



They were hailed as “the act that sums up the WOMAD spirit”. They sing in the language Jesus spoke. Azadoota delivers an Assyrian extravaganza of percussive dance-rock worldbeat.



# AZADOOTA

[www.azadoota.com](http://www.azadoota.com)



“  
If one were to  
pick a single act  
that sums up the  
WOMAD spirit, it  
would probably be  
the Australian-Iraqi  
party band Azadoota.

”  
-The Guardian







“The Assyrian language, Aramaic, once the common tongue of the civilised world and most famously spoken by Jesus, has been spoken by Assyrians for over 3000 years. Today however, it's in danger of extinction. Champions of Assyrian culture, Sydney-based worldbeat band Azadoota have released a new single called “Lishana” (meaning “Language”), which aside from being hugely catchy and danceable, doubles as a rallying cry for young Assyrians to preserve their iconic language.”

## VIDEO OVERVIEW

Against the backdrop of inner-Sydney suburb Rozelle, where the juxtaposition of heritage and contemporary streetscapes reflects the theme of continuity, the music video explores the lyric “imagine the world speaking Assyrian”. It opens with a page from the The Syriac Gospel Lectionary, a large, profusely illustrated Assyrian gospel manuscript, produced in Mosul, Iraq between 1216 and 1220, and now in the British Library. Looking closer at the illuminated manuscript draws us into a contemporary scene where the band, who wear costumes derived from Ancient Assyrian dress, are busking in a market. When a mystery man throws an Ancient Assyrian gold coin into the sax case and hurries off, the band give chase. As they get closer to catching up with the mystery man, each modern day scenario they pass reveals the use of Assyrian language. Eventually they enter a courtyard banquet where they catch up with the mystery man, and “the world speaking Assyrian” comes alive with traditional folk dancing and celebration. As the last notes of the song fade, the “world speaking Assyrian” becomes the scene from the Syriac Lectionary, and the band take their places in the illumination as the folio closes.

## TRACK OVERVIEW

The song begins with zurna, traditionally used in Assyrian culture to call people for a celebration, while a vocal hook starting with a happy “La La La” disguises a message to Assyrians not to forget their mother tongue. In classic Azadoota style, when the beat kicks in it's a merengue groove propelled by guira, tambourine and layers of hand percussion. Lyrics in Assyrian talk of language as the soul of a nation and the one thing that holds a displaced people together. The chorus in English reminds us that Jesus spoke this language, and the point is driven home with punchy brass lines. At the end of the song, traditional zurna and dawola usher in the “khiggeh yaqora”, a heavy 6/8 dance beat, and a chorus of young voices join Robin in urging Assyrian youth to rise up in celebration of their culture. Then the song switches back to merengue for the final message to the youth that they are custodians of the language.





Imagine the world speaking Assyrian



"Lishana" music video











“

Out in the wider community, it is likely that if people have heard of Assyrians, if they know anything about our people, it's because of the work of the incredible band Azadoota.

”

- The Young Assyrians Podcast



“

The crowds at our folk festivals are up and dancing when they start. One of the best “world music” sounds I’ve heard! ”

- David De Santi, Artistic Director Illawarra Folk Festival & Peak Festival

“

It was magic. One of those sets where the crowd and the band were feeding off each other’s energy. When the band dropped from euro-belly-pop into full-on dance, I swear everyone started jumping like the mosh at a Prodigy gig. ”

- National Folk Festival

“

Robin has so much talent! My favourite gig of the year. ”

- Frank Italiano, Program Manager, Kulcha, Multicultural Arts WA







Iraqi-born songwriter Robin Zirwanda sings in his native Assyrian Neo-Aramaic language, once the common tongue of the civilised world but now considered to be in danger of extinction.

To the mysterious sound of this ancient language he adds the familiarity of poprock and the spicy heat of Latin rhythms. It's a dance concoction deliberately pitched at mainstream audiences, and it has made Azadoota one of Australia's most popular world music acts.

In costumes derived from Ancient Assyrian fashion, Azadoota perform a repertoire of catchy originals, which extends from percussive dance tunes to sexy love songs, to solid funk and a touch of reggae - always conveying an irrepressible sense of celebration.

Seemingly fuelled by espresso and Iraqi temper alone, percussion powerhouse Robin fronts the band with timbales and doumbek his tools of trade, twirling his drumsticks as he switches effortlessly from Cuban rhythms to those of his home country.

Azadoota's two commercial releases, 2008's "Planetarian" and 2011's "Beyond Bridges" have garnered rave reviews at home and overseas. The band has performed at a diverse range of venues, from the tiniest bush halls to the most well-known festivals.

2015 sees the release of Azadoota's single "Lishana (Jesus Spoke My Language)", which aside from being hugely catchy and danceable, doubles as a rallying cry for young Assyrians to preserve their iconic language.

With a 4-decade age gap between youngest and oldest members, Azadoota's music spans genres and generations. Bikies start bopping, folkies let loose, emo kids smile and hippies go berserk whenever Azadoota take the stage.





**Azadoota**  
**Contemporary Assyrian dance-rock worldbeat**  
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