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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 Baklava Express brings Mediterranean-inspired global  
2 fusion to Next Stage on May 29

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4 TEXT BODY:

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5 Next Stage Arts and Twilight Music present Baklava  
6 Express Friday, May 29, at Next Stage Arts, 15 Kimball Hill.  
7 Brooklyn-based Baklava Express “creates vibrant, high-  
8 energy music that evokes the atmosphere of an open-air  
9 Mediterranean market,” said organizers in a news release.  
10 Blending ancient and modern instruments, the ensemble  
11 performs original compositions rooted in Turkish, Greek,

12 Armenian, Arab, Mizrahi, and Sephardi musical traditions, while  
13 weaving in touches of jazz, flamenco, rock, and Ottoman  
14 classical music.

15 Led by oud player and composer Josh Kaye, the group  
16 self-produced its second album, *Sabába*, released this spring.  
17 Organizers said it “reflects a band that has fully grown into its  
18 collaborative sound—joyful, fluid, improvisational, and deeply  
19 lived-in.”

20 “For *Dávka*, our first album, released in 2023, we went  
21 into the studio after having only played a few gigs as a group,”  
22 Kaye said in a news release. “But for this recording, everyone’s  
23 been in the band for at least three years, so we’re playing music  
24 that we’ve performed hundreds of times. It not only sounds  
25 tighter, but we had much more freedom to improvise and make  
26 arrangements on the fly.”

27 Kaye went on to describe the band as being “not a  
28 traditional music band. We play original music influenced by a  
29 variety of traditions.”

30 Born in London and raised musically on jazz, Jewish  
31 liturgical music, and early swing recordings, Kaye eventually  
32 discovered the oud after encountering Arab musicians in his  
33 Brooklyn neighborhood. What began as a chance encounter  
34 outside an Egyptian barber shop evolved into a profound musical  
35 calling.

36 “I became totally fascinated and obsessed,” Kaye recalls.  
37 “After developing a certain level of proficiency, I felt I could do  
38 something with it. I’ve always been a composer, so the natural  
39 next step was writing new music using the oud as a songwriting  
40 tool.”

41 The resulting music transcends cultural borders while  
42 remaining grounded in human connection. Instrumental and  
43 open-ended, the compositions invite listeners to find their own  
44 stories and emotions within the music.

45 “This music is about having a meeting place for  
46 everyone,” says Kaye. “An instrumental song could mean

47 anything to any person. I hope organically it becomes a meeting  
48 place for anybody who wants to listen.”

49 The concert begins at 7:30 p.m., with doors opening at  
50 6:45 pm. Tickets are \$22 in advance, \$26 at the door, and \$10 for  
51 livestream access. Tickets and information are available at  
52 [nextstagearts.org](http://nextstagearts.org).

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