

Media Release

Sounds of the Middle East

Zuhir Naji & Group

Friday 29 September 7.00pm

Thebarton Community Centre - cnr South Road & Ashwyn Pde Thebarton

From Damascus to Adelaide....

Fifteen months ago, **Zuhir Naji** was languishing in a Jordanian refugee camp where he had spent three years after fleeing war-torn Damascus in Syria. In Damascus, he had run a successful music school and was also a noted Oud (lute) player and singer/musician for concerts and special celebrations.

Thanks to the United Nations humanitarian scheme, Zuhir is now happily settled with his family in Adelaide. Zuhir is now fulfilling his dream of keeping his music and also sharing it with the people of South Australia. Through the close-knit Arabic community, he has assembled a talented group of experienced performers to present his first concert of 'old style folk and popular songs' of the region, bringing together other noted local artists such as renowned international Syrian violinist **Abdul Nanou** and **Saleh Al Mansour**, formerly a percussionist with the Kuwait Television Arabic orchestra, virtuoso hand-drummer **Ahmad Sadik**. Other artists include players of Qanun (plucked harp) Arabic Organ, Guitar, Oud and a small ensemble of back-up singers. The music is lively, very rhythmic and percussive, passionate and quite mesmerizing. The songs speak of love, place, life and learning. Many songs bear the influence of the Sufi tradition and have a classical edge to their presentation.

Zuhir has already begun his engagement with music in Adelaide, recently performing during SA Refugee Week at Government House where he presented a new song he composed called '**Thank You Australia**,' a tribute to his new homeland. He has performed live on radio as well as being part of a multi-cultural music ensemble with the 'AMRC's **In Our Own Voices** project which was presented at Her Majesty's Theatre in March.

The '**Sounds of the Middle East**' event is supported by AMRC (The Australian Migrant Resource Centre) and you are invited to come along and experience first-hand this exciting musical and cultural contribution of Australia's newest communities. World music at its best.

The event will be presented in cabaret-style. Delicious Middle Eastern food and teas/coffee will be available from a Syrian Café on the night, prepared and presented by community members.