

## THE LEGACY OF TV TSAR ALEJANDRO ROMAY

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### Creating spectacles to export to the world



Diego Romay, TV Tsar Alejandro's son, in charge of *El Nacional*, with Suar and Laviaguerre. | CEDOC PERFIL

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In 1906, the *El Nacional* Theater was born and it was destined to be an Argentinian asset from its very origins. On the opening night, the national *pericón* was performed by its founders -together with other names that would later create their own anthologies in the Buenos Aires theatrical scene, such as Carlos Gardel.- My father bought the old *El Nacional* Theater in 1961 and it was completely rebuilt by 1973. He put great plays, revues and musicals on the stage. Shortly after, *El Nacional* Theater was known as “the cathedral of the Buenos Aires revue.” The big tribute arrived in 1982 with the show *Sexitante* with Susana Giménez and Juan Carlos Calabró in the leading roles, accompanied by fifty artists on stage. Unfortunately, in the early hours of Thursday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> of that same year, the citizens of Buenos Aires woke up to the tune of a painful piece of news: four bombs caused a raging fire that turned our beloved *El Nacional* into ashes. Apparently, some area of the military government which ruled the country then, was upset by a sketch titled *Vivan las autopistas* (*Long Live the Freeways*.) I was only nine

years old then, but I can vividly remember my father's intense migraines, which he suffered for long days, and my mother trying to make him feel better with cold packs on his forehead. What was I, just a child, supposed to say to soothe his pain? How to help him overcome his heartache? That brutal attack kept him away from his beloved theater for almost two decades. As if to justify his lack of action, he would argue that the debris should stay in place as a symbol of intolerance and injustice.

After almost 20 years since that dark night, he felt it was time to let go of that pain and get back to his passion. The venue came back to life in 2000, a year that marked the beginning of an incredible stage in his life, and particularly in my own, two years later. That indelible image of his pain that I carried from my childhood, and my own love for the theater inspired me to make the decision to work by his side.

It is well known that my father was the only protagonist of all and each of his decisions and that everything had to be accomplished according to his ways, just as he pictured it in his creative mind. On the other hand, I knew I had to earn his professional approval. Therefore, I decided that first of all, I needed to show him that I was capable of creating my own original path, and thus I became a producer based on just one premise: the development of national content just as I had learned from him. And this is how *Tanguera*, my first big spectacle was born. *Tanguera*, the tango musical which became an international hit amidst the critical financial and economic crisis suffered in late 2001. The following year, I wrote and produced *Nativo*, another national production based on folklore which has been acclaimed by critics and audiences. And finally, I dared to get into jazz with the opening of *Caravan*, which unfortunately I had to cancel after three months because of the panic created by the possibility of a pandemic known as avian flu. When my father saw how depressed I was, he told me as if it were a teaching lesson, "You cannot win them all." And he declared lovingly, "Come work with me." I felt that his gesture had made me an all-around winner. For me, working with my father and be close to him meant to step on the threshold of Paradise. At *El Nacional*, we produced together the musicals he loved the most. We would ask him what he'd like to produce and immediately his group of associates and myself would start working to turn his dreams into new acclaimed hits. *Man of La Mancha*, *Victor Victoria*, among many other great titles, were staged at his beloved theater. It was a fusion of love and hard work, a wonderful driving force for both of us.

Today, a new era of this intense history is born. These are no longer the times of "epic heroes" as my own father was. Nowadays, the theater requires creative teams and skilled talents that can add value in different business areas. Our ways intersected sort of naturally: a meeting between Ignacio Laviaguierre (a talented producer with whom I

shared Antonio Gasalla's hit *Más respeto que soy tu madre*) and Adrián Suar who, just like was the case with my father, loves the actors' work and is an inveterate creator, eventually originated a new chemistry to work together as co-producers.

At this time, I'm displaying my abilities to give *El Nacional* Theater the spot it has always exhibited: room for the creation of Argentinian actors, directors and playwrights. My goal is to transform it into a platform with the capabilities to produce dramatic plays and musical shows that can be exported to the world. This is the big desire and the vision that unite us in this partnership. If in every theatrical spectacle we co-produce, we accomplish this mission and we carry on with the commitment to wake up emotions and be rewarded with applause, then I'll be accomplishing something even more important: I'll be paying tribute to my Dad in all his dimension and keeping on the extraordinary legacy he bequeathed to each member of his family.