

Lilo Gonzalez

Lilo Gonzalez is a Salvadoran singer and songwriter who has been singing for over 30 years. He is a musician who learned to play the guitar with his friends in his neighborhood, and soon was able to incorporate his own experiences into his music. For Lilo, music became a way to communicate a message, to educate and create peace and hope, and to show the things that we all have in common as human beings.

Lilo started to sing at a very young age in his country, El Salvador. When he was 12, Lilo co-founded a musical group at his school, and in addition to playing at many local events, the group was invited to record songs for an educational TV program in San Salvador.

In 1981, during the civil war, Lilo was forced to leave El Salvador, and at the age of 23 he arrived in the United States. He wanted to keep his Salvadoran culture alive and educate people about the situation in his country. He soon found a group of musicians with a similar vision and they formed the musical group "Izalco". They recorded their first cassette "Going Home" and played at many church gatherings, festivals and events, always creating awareness about the situation of immigrants in this country.

In 1990, after winning second place at the international OTI song festival, he created his own group "Lilo Gonzalez y los de la Mount Pleasant". In 1994 he recorded his first CD called "A quien corresponda" (to whom it may concern), that included all of his original songs. With this album he was able to bring his music to a broader audience, and soon he was playing in universities in several cities like Chicago, San Francisco and St Louis. He also played at the Lincoln Center in New York and the Millenium Stage at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC. He also returned on tour to El Salvador with his band on three separate occasions.

From 1991 to 2007, Lilo received seven awards for best latin vocalist from the WAMMIES organization, as well as three recognitions from the DC Commision of the Arts and Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts for his artisitic excellence. In 1991 he also won second place with one of his songs in the latin category of the Billboard Song Contest.

In addition to his work with his band, Lilo also wrote songs for several street theatre productions for local artists that dealt with immigrant issues. He also wrote songs for educational programs dealing with domestic violence, immunization programs, and heart health.

In El Salvador, Lilo had worked as an elementary school teacher, and when he came to the United States, he worked for 10 years at the Latin American Youth Center with latino youth who were considered "high risk" for violence and drug use. Through his music, he was able to connect with kids, guide them and teach them basic guitar and songs.

In the year 2000, Lilo began teaching young children from age birth to 5 years at the Levine School of Music in Washington, DC. This became a steppingstone for him, and soon he was getting calls to teach at a variety of preschool and daycare programs all over the DC metropolitan area, such as NCRC, LAM school, BCDC, Lowell School, and others. In addition to working with English speaking children and exposing them to the Spanish language, he also works with latino immigrant families and their children at an outreach program called Proyecto Familia.

Lilo teaches songs in Spanish, music concepts, dances and rhythms, and just has fun with the children. Lilo feels that his classes foster pride in the Hispanic culture and that he is teaching children and their parents to build and reinforce positive attitudes towards a more open and multicultural society.

Currently, Lilo is preparing his second album with his band, in addition to a third recording of music for children. He is very much connected to his home country El Salvador, and has visited frequently. He has played in his hometown Armenia, as well as in the national festival "VERDAD"- a homage to Monseñor Romero and the many innocent people who were killed during the war.

Lilo lives in the Washington DC metropolitan area with his wife and three young children. His adult son, Lilo Gonzalez Jr., is also a musician in the DC area and plays with his band Mchetres and Nayas.