

# Middle East's desert music highlights Bedouin culture

■ In Oxnard, college flows with melody

By Anne Kallias

Special to The Star

The Oxnard College Performing Arts Center became a Bedouin tent Wednesday, with Israeli performers Yair Dalal and Yuval Ron playing the intricate melodies of the Middle East.

The presentation was part of the 2015 Oxnard College Fall Literature,

## WHAT'S AHEAD

**Nov. 4:** "Forty Years in the Life of a Chicano Painter," George Yepes

**Nov. 11:** "Swinging in Oxnard," the Swing Street Band

**Nov. 18:** "Martin Luther King and the Spirit of the '50s," Lanny Kaufer

**Nov. 25:** "Women in 18th Century Ireland," Marie Butler

Arts and Lecture Series, where the general public can join students at a lecture or performance by an

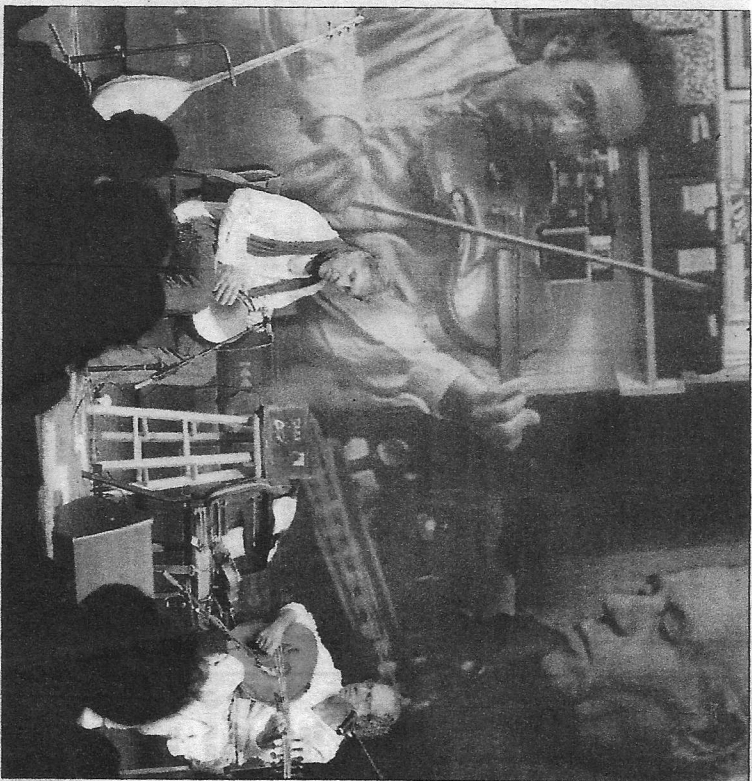
**Dec. 2:** "Each Moment as a Masterpiece," with Sigma Kappa Delta English Honors Society students analyzing the novel, "The Unbearable Lightness of Being."

### Information:

Lectures are free and begin at 1 p.m. in the Oxnard College Performing Arts Center. Call 986-5800, ext. 1951.

eclectic variety of people lined up by Shelley Savren,

See MUSIC, 6B



Musicians and composers Yuval Ron (left) and Yair Dalal perform Wednesday as a video plays in the background at the Oxnard College Performing Arts Center. Dalal talked about his experiences living with Bedouin nomads in the Middle Eastern deserts and the music created there. CHUCK KIRWAN/THE STAR

# MUSIC

from 1B

a retired English professor at the college.

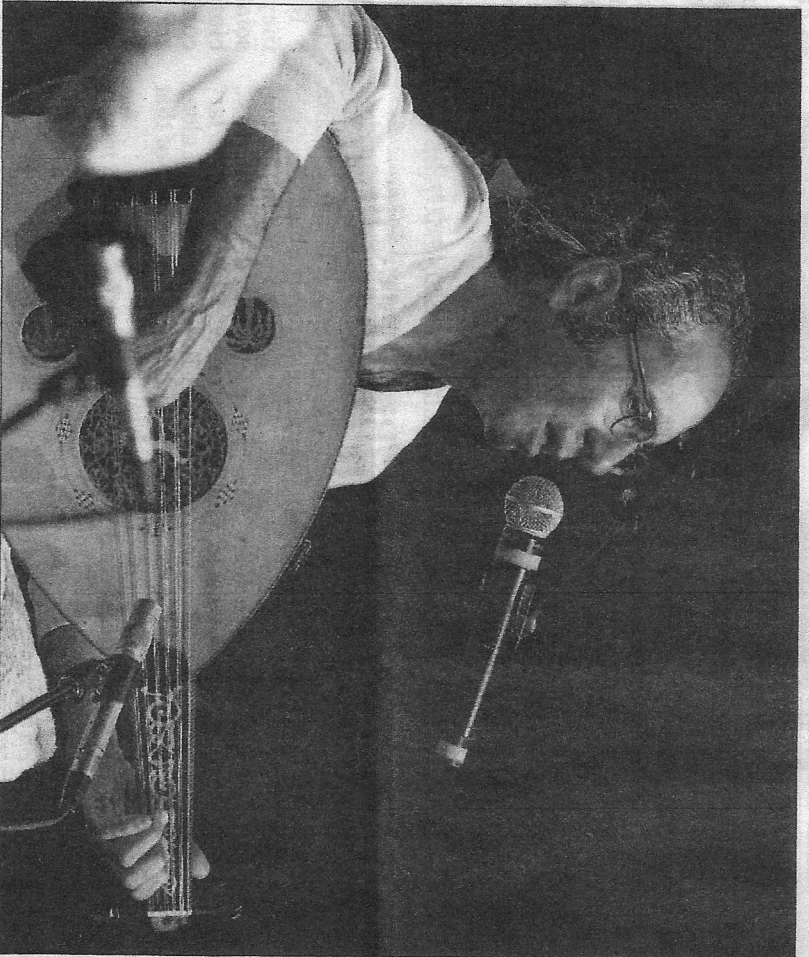
Savren called Wednesday's performance one of the highlights of this year's series. She met Dalal in the desert near Israel during a trip organized by Ron, a musician who plays with his own ensemble in the Los Angeles area.

Ron said he came to Oxnard to join his old friend who is touring the United States, most recently visiting San Francisco and Santa Barbara.

"This is really a love for me," Ron said. "The music itself is an oasis. We were in another world for an hour."

Dalal said he is originally from Iraq, but his family moved to Israel when he was a boy. Initially a violinist, he said that in his 20s, he picked up the oud — an ancient precursor to the guitar — because it was a familiar instrument in the Middle East.

The Bedouin culture,



CHUCK KIRMAN/THE STAR

Israeli musician, composer, violinist and teacher Yair Dalal sings and plays the oud at the Oxnard College Performing Arts Center on Wednesday. The performance was part of the Oxnard College Fall Literature, Arts and Lecture Series.

with its adherence to an ancient lifestyle that has changed little over the centuries, holds a fascination for Dalal. "I love the deserts because of the space, atmosphere and the people," he said. "There's the

informality of sitting in a tent and starting to play. If you go to visit, your host will play for you if he's a musician. If not a musician, he will sing along while you play."

Dalal introduced his concert as "Ain't Got No Jeep and my Camel Died," which he said is based on a true story.

"I was 21 years old and I had a camel," he said. "The camel took me and him to the desert. After a year of working in the desert of Israel and Sinai, an evil snake came and bit the camel and the camel died."

The camel is a desert dweller's closest friend, said Dalal, who still keeps the animal's saddle in his home.

"A Bedouin loves his camel more than his wife," he said.

Later, when he was working in a nature reserve, Dalal's employers gave him a jeep to use, and when he left the job, he had to return the jeep.

"So there I was: without a jeep after my camel died," he said.

To the Western ear, the music played Wednesday is full of unexpected cadences and intervals. Dalal said the music, which contains elements of ancient Jewish and Arab cultures, depends on melody only, with no harmony.

"Imagine a piano where there are white keys and black keys, and brown and purple and green keys. In this music, there are eight notes between two white keys," Dalal said, adding that Westerners often have trouble appreciating the haunting and soaring sounds of the music of the desert.

"There is a big difference between the cultures," he said.

Oxnard College freshman Gwendolin Gutierrez said she was getting extra credit for attending part of the lecture series and writing about the presentation.

"It was interesting," she said. "The music of the Middle East and the instruments are a lot different. The music is more relaxed."