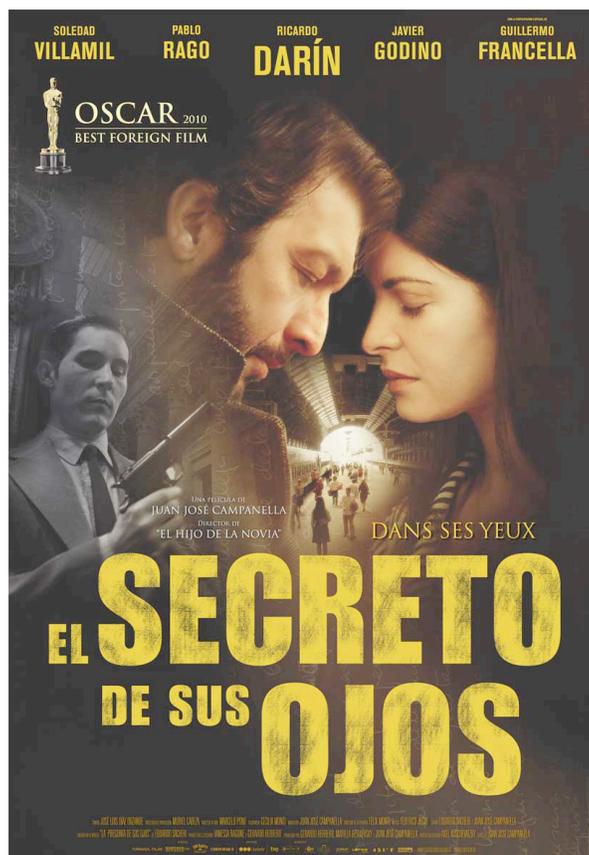


# EL SECRETO DE SUS OJOS

San Sebastián Film Festival 2009  
Toronto International Film Festival 2009  
OSCAR 2010: «Bester fremdsprachiger Film»



Ein Film von Juan José Campanella  
Argentinien / Spanien, 2009, 127 Min.

**Verleih:**

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# Synopsis

Benjamín Espósito has spent his entire working life as a criminal court employee. Recently retired and with time on his hands, he decides to write a novel. He does not decide to make up a story. There is no need to. He can draw on his own past as a civil servant for a true, moving and tragic story in which he was once very directly involved. In 1974, his court was assigned an investigation into the rape and murder of a beautiful young woman.

At the scene of the crime, Espósito sees the result of the young woman's rape and murder first hand. He meets Ricardo Morales, who had married the girl a short time before and worshipped her body and soul. Moved by Ricardo's grief, Espósito tries to help him find the culprit despite having to contend with the apathy and ineptitude of the police and legal system. He knows that for help he can count on Sandoval, an underling at the office yet a close friend, who occasionally seeks release from the routine of his existence by drinking himself unconscious. He can also turn to Irene, his immediate superior and secretary of the court, with whom he is secretly deeply in love, although there is no hope that she will ever love him.

The search for the murderer is anything but simple. No clues remain at the scene of the crime and Espósito must rely on guesswork and his own instincts to make any progress. Furthermore, Argentina in 1974 is not a peaceful place. It is a perfect backdrop for the violence, hate, revenge and death that rule people's lives and fates.

To this ever more hostile and dark setting, Espósito's investigation takes him deep into a world of terrible violence. No longer an observer, he becomes an unwilling central character in a drama in which he is exposed to ever-greater danger.

But it is not only the young Espósito of 1974 who is swept along by the storm of events, for that storm also envelops the present-day Espósito, the old would-be writer, and sets him adrift. By deciding to revive and relive his memories, he has set in motion the wheels of the terrible mechanism of memory. And those memories are neither innocent, neutral nor aseptic. Espósito writes, and as he does so, relives a past that rises up before his eyes and awakens all his demons: particularly those involving his past decisions, uncertainties and irreparable mistakes.

As he moves forward, Espósito begins to see that it is now too late to stop. Telling a story from the past is no longer just a pastime to fill his empty hours. It becomes a narrow, winding path he must take if he is to understand and find justification for his own life, if he is to give any meaning to the years remaining to him, and if once and for all he is to face up to the woman who, thirty years on, he is still in love with.

# Cast

Benjamín Espósito  
Irene Menéndez Hastings  
Ricardo Morales  
Isidoro Gómez

RICARDO DARÍN  
SOLEDAD VILLAMIL  
PABLO RAGO  
JAVIER GODINO

and the special participation of  
as Sandoval

GUILLERMO FRANCELLA

# Crew

Director  
Screenplay

JUAN JOSÉ CAMPANELLA  
EDUARDO SACHERI  
JUAN JOSÉ CAMPANELLA

Producers

GERARDO HERRERO  
MARIELA BESUIEVSKY  
JUAN JOSÉ CAMPANELLA

Executive producers

GERARDO HERRERO  
VANESSA RAGONE

Associated producer  
Production manager  
Director of photography  
Art director  
Costume designer

AXEL KUSCHEVATZKY  
MURIEL CABEZA  
FÉLIX MONTI  
MARCELO PONT  
CECILIA MONTI

Make-up  
Hair stylist  
Sound editor  
Editor  
Music

LUCILA ROBIROSA  
OSVALDO ESPERÓN  
JOSE L. DÍAZ OUZANDE  
JUAN JOSÉ CAMPANELLA  
FEDERICO JUSID

# Juan José Campanella

 (director and co-screenwriter)

Juan José Campanella was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

He has worked in the United States on TV series including *Law & Order*, *House MD* and *30 Rock*.

In addition to directing, he written the screenplays for his three best-known films: *El mismo amor, la misma lluvia*, *El hijo de la novia*, and *Luna de Avellaneda*.

In 2001, his film *El hijo de la novia* (“Son of The Bride”) was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

He has directed films and television series.

In addition to his nomination for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, he has won other awards, including several Emmys for Best Director.

## FILMOGRAPHY - CINEMA

(selection)

2009	<i>El Secreto de sus ojos</i>
2004	<i>Luna de Avellaneda</i>
2001	<i>El hijo de la novia</i>
1999	<i>El mismo amor, la misma lluvia</i>
1997	<i>Love Walked In (Y llegó el amor)</i>
1991	<i>The Boy Who Cried Bitch (El niño que gritó puta)</i>

# Director's comments

An old man eating alone. It was that image that haunted me and finally took me back to the novel. Not the crime itself. Or the suspense. Or the genre. The Old Man eating alone. How does someone end up all alone in life? Does that Old Man wonder how he ended up eating alone in a bar with no one by his side? One can deny it, forget about it, cover it up for a time, but the past always comes back. Perhaps during the second act of his life, the Old Man managed to ignore what he had done during the first act, but if he wants to make a successful transition into the third act, he will have to deal with his unfinished business.

I don't see this as "film noir". The "meat", the main dish, the driving forces behind this movie are an undeclared love that has lasted for years, frustration, and the emptiness felt by the main characters. The genre is the dish the meat is served on.

Memory fascinates me. The way decisions we made twenty or thirty years ago can affect us today. This could also apply to a nation's memories. As we now recover our memory of the 1970s as a country, we know that the horror began to take shape before the military dictatorship. The story takes place in that Argentina as the very air thickened, creeping up on and enveloping even the key players.

My aim was to tell this story as a mixture: of small beings wandering through a sea of people, among huge structures, lost in the crowd - and their eyes. The story of that man walking by a hundred meters away at the train station, with five hundred bodies between us and him. What could we learn about him if suddenly, with no cuts, we could see a close up of his eyes? What secrets would they have to tell?

Secrets about a story like this one perhaps: a story about a murder, true, but above all a story about love. A story about love in its purest form. A love that ended when it was only in the bud, with no time even to fade and die. How could a love like that be lived? What effect would it have on the people involved? What acts of madness could a pair of eyes commit when love is taken away from them?

These are questions the film seeks to ask and which, only in the lives of the characters, perhaps attempts to find answers to.

**Juan José Campanella**

# The characters

**Benjamín Espósito** is a tired man. Not just –although partly– because he is over sixty and has just retired from his job at a criminal court. He is tired of silently bearing the pain of a love for which there is no hope. He is tired of constantly rehashing a story –a crime, a conviction, and a punishment– that affected his life and the lives of people he loved. Tired of his weariness, he decides to get up and move. He decides to write, to tell the story, to lift the heavy seal of silence he used to hide it all for over twenty years. But we cannot return to the past without it coming back to life again. We cannot escape the cold presence of ghosts once we have raised them. And Espósito will have to battle with the ghosts of love, violence and death.

**Pablo Sandoval** works for the justice department. He is Espósito's best friend. His right-hand man on the job. They can read each other like a book. Sandoval is a man of extremes; he is capable of showing flashes of genius, then plunging into the depths of drunken despair when nothing else seems to matter. He and Espósito have an ironclad bond of friendship. They also complement one another. Espósito is the consummate professional, Sandoval is incredibly inventive. Where Espósito is shy, Sandoval is self-assured. Both are extremely loyal and possess a deep sense of right and wrong, a distinction they both have a great deal of respect for.

**Irene Menéndez Hastings** is, at the beginning of the story, a typical Daddy's girl, whose father's friends got her a good job as a secretary of the court. Daily contact with Espósito and Sandoval as the three try to find the perpetrator of a terrible murder will enable her to gain experience, strength and determination. But this, like all profound lessons, means she will be forced to question some of her most deeply held tenets and will lose her assurance that she will always be safe, her belief that the judicial system is effective and believable, and the certainty that evil is always punished.

Twenty-five years on, Irene is a middle-aged woman who runs her own court with a firm hand. Unintentionally, she once again finds herself caught up in the tangle of crime, doubts and painful discoveries like those which swept her away like a whirlwind when she was young. Once again, when faced with the truth and, above all, with its consequences, she must decide whether it is best to open her eyes or keep them shut.

**Ricardo Morales** considers himself a fairly ordinary guy with an ordinary predictable job at a bank. There is, however, something truly extraordinary about his life: he is married to Liliana, the beautiful, adorable young woman who changed his life. They are newlyweds and Morales is thrilled every morning as he watches her making breakfast, chatting about this and that, and thinking of ways to improve their home. But then the dark hand of violence and death tear the woman he loves away from him. An inexplicable crime and suddenly his life loses all meaning except what he can build around the crime. Understanding the crime, finding the murderer and doing whatever it takes to make sure he is punished.

# The actors

## Ricardo Darín

(Benjamín Espósito)

### FILMOGRAPHY

(selection)

- 2009 *El Secreto des sus Ojos*, directed by Juan José Campanella
- 2007 *La señal* (debut as a director)
- 2006 *La educación de las hadas*, directed by José Luis Cuerda
- 2005 *El aura*, directed by Fabián Bielinsky
- 2004 *Luna de Avellaneda*, directed by Juan José Campanella
- 2003 *Kamchatka*, directed by Marcelo Piñeyro
- 2002 *Samy y yo*, directed by Eduardo Milewicz
- 2001 *Porque te quiero*, directed by Mario Sábato
- El hijo de la novia*, directed by Juan José Campanella
- La fuga*, directed by Eduardo Mignogna
- 2000 *Nueve reinas*, directed by Fabián Bielinsky
- 1999 *El mismo amor, la misma lluvia*, directed by Juan José Campanella
- 1998 *El faro del sur*, directed by Eduardo Mignogna
- 1986 *Les longs manteaux*, directed by Gilles Béhat
- 1980 *La discoteca del amor*, directed by Adolfo Aristarain
- 1979 *La carpa del amor*, directed by Adolfo Aristarain

## Soledad Villamil

(Irene Menéndez Hastings)

### FILMOGRAPHY

(selection)

- 2009 *El Secreto des sus Ojos*, directed by Juan José Campanella
- 2004 *No sos vos, soy yo*, directed by Juan Taratuto
- 2002 *Un oso rojo*, directed by Adrián Caetano
- 1999 *El mismo amor, la misma lluvia*, directed by Juan José Campanella
- 1997 *El sueño de los héroes*, directed by Sergio Renán
- 1997 *La vida según Muriel*, directed by Eduardo Milewicz
- 1993 *Un muro de silencio*, directed by Lita Stantic
- 1991 *Vivir mata*, directed by Nicolás Echevarría

## **Pablo Rago**

(Ricardo Morales)

### FILMOGRAPHY

(selection)

- 2009 *El Secreto des sus Ojos*, directed by Juan José Campanella
- 2008 *La leyenda*, directed by Sebastián Pivoto
- 2007 *La mujer rota*, directed by Sebastián Faena
- 2005 *El buen destino*, directed by Leonor Benedetto
- 2002 *Apasionados*, directed by Juan José Jusid

## **Javier Godino**

(Isidoro Gómez)

### FILMOGRAPHY

(selection)

- 2009 EL SECRETO DE SUS OJOS, directed by Juan José Campanella
- 2008 *Deception*, directed by Marcel Langenegger
- Hospital Central* (television)
- 2006 *El comisario* (television)
- 2004 *Tus labios*, directed by Isabel de Ocampo (short film)
- 2000 *Besos para todos*, directed by Jaime Chávarri

## **Guillermo Francella**

(Sandoval)

### FILMOGRAPHY

(selection)

- 2009 EL SECRETO DE SUS OJOS, directed by Juan José Campanella
- 2008 *Un novio para mi mujer*, directed by Juan Taratuto
- Rudo y cursi*, directed by Carlos Cuarón
- 2007 *Incorregibles*, directed by Rodolfo Ledo
- 2000 *Papá es un ídolo*, directed by Juan José Jusid