



ARGENTINA, 1985



Directed by: Santiago Mitre

Screenplay by: Santiago Mitre, Mariano Llinás

Produced by: Axel Kuschevatzky, p.g.a., Federico Posternak, Agustina Llambi-Campbell, Ricardo Darín, Santiago Mitre, Santiago Carabante, Chino Darín, Victoria Alonso, p.g.a.

Starring: Ricardo Darín, Peter Lanzani

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Synopsis

Argentina, 1985 is inspired by the true story of public prosecutors Julio Strassera and Luis Moreno Ocampo, who dared to investigate and prosecute Argentina's bloodiest military dictatorship in 1985. Undeterred by the military's still considerable influence within their fragile new democracy, Strassera and Moreno Ocampo assembled a young legal team of unlikely heroes for their David-vs-Goliath battle. Under constant threat to themselves and their families, they raced against time to bring justice to the victims of the military junta.

Argentina, 1985 is directed by Santiago Mitre (*Paulina*, *The Summit*), from a screenplay co-written by Mitre and Mariano Llinás. It stars Ricardo Darín (*The Secret In Their Eyes*, *The Summit*) as Julio Strassera and Peter Lanzani (*The Clan*) as Luis Moreno Ocampo, with Alejandra Flechner, Santiago Armas and Gina Mastronicola. The film is produced by Axel Kuschevatzky, Federico Posternak, Agustina Llambi-Campbell, Ricardo Darín, Santiago Mitre, Santiago Carabante, Chino Darín and Victoria Alonso. The creative team includes Director of Photography Javier Julia, Editor Andrés Pepe Estrada, Costume Designer Mónica Toschi, and Art Director Micaela Saiegh. The original score is composed by Pedro Osuna and produced by Michael Giacchino.

Argentina, 1985 is a La Unión De Los Ríos, Kenya Films, Infinity Hill, and Amazon Studios production.

The Trial of The Juntas

The journey to making *Argentina, 1985* began with a meeting of two old friends. Director Santiago Mitre and producer Axel Kuschevatzky are long-time creative collaborators, on films including *Paulina* (2015) and *The Summit (La Cordillera)* (2017). *Argentina, 1985* was devised while discussing their love of cinema. "We love to pick each other's brains," says Kuschevatzky. "We were sitting in a bar in Buenos Aires having a conversation about movies we adore. We were talking about political thrillers we love, like *All The President's Men* or *Judgement At Nuremburg*. We wondered why there was no equivalent in Argentina. We talked about what might be the subject of such a film. Santi said, 'It has to be the Trial of the Juntas.'"

The Trial of the Juntas was one of the most seismic moments in Argentinian history. During the dictatorship of the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional, from 1976 to 1983, Argentina was ruled by a pitiless military government. The country lived in a state of terror, with supposed enemies of the government tortured, killed or 'disappeared' on an unimaginable scale. In 1985, two years after the government had collapsed and democracy had been tentatively restored, nine of the former military leaders were tried for war crimes. The Trial of the Juntas was the largest such case since the Nuremberg Trials. Securing a judgement against the dictators seemed close to impossible given how much power they still wielded.

Trying the case fell to veteran public prosecutor Julio Strassera and a young and eager deputy, Luis Moreno Ocampo. With few people willing to assist on a surely unwinnable case, they had no choice but to gather a team of very young, very inexperienced assistants. As much as the majority of the country wanted them to succeed, they had little faith in their

chances. The trial last five months, during which time 833 witnesses gave their testimony. The country was on a knife-edge through the trial. Strassera and Moreno Ocampo received multiple death threats. Bomb threats were regularly made and several bombs were detonated at government buildings. It was an extremely dangerous time. Despite all the odds stacked against them, Strassera and Moreno Ocampo never gave up. It was a story with all the makings of a political thriller.

“This was an event that had a big impact on my family,” says Mitre, who was just five years old when the trial took place. “My mother worked in the justice system her whole life. Beyond that, it had a huge impact on me as an Argentinian and the way I see my country. I’ve always wanted to tell this story. These were just ordinary men doing their jobs in the best way they could. It’s a story about how regular people can change society.”

Mitre also saw that this story had a lot of relevance today. While it’s about a specific time in Argentina, this inspiring tale of people fighting back against oppressive leaders, and fighting for democracy, will resonate with audiences everywhere. The story of Argentina in 1985 has many echoes in what’s happening around the globe right now. “This is a story that speaks to Argentinians, but it will speak to people anywhere in the world,” says Mitre. “Strassera achieved this extraordinary thing for Argentina, which also sent a message about justice to people all over the world.”

“Accountability is a big issue in the world right now,” says Kuschevatzky. “This is a film about people in power being held accountable.” With such a rich historical story and such contemporary resonance, both Mitre and Kuschevatzky were surprised they were the first to bring *The Trial Of The Juntas* to film. “We wondered why nobody had made this story before,” says Kuschevatzky. “It’s like a superhero film. These are everyday guys who are facing a seemingly insurmountable force. It’s a very complex story and it’s a period piece, which brings extra complications, so we knew it was going to be a challenge, but it is such an amazing story that we knew we had to make it.” Neither man realised quite how much of a challenge, and quite how rewarding, it was going to be.

A Human Story

Before a single scene could be shot, Santiago Mitre and his co-writer Mariano Llinás had to understand every aspect of the time, the trial and Strassera’s life. “Initially, Llinás and I began writing as if we were writing fiction,” says Mitre. “We stopped almost immediately because writing this is not the same as what we’ve written before. We need to know exactly how the events happened, so we spent two years on research before we started writing again.”

Mitre and Llinás got their hands on every bit of material they could find. “We spent a couple of years doing interviews, reading every newspaper from the period and watching as much footage as we could find,” says Mitre. “It was the first time I’ve written in this way and it was a huge learning experience for me and totally fascinating.” Strassera died in 2015, but because most of his legal team was very young in 1985, many of them are still alive. “I spoke to most of them. I spoke to some of the judges. I spoke to journalists who were at the trial. I spoke to people who survived concentration camps.”

Mitre’s research process started with watching Strassera’s closing statement from the trial, a hugely emotional moment for the Argentinian people, as Strassera gave voice to all the pain they’d suffered under the dictatorship. It was the end of a brutal court case and hopefully an end to a painful time in Argentina. “When you watch that speech, it was something unbelievably moving for everyone,” says Mitre. “That was the first thing I watched and it set me on a path to understanding Strassera’s life. Something that was so interesting was seeing the way Strassera was transformed by this trial. He wasn’t the obvious person to prosecute this trial. He was the underdog.”

“Strassera is like a guy out of a Frank Capra movie or a Steven Spielberg movie,” says Kuschevatzky. “He’s the average guy on a mission. And he doesn’t realize how huge his mission is until it’s too late to escape it. And then you have Moreno Ocampo, who’s like a character out of a Howard Hawks film. He knows his goal and he wants to be the best. He wants to win this case, no matter what.”

The more he spoke to people who had known Strassera and Moreno Ocampo, the more Mitre understood that he was not going to be telling just a story about an event, but the story of the people who lived through it. In the meeting of Strassera and Moreno Ocampo, he saw many things: a story about two men from very different worlds fighting a common cause; a message of hope about how a new generation can atone for the sins of the last; and also a surprising warmth and comedy in how the two men found friendship and shared ground in the most difficult circumstances.

“Something that came up very quickly when talking to the people who worked in the prosecution office and the family of Strassera was the humor that he had,” says Mitre. “He was this grumpy and funny guy. Everyone called him ‘Loco’. You think of a trial like this and you never think there could be humor, but it came from Strassera’s character. They needed that to compensate for the horror they were seeing.”

After two years of research, Mitre knew these two men collectively held a story more gripping than he could have initially imagined. “Both characters on their own had enough drama to make a really compelling story,” he says. “With both of them together, the possibilities were so exciting.”

The Dream Cast

As far as Mitre was concerned, there were only two men who could play Julio Strassera and Luis Moreno Ocampo. He'd need the greatest Argentinian actors of their respective generations: Ricardo Darín and Peter Lanzani.

"Ricardo Darín was always the only choice for Strassera," says Mitre. "He brings this magnificent power and empathy to the screen." Mitre and Darín had worked together once before, on *The Summit*, and developed a deep respect for each other's work and a great friendship. "When I started developing the idea for this film, before I'd even written the script, we were having dinner and I said, 'I want to make a film about the trial of '85'," says Mitre. "He told me, 'I'm doing this'. He didn't even have to think about it."

Playing real people was something Darín had avoided through his career. "In the past I'd rejected the idea of playing non-fictional characters," says Darín. "When you try to emulate or impersonate a character based on a real person, you step into dangerous territory. I'm not interested in trying to copy anyone." Here he saw an opportunity to embody a man vital to Argentinian history, but also somebody he could make his own. "I told Santi I didn't want to imitate him. I had to find my own path. Then when I read the script my enthusiasm grew even more. I saw it was not focused on the trial but on the human aspects of the story. That thrilled me."

Darín still vividly remembers the time of the original trial. "The advent of democracy meant a breath of fresh air for the country," he says. "The possibility of prosecuting the military was unthinkable at first, because they still held a lot of power. I remember there was huge expectation on the trial." He placed a huge expectation on himself to do Strassera justice.

Darín immersed himself in information about the real Strassera, watching many hours of interviews and footage of the trial. "I met many people who worked with Strassera," he says. "And they confirmed my theory that he was a very strong-minded man with a great sense of humor. I think for many years his confidence was low, which happened to many people living through the dictatorship. He felt he could not do enough." Darín saw a man who didn't initially believe he could triumph in this case, but came to learn he was capable of more than he believed. "He thought this couldn't be possible," he says. "It was an extraordinary boost for him when he realized he might do it. I think that's when his true personality emerged. I ended up falling in love with his personality. He was a man with big convictions. We need that type of person, the people who will defend their values and principles, even against enormous odds."

Darín got the ultimate endorsement of his performance one day during shooting, when he was standing on the street between takes. "A couple, who were about the age Strassera would have been now, came over to me," he says. "I was in my costume, with the glasses and the hair. And the man said, 'I knew Strassera. We were in the same class and then we were neighbors in the same building. I saw him many times over 50 years. You don't look that much like him but you are just like him'. I was happy with that review!"

To play Luis Moreno Ocampo, Mitre needed an actor who could balance many things in one performance. Moreno Ocampo is a man certain of his own abilities, while also trying to prove himself to the more experienced Strassera. He's committed to democracy and justice, but he comes from a family with loose ties to the dictatorship. His own mother knew some of those on trial. It's a very complex role. Mitre immediately went to Peter Lanzani, one of Argentina's most respected young stars. "I've been wanting to work with him for many years," says Mitre. "He's so smart and a unique actor in his generation. I thought of him while I was in the middle of writing."

"I loved the script straight away," says Lanzani. "There is everything in there. It's thrilling. It's full of truth. And there's humor too. I loved the relationship it showed between Strassera and Moreno Ocampo, and how it got into the psyche and the emotions of these men." Lanzani was intrigued by the contradictions within Moreno Ocampo's life. "This story

speaks of his courage, because he's a young man with no experience in trials. He's the one who suggests gathering a really young team to work on this trial. It was a crazy idea. And he is a man so committed to justice for his country. His life is threatened. He could have been killed, but he still believes. Then you also see how he comes from a very different political background, growing up in a family that crossed paths with some of the men on trial. His own mother went to mass with [Commander In Chief Of The Army] Videla. He moved between two very different worlds."

Darín and Lanzani relished the opportunity to finally work together. "Peter is an angel," says Darín, grinning widely. "Aside from being a fantastic actor, he's also a wonderful human being. I've been following his career and have always loved his work. It was the greatest pleasure to work with him."

Though this is Darín and Lanzani's first time acting together, they've known each other a long time. "Peter is a very good friend of my son, Chino [who is a producer on the film]," says Darín. "I've had the opportunity to meet him in a social context many times. I knew he was a fabulous person before we got to set."

"I think first meeting Ricardo as Chino's dad is the best thing," laughs Lanzani. "I knew how much fun he was. His family does not stop cracking jokes." As well as loving him as a person, Lanzani is a huge fan of Darín's work. "I grew up watching his movies. He's one of the greatest actors in Argentina – in the world – and to get to know him as an actor on set, it really blew my mind. He was so impressive. I hope I'm going to continue learning from him."

Much of Mitre and Llinás' screenplay delved into Strassera's home life, showing everything he's fighting for and everything he fears losing. To play Strassera's wife, Silvia, Mitre chose Alejandra Flechner. "I'm not interested in playing women who just support their husbands," says Flechner. "These two are a real team. They go hand-in-hand. She is aware of what her husband does and she knows his fears, his contradictions, his light and shadow." Like her husband, Silvia does not back down when a situation gets scary. When the family is threatened, she and their

two children stay alongside Strassera. “That humanizes their connection,” says Flechner. “That is very intelligently crafted in the script, putting aside the public person and seeing who they are personally.”

The film was a reunion for Flechner and Darín, who first worked together on *Sammy And Me* in 2002. “We hit it off immediately,” says Flechner. “There are people you understand straight away and it was like that with us. It was like that again for us on this film. I found him very easy to act with. Everyone on this film was easy to work with and I think that starts with Santi. He’s easy to talk to. He listens. He makes everyone feel relaxed and I really think that shows.”

“I like to make the actors part of the whole process,” says Mitre. “Not just reading the script many times, but having time together, having dinner together, to build a relationship. That means it becomes real. There was a real connection between the actors on this. They were an amazing team for me.”

Reliving The Past

Argentina, 1985 was shot on location in Buenos Aires, Rosario, Salta, Payogasta, Cachi and Campo Santo, from July to September 2021. The 1980s setting provided some challenges for the film’s artistic team, particularly as much of the film was shot in public spaces. “I thought Buenos Aires would still look much as it did in the 1980s,” says Mitre. “Turns out that’s not the case. Making a film set in 1985 is as complicated as making a film set in the 1920s.”

It was further complicated by the fact that nobody wanted this to look like a museum piece. Every location and costume had to look lived in and reflect the lives of the different classes represented in the film, from the wealthy clubs and apartments enjoyed by Moreno Ocampo’s wealthy mother, to the middle-class home of Strassera, to the ageing, underfunded offices of the legal team. “Our cinematographer, costume designer and artistic director were always asking themselves, ‘Was this what this specific person would wear? Is this how they’d live?’” says Axel Kuschevatzky. “It’s not only about time period. It’s about social classes.” Every detail had to be perfect when dealing with relatively recent history, because “this isn’t fantasy. A lot of people have memories of the time and know how it should look.”

For exterior scenes, the team scouted locations that had changed relatively little since the 1980s, then augmented them with fake subway entrances, traffic lights and other street furniture to take them back to that decade (plus some digital trickery to remove anything contemporary that couldn’t be hidden). For the scenes shot in the Palace of Justice, Mitre was given an unimaginable gift. He was able to shoot in the actual court where Strassera tried his case.

“I cannot tell you what it meant to be able to use that location. It was so powerful,” says Mitre. “The courtroom was just as it was in 1985. It’s no longer used for trials, so they allowed us to film there. When we began to shoot, it had this incredible effect on everyone. There was a day that we were shooting the testimonies of some of the witnesses and it felt like travelling back in

time. We were watching and many of the team were crying. It was incredible what filming in that room brought to the movie.”

For everyone, there was one scene that was particularly moving. The room was packed for Darín’s delivery of Strassera’s closing statement. That speech was a moment of emotional release for the people of Argentina, watching Strassera put into words all that the dictators had done and all that the people of the country had been subjected to. Both filmmakers and cast knew they had to get this scene exactly right.

“That day was very special,” says Mitre. “It made us realize just how small that courtroom is. Strassera was only about a meter away from the dictators as he was talking to them. He could have reached out and touched them. It brought an incredible tension.” The courthouse was packed for the scene, as it had been during the real trial, with extras playing the public audience watching the speech.

“It was exceptionally moving to do,” says Darín. “For technical reasons, to get all the different shots, we had to repeat that speech 20 times. The same extras there for every take. Through those 20 takes I looked at each of the extras and they were all crying.” When

the extras broke into applause at the end of each take, Mitre remembers it was obvious they were not just doing it because they’d been instructed to. They were genuinely overwhelmed by the moment.

“You could see how much it really affected everyone,” says Lanzani. “You looked at the extras and they had suddenly become the greatest actors. You saw all the emotion on their faces. You could see they felt it in their hearts.”

“It felt like history being re-lived,” says Alejandra Flechner. “It was so hot in that room. The air was thick, you could feel it. We were all kind of in a trance watching it, so moved. It’s one of the great privileges of my job to be able to see moments like that. I’ll feel that moment tattooed on me until the day I die.”

A Story Never To Be Forgotten

Making *Argentina, 1985* is an experience that has changed everyone who worked on it. Though some of the cast and crew remember the years under the dictatorship and the 1985 trial, others were not born until after it was all over. The film gave them all a way to process one of the most important moments in their country’s history.

“Living through that dictatorship, all your freedoms were curtailed,” says Kuschevatzky. “You can’t read certain books. You can’t watch certain films. You can’t decide who’s your president. I remember that time was like going through a dark tunnel. We made this movie for our children and for future generations. It’s not a movie about a dictatorship in a country a long time ago. It’s a movie about how fragile democracy is and how we need justice to make it work.”

“It’s so important for stories like this to be told,” says Lanzani, who was born five years after the trial. “There are people in Argentina who are young and don’t know this story. People have to know that terrible things like this can happen and that as humankind we have to step in. It’s not just a movie about a political narrative. It’s a movie that encourages you to learn more. The first time I read the script I started to cry. I had to take a walk to process all this information. I felt a strange guilt, that I was not there to be part of that society. But I think it’s good that I felt like that, because these things can still happen and do still happen.”

That is the larger story Mitre realized he was telling. While the film is specifically about Argentina in 1985, it’s also telling a story that is repeated throughout history in almost every country in the world. Evil people will try to seize power and crush those they see as weak, but ordinary people will rise up to overcome them. “You don’t need to be a big, famous person to do something that will change society,” says Mitre. “If you believe in yourself, you can achieve it.”

“I think this is one of the most important trials in the history of the world,” says Darín. “It’s the first time a civilian court dared to prosecute the military. And it was such a huge risk to do that. I think that it’s such an important thing for people to see, in any society in the world. Almost every country in the world has suffered in similar ways, to different degrees,

and to see that people can recover the power and the power of democracy, I think that is very inspiring.”

In his closing arguments in *The Trial of The Juntas*, Strassera borrowed a phrase from the Argentinian people, a phrase that had become a protest cry when Argentina demanded dictatorship would never return to the country. It’s a phrase that also runs through the heart of *Argentina, 1985* and encapsulates its message: *Nunca más*. Never again.

Cast And Crew Biographies

Santiago Mitre – Director, Screenwriter and Producer

Born in Buenos Aires, Santiago Mitre co-directed *Love (Part One)* which premiered in Venice’s Critics’ Week 2004. *El Estudiante (The Student)* (2011), his solo debut, won the Jury Special Prize in Locarno and was screened at TIFF and NYFF. *Paulina* (2015) won the Grand Prix of Critics’ Week and the FIPRESCI award at Cannes. *La cordillera (The Summit)* (2017) was selected for Un Certain Regard at Cannes. He recently released his fourth film *Petite Fleur. Argentina, 1985* is his fifth feature as a writer and director.

Ricardo Darín - Chief Prosecutor Julio Strassera

Darín is one of Latin America's most internationally acclaimed actors. The Buenos Aires-born star has demonstrated his versatility in films directed by Abbas Kiarostami, Damian Szifron, Fabian Bielinsky, Fernando Trueba, Pablo Trapero and Sebastian Borensztein, among many

others. Darín is especially well known for his collaborations with director Juan Jose Campanella, including the Academy Award-winner *The Secret in Their Eyes* and the Academy Award-nominee *Son of The Bride*. He also starred in the International hit *Wild Tales*, also nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and currently all-time box-office champ in Argentina with more than 4 million admissions sold.

Peter Lanzani - Assistant Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo

Peter Lanzani is widely considered one of Argentina's best young rising stars. He started his career as a teen performer when he was sixteen years old in TV series before graduating to adult roles. In 2015, he starred in the true-crime hit film *The Clan*, playing the eldest son of a family of kidnappers and murderers. *The Clan* was awarded the Silver Lion at the Venice film Festival. He also had a major part in *El Angel* (2018), based on the true story of a well-known serial killer. The film debuted in Cannes in the Un Certain Regard official selection. His other features include *Los Últimos*, *Hipersomnia* and *You Only Live Once*, alongside Gerard Depardieu.

Production Companies

La Unión De Los Ríos

La Unión De Los Ríos is the Buenos Aires-based production company of Santiago Mitre's *The Student* (2011 - Locarno's Cineasti del Presente); *Paulina* (2015 – Nespresso Grand Prix and FIPRESCI award - Semaine de la Critique Cannes); and *The Summit* (2017 – Cannes Un Certain Regard); *The Sky of the Centaur* by Hugo Santiago (2015 - Opening Film BAFICI); *The Bums* by Gustavo Biazzi (2018 – Rotterdam Film Festival); Felipe Ríos Fuentes' *The Man of the Future* (2019 – Thessaloniki Competition); Alejandro Fadel's *The Wild Ones* (2012 – Semaine de la Critique Cannes) and *Murder Me, Monster* (2018 – Cannes Un Certain Regard). In 2022, the company released *Petite Fleur*, Santiago Mitre's fourth feature, shot *Blondi*, actress Dolores Fonzi directorial debut, and went into post-production of *El tema del Verano*, Uruguayan helmer Pablo Stoll's take on zombie comedy. Its upcoming projects include Alejandro Fadel's *The Adventures of China Iron*, based on Gabriela Cabezón Cámara's novel, shortlisted for the Booker Prize 2020.

Kenya Films

Kenya Films is an independent audiovisual production company founded in 2016 by Ricardo Darín, Chino Darín and Federico Posternak with the goal of developing high-quality content for both local and international audiences, supported by the joint experience of their partners who had been part of some of Argentina's biggest box office hits of the last 20 years. Kenya's previous features are *El Amor Menos Pensado* (2018 - directed by Juan Vera), official selection and opening film at the San

Sebastian Film Festival, and *La Odisea de los Giles* (2019 - directed by Sebastián Borensztein), Best Latin American Film at the Goya Awards, TIFF Special Presentation and SSIFF Official Selection.

Infinity Hill

Infinity Hill is a multilingual and multicultural film and TV series production company based both in the UK, Los Angeles and Buenos Aires headed by Axel Kuschevatzky, Phin Glynn and Cindy Teperman. Among its projects already released are the action thriller *The Doorman*, starring Jean Reno and Ruby Rose; *Nasha Natasha*, a documentary about pop star Natalia Oreiro's massive success in Russia for Netflix, and the Argentine Oscar submission and Berlin Film Festival contender *The Intruder (El prófugo)*. Infinity Hill produced two seasons of the BBC UK prime time TV hit *Staged*, starring Michael Sheen and David Tennant, with guest stars Samuel L. Jackson, Judi Dench, Christoph Waltz, Ewan McGregor, Ken Jeong, Jim Parsons, Phoebe Waller-Bridge and Cate Blanchett, among many others. Infinity Hill's upcoming movies includes *Amor es Amor* starring Rob Schneider and Vahdir Derbez; *El gerente* with Leonardo Sbaraglia; *El salto de papá* with Rodrigo de la Serna for Paramount+; *Los conspiradores* headlined by Guillermo Francella for HBOmax; *A Bit of Light*, starring Academy Winner Anna Paquin and Ray Winstone; and the docuseries *Daughter of God* with Dalma Maradona for Discovery+.