

Center Stage



Aziza Poggi

Mezzo-soprano

Grand Rapids, Mich.

Please tell our readers about your career highlights so far.

I am an aspiring opera singer, study with Melissa Ferlaak from Minneapolis, Minn., and sing in an Egyptian-themed metal band called Dendura. I sing a mixture of rock, classical, opera, and Middle Eastern vocals. Though I love my band Dendura, I am just as much in love with opera and will be continuing my education in voice at Grand Rapids Community College, then hoping to transfer to Chicago or U of M[ichigan] at Ann Arbor. Our band has had a lot of success such as recording a new album with a Grammy producer, recording a theme song for Comedy Central Network, [being] seen in national and international magazines, and scoring music for films.

What are your goals for the next five years? The next 10 years?

My goals are to continue singing safely in Dendura, progressing my voice and career; to get a solid music education; to learn everything I can from experts and professionals; and to record and sing on the stage for a long, long time.

What is your dream role, and why?

I would love to play Azucena from *Il trovatore* because she is a force to be reckoned with and a gypsy. I also think my voice suits that role very well.

How do you handle the inevitable rejection that is part of a singer's life?

When I first started in 2003, I had a hard time with it because I didn't understand what was wrong with my technique. But after building up my self-esteem and learning more about music, I understand the teachers then were just trying to help me, not hurt me. You have to have self-esteem to be a singer or you won't do well in this field.

How do you balance career and family?

I have a son. He understands I need to practice regularly and knows my voice is important to me. My friends and parents are the ones who suffer the most, as I don't visit or attend functions as much so that I can train.

Who is your favorite singer and why?

I love Maria Callas. I know she had vocal problems later in life and dark tones, but she was great on the stage and you could hear convincing emotion in her voice.

What is your favorite techno tool you use as a singer?

I would have to say my computer because I take my voice lessons via skype.com.

Do you have a motto by which you live?

"There is always a way."

Anything else you'd like to say during your moment in Center Stage?

I started out with a weak voice. A lot of people said I couldn't sing. In my mind, I knew I could. My self-esteem was bad and I had a lot of problems I was dealing with as a person. It was holding me back with my voice. When I got rid of all the bad people in my life and focused on the beauty of music, it saved me and I was set on never allowing people like that to enter my world and disrupt my mind again. I started out with a two-octave range and now it's a three-and-a-half. If you put your mind to something, you can achieve a lot.

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