

## BIOGRAPHY

If life can be described as a project, the love and dedication I have for this profession is more than that. I have spent my entire professional life, almost forty years, and here I am, in the middle of my most recent re-invention... for now.

### First stage: BARCELONA, VERTIGO

When I was twenty years old, I entered the *Institut del Teatre* of Barcelona as an acting student where I thought I was going to train for a job. It turned out to be a way of life. I'm glad that I went there because it meant a new city, a new career and a new language, each one full of expectations and illusions and so, I began this new adventure. I will always be grateful for having taken that decision and for those who mentored me. At that time the *Institut del Teatre* was an island, even in that Barcelona of 1973, which was so different from the rest of the country, where if you plunged into the surrounding waters of that island you would find it completely different from the rest of the world beyond, and by comparison, find it very uninteresting.

I didn't wait to finish my studies before I started working as an actor, which went against the opinions of my teachers, so I combined performing with my classes. What reality showed me was that one thing was what I was studying and another thing was what I applied to the scenes I worked in. This was also true for those who taught me. I neither regret it nor blame my teachers, I guess it was like the country we were living in at that time, full of contradictions - what we longed to be and what was real. At the end of my studies, personal circumstances and the shock of seeing me as a greenhorn "actor" pushed me to pack up and leave for London's next season, where I lived an encounter with the world, and was able to look at myself and my country from thousands of miles away. I worked at the Globe Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue, as an usher and ice cream vendor. That theatre is no longer what it used to be and it's not even known by that name. The same is true for that young man, me, who overcame everything with enthusiasm and like the theater, is not the same. A few months later I returned to Barcelona where I had the feeling that that phase of my life was over. Contrary to the opinions and advice of friends and colleagues I continued on my journey. Impatience is not a virtue but...

### Second stage: VALENCIA, SPEED

I returned to Valencia when I was 25 years old very different from the person who had left five years earlier. The city was also different. It was not a romantic desire to return to my birthplace. Except for my family, there was nobody tying me there as friends from my youth had disappeared from my life. I had been selected for a TV show that would be shooting in September in Madrid and had the whole summer ahead of me. Valencia was in the midst of a moment, the likes which have never been repeated. I had always liked its moorish flavour, and it now smelled of joy and freedom. Performances and concerts were happening all around. I contacted a fellow from my

time in Barcelona and in the middle of everything we set out to assemble a cabaret show. It was then that I realized I was settled, living and working among the people who were trying to shake their provincial image and highlight the things, which were different. Soon we were presenting rock concerts, festivals and parties. Our show was so unusual that it even worked with the right-wing boycotts. The TV show never happened but I lived one of the most creative and free periods of my life accompanied by people who have remained important to me all these years.

## GALLOPING AT GREAT SPEED

Out of the blue, I found myself directing Shakespeare, of all things. A year earlier I had been awarded a scholarship by the National Dramatic Centre as assistant director at the María Guerrero Theatre. Was this just a great coincidence? A workshop with John Strasberg the Lee Strasberg's son, the famous director from The Actor's Studio in New York, had been scheduled at the exact same time that I would be there. It was clear that I had to participate in that workshop, so I applied. Even though all of places were covered, there was still a possibility that I could join. In addition to young actors, young directors were also going to participate in the workshop. So I seized the opportunity and entered the course as a director even though, I had never studied to be one, only as an actor. From there, The National Dramatic Centre chose young student directors and I was among those lucky enough to receive the grant - another contradiction in my life. By strange games of fate I began to learn a trade, directing plays, which would mark my future and fully occupy almost thirty years of my professional life.

## Third stage MADRID, DESTINATION UNTIL TODAY

Sometimes cities live a golden age. I have the feeling that my vital moments have coincided with the golden ages of the cities where I have lived. In Madrid I have developed my career to date, as an actor, director, producer and teacher. Just as a complex and multifaceted university deals with its students, my work and all of its determinants have helped to form me, to meet people, to travel and finally to open my mind to understand that any ideas, like jewels, can be studied in many and varied forms and from any angle. I have had the great fortune to learn from great people and others that were not so great, but in order to keep going one must be able to distinguish between the two. Doubt has been a great travel companion, sometimes tortuous, and I have always betrayed myself when I've ignored it, which has happened on several occasions. Despite my age I always need to test myself. Recently I felt the need to find the enthusiasm that I had lost. After many years running, I've gone back to work as an actor. It was a life choice, a reunion with myself. I do not cast aside anything, I cannot and will not. Whether it's directing or acting, it depends both on me and others, on everyone and on no one. I am currently living in search of the child who dressed up in the attic and created rituals with figures of cowboys and indians. This is

the moment I am living... near the door with a suitcase packed and ready to go.

José Luis Saiz