Pourmehdi, world-renowned Armenian-American oudist John Bilezikjian, Lebanese master musician and ethnomusicologist Dr. A. J. Racy, percussionist and darabuka player Amir Sofi from Israel. The ensemble will also feature surprise special guests.

Aaron Paley, Director of Community Arts Resource (CARS) at the Getty Museum sums it up by saying, “They inspired the enthusiastic crowd of hundreds with their mesmerizing blend of Near and Middle Eastern music and exotic instruments, yet presented a concert performance that anyone of any age could relate to and appreciate. The ensemble represents an important mix of eastern cultural music that brings together people from all walks of life, in a day and age when we need it most. Bravo, Salaam!”

For information, call:

John Zeretzke, Director – Salaam Ensemble

Please contact for press photos (jpegs) – leave e-mail address and message.

805.640.1832

[www.zworldmusic.com](http://www.zworldmusic.com)