

BEST BETS

MASTER OF THE OUD: Marcel Khalifé, master of the oud (an Arabic lute), brings his artistry and humanitarian message to the Ritz Theatre in Elizabeth on Saturday in a concert to benefit the building of a Palestinian Diabetic Institute in the West Bank, between Israel and Jordan.

Khalifé, performing with pianist Rami Khalifé and percussionist Bachtar Khalifé, is touring North America with his innovative and accomplished playing and a message of tolerance, peace, free expression and reconciliation.

Both composer and performer, he has been almost universally applauded by music critics and often condemned by radical fundamentalists, and he has played in bombed-out concert halls during Lebanon's civil war and in both moderate and high-end venues throughout the world. Much of his music is set to the words of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and other Arab writers, but his latest CD, "Taqasim," offers music without words, performed with bassist Peter Herbert.

The Elizabeth performance is set for 9 p.m. in the Ritz Theatre, 1148 E. Jersey St., sponsored by the National Arab American Association's New Jersey chapter. Tickets start at \$50. For more, call 908-352-1919.

— *Tim Norris*

