

Friends hope music is avenue to peace

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Photo by Naser Musa

Musicians and friends Yair Dalal, left, an Israeli, and Naser Musa, a Palestinian, are performing together in a series of "Peace Concerts."

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The coincidence is inescapable: *Salaam* is the Arab word for peace.

"It sounds close to *Shalom*, doesn't it?" asks concert producer Sheldon Sands about the Hebrew word that carries the same definition.

In a sign of solidarity, Palestinian musician Naser Musa composed a song titled *Salaam*, which he'll perform with his Israeli friend and musical colleague Yair Dalal this weekend.

To Sands, the similarity of the Hebrew and Arabic words underscores his belief that peace is possible between Arabs and Israelis. In a demonstration of how those traditional adversaries can co-exist, he is presenting "Peace Concerts" featuring Musa, Dalal and local tabla player Ty Burhoe.

"I've seen an upsurge of interest in such Arab-Israeli collaborations over there," said Sands, a composer/pianist who began producing concerts by players from those warring sides in 1999. "This is a nonpolitical way of promoting peace, not taking sides - to feel a sense of common humanity."

That message is not lost on the musicians.

"When I met Yair at a Middle-Eastern music camp in Mendocino (Calif.) five years ago, I played for him an Arabic song," Musa recalled. "And he said, 'Oh, that melody is an important part of our *Shabat* service.' And so I set Arabic words to it."

The two became friends and have performed together occasionally. Musa said the message is simple: "When peace is discussed through music, people will listen and enjoy."

