

## MUSIC

# Sol y Canto celebrates 30 years as Boston's ambassadors of Latin folk with a party and new album

By **Noah Schaffer** Globe correspondent, Updated September 19, 2024, 2:37 p.m.



Rosi and Brian Amador of Sol y Canto. SASHA PEDRO

Thirty years ago, Cambridge musicians Rosi and Brian Amador found themselves at a crossroads. A band they were in, Flor de Caña, had dissolved after a decade of heavy touring and a pair of albums on Flying Fish, a prominent folk label in the '80s and '90s.

“We looked at each other and asked ‘What are we going to do now? Are we going to end music?’” recalls Rosi. “No, I don’t think so.”

Instead the couple founded [Sol y Canto](#), which continued to showcase Rosi’s gorgeous singing and Flor de Caña’s broad pan-Latin approach, but added a focus on Brian’s original compositions. For three decades they have been beloved ambassadors of Latin music in the country, and they’re now celebrating their anniversary with a new recording, “En Tu Órbita,” and a series of area concerts with an expanded version of the band that includes a Club Passim-sponsored anniversary show at the Crystal Ballroom in Somerville on Saturday.

Boston has long had a vibrant Latin music scene full of bands that specialize in specific genres like salsa, Latin jazz, or mariachi. Sol y Canto has filled a unique niche by incorporating a wide range of influences that range from the flamenco heard in Brian’s fiery guitar playing to the “nueva canción” movement of politically charged Latin American songwriters.

“That part makes us harder to categorize from a marketing point of view,” concedes Brian, “but I think it really adds to the enjoyment for us and our audiences — we take them on this whole journey through all these different rhythms from all over Latin America and the Caribbean.”

“Our mission has always been to build cross-cultural bridges through our music, and to make it accessible to a non-Spanish speaking audience,” says Rosi. “Because we live in the US, naturally we are going to be performing primarily for non-Spanish speakers, and because we’re bicultural and bilingual, that comes easily to us. We’ve always wanted to celebrate Latin culture, and share who we are with the world through our music.”

Brian is a New Mexico native who came to Boston to attend New England Conservatory. Rosi was raised in Puerto Rico by her Nuyorican mother and her Argentine father, both of whom were entertainers who had toured internationally. A boyfriend was living in Boston, and she stayed after the relationship ended.



The Sol y Canto full band. SASHA PEDRO

The couple met in a quintessentially Cambridge way: They were both part of a cultural mission to Nicaragua in 1984 during that country's civil war. While the Reagan administration was aiding the Contras, the Amidors brought instruments and songs.

That social commitment can still be heard in Sol y Canto's new music. "El Muro (The Wall)" references the ongoing debate over immigration, but it's a lively dance tune that imagines an abandoned, decaying border wall whose steel becomes a material for artists creating sculptures and fountains. "One Step Forward," the rare English Sol Y Canto song, bemoans a society that never seems to progress.

The title track of "En Tu Órbita" is a poignant song that features the group's newest member, Barcelona-raised cellist Queralt Giralt Soler, and a story inspired by a visit to an elderly family friend shortly before she passed away. "Our son, Zia, said 'Marie Jo, can I get you anything,' but she said 'No thanks, honey, I just want to be in your orbit,'" says

Brian, who co-wrote the song with Argentine singer-songwriter Santiago Alonso. “It’s a love song not to one person but to everyone we know.”

The group’s whimsical side is also on the album. “Arroz Integral” puts to music Brian’s recipe for cooking brown rice.

In 2003 the Amidors’ twins, who were 7 at the time, collaborated with their parents on “Sol Y Canto Kids,” a children’s music album released on Rounder Records. While Rosi’s performer parents discouraged her from trying to make a living as a musician, Brian and Rosi have seen their own children become music makers. [Alisa won the NPR Tiny Desk Contest and recently released her debut album](#), which is also a bilingual affair.

Boston singer-songwriter Alisa Amador followed her 2022 NPR Tiny Desk Contest win with her debut album "Multitudes." SASHA PEDRO

After their three Rounder records, Sol y Canto started releasing their own music and were so successful booking themselves that Rosi started an agency. Brian and Rosi say they’ve always been upfront with their children about the challenges that come with a life of making music as an independent artist.

You never know what your kids are going to do. You want them to do whatever they want, but they’re both really creative beings and souls, and they, like us, feel that music can bring people together and lets you express yourself authentically and share your soul,” says Rosi.

In recent years the Amidors [have branched into voice-over work](#), an area in which being bilingual has proved to be a major asset. That means that Sol y Canto no longer performs at schools and family events as frequently as the ensemble did in its early years. But the Amidors still encounter audience members who first discovered the soul and passion of live Latin music by seeing the band when they were young.

“We have people who came to see us as kids, and now they’re bringing their kids to see us,” says Brian.

Sol y Canto performs [Saturday, Sept. 21, at 8 p.m. at the Crystal Ballroom at the Somerville Theater](#). The group also celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month [Sunday, Sept. 22, at 5 p.m.](#) at the Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport, and Thursday, Sept. 26, at 7 p.m. at the [Word Barn in Exeter, N.H.](#)

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