

say hello to aziza!

A local group with a familiar sound reemerges this month as Aziza.

What does an Egyptian Tabla sound like? If you live in West Michigan and you know, perhaps you've heard of Ensemble Al-Asdeka. If you don't know, think world fusion, based on greater Middle Eastern music: Turkish, Greek, Egyptian, Andalusian, Balkan, and Sephardic. Think flute, saxophones, Egyptian Tabla, Cajon, assorted percussion, ornamental vocals, and guitar that sounds like many different guitar relatives. That's the sound of Aziza.

Originally, the band was three instrumentalists, but many of the band's songs were originally written with vocals, and the flute or the sax would do the job as the lead. Now the band is getting a front woman, and a new name. "A singer really helps you get into a group when you watch them," Roberts said. "You memorize the lyrics, get into the songs, and sing along.

"We are so excited to add vocals and eye candy for a more dynamic presenta-

tion. Aziza Poggi will bring her years of vocal studies, her years as a metal performer, and her acting experience together to create a Natacha Atlas-like persona to really catalyze this group."

Poggi has a vocal background in rock and opera. "I've always had my hand in different pots, but I am half-Middle Eastern, so when I do hear this music, it calls to me," she said. "I have always found it quite hypnotic."

Aziza will perform its debut show at the Grand Rapids

Art Museum, where the group will perform a mix of instrumental music and music with vocals. Then it's back to work on the demo.

"I hope people see that there are a lot of nice different cultures in the area that maybe they're not aware of, and embrace it," Poggi said. "Something different is always good. I hope we grab the people that like the eccentric side of things."

nicole corley



bandmates: aziza poggi, d. adam estner, daniel giacobazzi, and kathy roberts

Kathy Roberts founded Ensemble Al-Asdeka in 2004 after spending time in North Africa and Europe. "I experienced a very different music scene than was going on here," Roberts said. "People are way into their country's sound. It's less commercially driven than here." Apparently, many countries hear their sound in this music—currently, the music of Ensemble Al-Asdeka (now Aziza) is played on the radio in more than fifty-six countries.

Aziza performs a free concert at the Grand Rapids Art Museum's GRAM on the Green event **August 26**. The concert is at 5 p.m. in Rosa Parks Circle. For more information, visit www.azizaworld.com