

WE INTERVIEW...



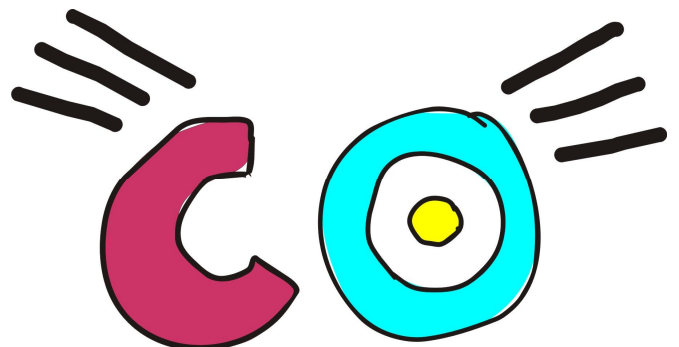
XOSÉ RAMÓN GAYOSO

- Galician TV presenter -

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Education and Culture
Lifelong learning programme
COMENIUS



We interview Xosé Ramón Gayoso

Xosé Ramón Gayoso, born on April 25th, 1956 in A Coruña, is a Galician Television presenter and he is one of the most popular persons in Galicia.

Although when he was young he felt especially attracted to singing, and he even won various teen prizes and went on tour all over Galicia as member of a duo, his studies led him along a different path. He studied Law at the University of Santiago de Compostela and he worked as a lawyer for the Apostolic Tribunal of the Roman Rota, the highest appellate tribunal of the Roman Catholic Church.

In this interview he told us that he was preparing his entry exams to be a judge when Galician Television was created in 1985 and, just by chance, he started working there since the opening day. He has conducted a lot of programmes, like *Thursday Neighbour*, which he is especially satisfied with, but it has been due to *Luar (Moonlight)*, broadcasted since 1992, (eighteen years have already passed!), that he became incredibly popular.



GAYOSO: Galician TV presenter

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How long have you been working as a TV presenter in general, and in *Luar* in particular?

On July 24th it'll be 25 years since I started working as a TV presenter and this summer I will have been in *Luar* for 18 years

Don't you get tired of working in the same job for such a long time?

Of course you get tired. The same as a teacher gets tired, a butcher gets tired, an architect gets tired... everybody gets tired. Anyone who works, anyone who runs, anyone who wants to reach a finishing line has to be tired. Otherwise it means he hasn't run, he hasn't worked. But another thing is to say, 'I'm tired, I'm going to leave it'. No. The important thing in life is effort, sacrifice, to keep going. Everything worthwhile in life takes hard work and effort.

If you weren't a TV presenter, what would you like to be?

I'd like to be a singer. I'm a frustrated singer. But the good thing about *Luar* is that, from time to time, it allows me to spoils the singers' songs, and I sing along with them and I fulfil my wish.

If you could choose, would you stay in your present job or would you choose a previous one?

I liked a programme I made in the 1987-88 season very much. It was called *Thursday neighbour*. That was the programme I, personally, liked the most. But I love *Luar* very dearly for many reasons, personal and professional.

Law studies are said to be very hard. Do you agree?

Even harder if you don't like it. That's even worse. And I didn't like it at all. I didn't get a very good degree in law because I didn't like it. It was something I didn't want to do it but I had to. And this is a lesson for life. Now I'm 54 and I do more things which I don't like than things which I like. 'I'd like to...' is OK, but life



is not like that. Unfortunately, in real life you have to do a lot of things you don't like

We've heard that you worked as a lawyer for la Rota Court. What was the experience like? How long did it last?

I got my degree in Law and I moved to Madrid and I worked as a lawyer for three years. That court was an ecclesiastical one where religious, catholic marriages were annulled. But we used to work on other things, Civil Law in general. I spent three years there.

How has the audience of *Luar* accepted the programme over the years?

Very well.

Why do you think that audience remains faithful after such a long time?

Because we work hard and the audience is great. They are very acquiescent and they love us but everything is due to our effort and work, and the audience which, miraculously, still lets us enter their houses.



We suppose you have learnt a lot of things thanks to this programme. Could you tell us some of them?

Of course, there are so many things, you know! It's been 18 years since this programme started. The most important thing that I've learnt is that television means team work. You can't work individually. There are people who are artisans and out of a piece of wood or a piece of iron or on a canvass, alone, they can make their work of art. But this is impossible for us. We can't do anything alone, neither the presenter nor the scriptwriters, nor the lighting technician, nor the directors. It's group work in perfect coordination. If a link breaks, everything breaks; the whole programme. That's why I've tried to know all about my TV mates' jobs. Our tasks are completely linked and this is the most important thing. And my respect for our public grows every day. Sometimes we think we are the centre of the world, like in many jobs, and from time to time we try to make programmes so that other colleagues will like them. I also learnt that the public is the boss. Not even politicians. The public has the remote control, which is a more democratic element than a ballot box. They press a button and... you disappear. They press a button and you... appear again. They don't need to wait for four years to vote for you.

There must be things you like in the programme and things you don't. Which ones? Why?

This could be such a long answer! Well, I don't make this programme so that I will like it. I do it for the audience, for the immense majority of the people who watch us, so they will enjoy it. My personal likes are left aside. I like some things and I don't like some others. I know its lights and shades. *Luar* isn't the best programme in the world, but it is well-accepted.

***The Singers from Ardebullo* have a lot of fans. Is Gayoso one of them?**

Yes, of course. They have a lot of fans and I'm one of them. I have a great time with them. It's a wonderful way of ending the day, such a long day, so many hours in here and then ending... not with a smile, but with gymnastic sit-ups because I have a whale of a time with them.

Do you think that this comic duo is a positive influence on the audience of *Luar*?

Sure, sure, sure. *Luar* has quite a large audience but these guys are giving us a big plus right now.

What is the main difference between *The Tonechos* and *The Singers from Ardebullo*?

The difference...well, I think both speak a very understandable language, very close to people. There are more similarities than differences, aren't there? I think they are quite similar in one thing: they play Galician village people very well.





Do they have the same effect on the public who attends the programme live?

Certainly. I remember the times of *The Tonechos* as hilarious as the times of *The Singers from Ardebullo*.

If Gayoso had to choose between one of the two duos, which one would you choose?

Oh! It's really hard to say. It's like if you had to choose between your two sons. Impossible to say! Both have a place. Besides I'm such a good eater I can eat everything. I choose *The Tonechos* and I choose *The Singers from Ardebullo*.

You must have lived a lot of anecdotes in *Luar*, could you tell us one of them?

There're so many anecdotes, oh my god, 18 years in *Luar*, 25 working on TV! Perhaps one of the funniest one was when I forgot an artist's name; I was about to introduce the artist, my mind went blank I began to look at the camera... the artist's name was Gilbert O'Sullivan. He was a very well-known artist, in those times, many years ago, and I

started to say, 'My dear friends, a great artist is here with us today, an artist who has never been here before', I still went on and on badly, 'when you listen to him you are going to recognize him immediately' and oh my god! I was still trying to remember his name, oh my God! What was his name? And I had an idea: the stage manager. The stage manager is a member of the staff who is never on stage, he is behind the camera, he is very close to the presenter with some headphones very close to the producer and I had an idea, so I said, "I want this artist to be introduced by another person of our team, because I don't want to attract all the attention ...

-Manolo, come here, please. What's the name of the next artist?

Excuse me?

-What's the name of the next artist?

-Gilbert O'Sullivan

-You've just heard his name. Gilbert O'Sullivan is with us tonight, presented by Manolo. A big round of applause!

Ha, ha, ha! And when the programme had finished Manolo told me: 'Listen. The next time you do such a stupid thing or make a joke, let me know, because I didn't know what to do'. 'It wasn't a joke. I completely forgot his name'.

Funny things, you see.

We also suppose that you have been through hard situations in the programme. Which is the worst experience that you remember?

Killing *The Fary* and having to resuscitate him in the same programme. I announced *The Fary's* death and before the end of the programme...oh! I had an awful time... not just at that moment, but after that... I put my foot in it. But that's life! We are human and we make mistakes. And I hope to stumble many more times because that means that I am walking and when you walk, you can stumble. The possibilities of stumbling are bigger than when you are just sitting aren't they?

In general, are celebrities as good as they seem? Is there anyone who seems very good in front of the camera, but has a very bad temper behind it?



Yes, they are good. In general, they are. There are exceptions, but I'm not going to tell you, of course. Ha, ha, ha! They are really nice people in general. Another thing I learnt here in *Luar* is that behind a great star, and by an star I mean someone who has been working for 40 or 50 years and who has a lot of fans, there is a person who has worked very hard, and besides, they are extraordinary human beings, people who are out of the ordinary, very hard-working, very kind, very close and very humble.

Could you tell us who your favourite singer is and why?

My favourite singer... Gilbert Becaud! You may wonder who he is. He is already dead. He was a French singer and I liked him very much. A great French singer. At that time there was Frank Sinatra in America and Gilbert Becaud in Europe, probably the greatest ones. He was the star who touched me.

All of us would like to meet a celebrity we admire. Has Gayoso already made his dream come true?

Yes. Gilbert Beaucaud, for example. I have admired him since I was a child. I used to

sing his songs when I was a kid. I danced with him here, on the stage of *Luar*! Imagine what that day meant for me! Since then I feel that I can die in peace. I also met artists who I like, artists I have grown up with, I went to parties with, and I listened to their songs. I know all the artists in this country. There is no one left to meet. I am a bit foolish, you know, but I like meeting celebrities.

Which celebrity that you have never talked to, would you like to meet?

You put me in an awkward position! Who would I like to meet? Perhaps sportsmen, maybe someone in the world of sports because I've already met all the artists that I'd like to meet. Well, there are people who have died that I would like to have met, like Maria Callas. If I start naming people I didn't have the chance to.. But I'd really like to meet sportsmen, Fernando Alonso, for instance.

Is a TV presenter worried about what the audience may think of him?

Yes, of course we are worried! I am very worried about what people might think about me as a person because I distinguish between the TV character and the human being. I understand perfectly well that this gadget distorts reality and the public sometimes mistakes the character and the person who walks along the street. What worries me is that possible confusion. People think that I am that character that appears in *Luar*. And that character only lives there for three hours a week. That's the puppet which only lives on TV, and



that's all. Only three hours a week. And when I walk along the street in any city in Galician I am just Xosé Ramón Gayoso, an ordinary citizen who handles the strings of a puppet which is on TV three hours a week and who is called Gayoso. But I'm not that puppet. I don't spend the whole week shouting, "Ladies and gentlemen, we are very pleased to ... we're going to sing, we're going to dance, we're going to have fun...!" I handle the puppet, but I'm not that puppet.

Does a TV presenter still get nervous after so many years of work?

Yes, but nerves, which in the beginning are due to insecurity, not knowing what to do, then turn into respect for what you are about to do. You lose that feeling. After 25 years, I know what I have to do. Another thing is to do it well, but I know what to do. But the old nerves turn into respect. It's a responsibility in front of the public. I repeat what I said before: they are the bosses, the ones who decide.

Does working on TV change your life for the better or for the worse?

It really changes your life, for the better, and for the worse. Ha, ha, ha. The nice side is that you get to know people, you feel their affection... but the negative side is when people mistake the character and the person behind the character. And there are people who don't let you live in peace. They don't let you have a normal life. They are people who must be mentally ill. But what can we do? It's sad because they have mental problems and they misunderstand, they hound you, they chase you, they don't let you sleep, they go to your place and you can't do anything. You can retire from screen. It's the only thing you can do. Once you've disappeared, you will also disappear from their minds and from that paranoid imagination. This is real life, for the better and for the worse. But the good things are

far more than the bad ones, otherwise you would leave your job.

How long do rehearsals before the show last?



As you can see, we start at midnight and we finish at about 8 o'clock in the evening with one hour's break. Today, as I am a veteran, I agreed to meet you for the interview and I'm delighted, but my colleagues are waiting for me for a meeting.

The team which makes Luar possible must be large. How many people and jobs are we talking about?

We are talking about 150 people working on stage on Friday. Technicians of every kind, those who assemble the sets and the lights, lighting technicians, public relations, the creative team of scriptwriters, producers, musicians... there are loads of people working with us. Nobody can imagine how many. We are a team of ten people from Monday to Thursday, which is the creative part: phone calls to the stars, sign ups, guests' sign-ups, scripts. On Friday, we're 150, apart from these ten people.

Human relationships in such a big group must be difficult from time to time. Can you get on well with everybody?



Yes, it's possible. Human relationships are basic in a team. Coexistence is essential. Human relationships are basic for a good job. In *Luar* we are proud of having a great team who work together well. We have the logical frictions among people who have worked together for 18 years. But that is logical. We have to express ourselves and sometimes we have to be tough. Affection is more than saying nice things all the time. We are proud of, not only of the audience or the programmes, but of having created a work team who work together happily.

Who would Gayoso prefer not to work with and who does he get on very very well with?

Do you mean with stars or with my team? Well, I can work with everybody. I've answered this question before, I don't have the expression 'I don't feel like...' in my vocabulary. My job is my responsibility and if I like it, it's great, and if I don't, it's not as great but it's my job and I do it. I'm very serious and responsible.

How did Gayoso start on TV?

Just by chance. In 1985 Galician Television was created. I was working as a lawyer and I was preparing my entry exams to be a judge. I knew this company was about to start and I went there to apply for a job with my curriculum. They told me that they didn't need a lawyer, that they only needed TV presenters. So I thanked them and when I was about to leave, suddenly, like in a movie, I said, 'By the way, what do I have to do to become a TV presenter? And everything started at that very moment. They told me, 'you have to audition in front of the camera. We have to check if the camera loves you'. 'And when will it take place?' 'In a month or so, you'll see it in the newspaper'. So I left. I saw the audition ad in the newspaper, I went there, and that's all. This is my story. But I started on TV just by chance. Life changes in just a second. But not that much, because as I was telling one of your teachers, people have an idea of a lawyer associated to jails, crimes, very serious people...but I used to have a parallel life, and that was the stage. At school, when I was 6, my parents made me play the mandolin in a band. I've never wanted to get off that stage since I got on there. Then I played the guitar in and out because, apart from studying and working, I had that parallel life singing. I used to sing in pubs with a friend of mine. I used to have a very good time. And now that I am 54, I remember feeling great on stage. And I used to tell my parents that it was their fault for making me play on that stage. When I gave up law, both lives converged. My life changed, but not so much.

Could you define *Luar* in just one word?

Fiesta, fiesta. We are here to entertain. We don't have any other goal. When we began we used to be a bit more pretentious, but then we decided that entertaining people was our target. And we try to do it with clean and white contents. This programme can be seen by children with their

grandparents. We tell jokes, we dance, we sing and we try to do it with people from our country. When you see the list of the guests of *Luar*, the vast majority are from our country. There are only two or three foreign artists, but the word which defines *Luar* is fiesta, a Galician fiesta. A man from El Bierzo said that Luar was the temple of worldwide folklore and we liked the definition, so from time to time we say, 'Here we are, from the temple of worldwide folklore'. And folklore is joy, folklore is people's expression, it's the feeling of a country. That's Luar.

Would you like to go on working in *Luar* for many years?

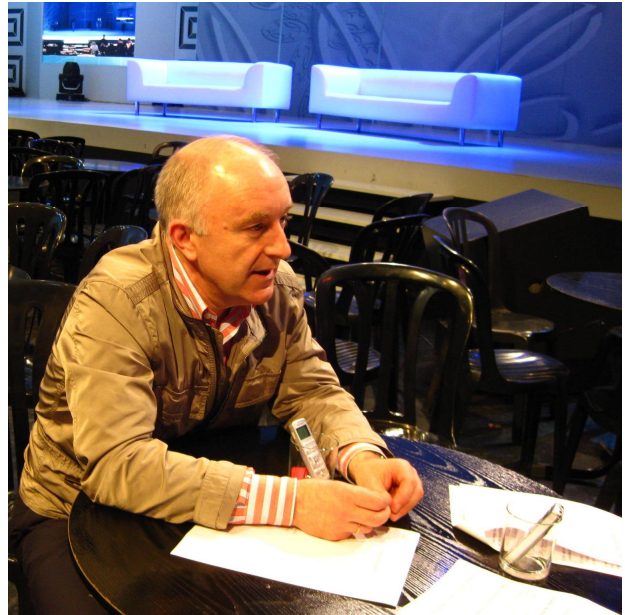
I wouldn't mind, but I'm aware that the viewers have the upper hand and if the public decides that it's enough, it'll be over. We'll do another thing and we'll try to keep on entertaining.

We are working on a European project, Comenius, which involves student exchanges and carrying out tasks together with our mates from Lithuania and Poland. Were there similar projects when you were a student?

Not at all. The only thing we knew was that Europe existed, but we didn't even notice it. We didn't have a television or the Internet. Young people didn't have the necessity of travelling. And travelling is very important because it opens your mind. You have all the tools to keep in touch with the whole world but we didn't. But I know that you, young people, are hard on our heels and you keep on going wherever it takes. And I love that because you are the future of this Community, Galicia, and that is to say the world. You are much more qualified, there's no doubt about it. You have a very promising future.

When you were a very young man, could you travel abroad?

Not so much, because there was no money and there weren't these partnerships with other countries which make travelling cheaper. In our parents' time it was a question of survival, 'give us this day our daily bread'. They used to get up and look for something to eat because they had to survive. But things have changed a lot nowadays.



What do you think about Lithuania and Poland?

They are countries which also had to struggle very hard, countries where the lack of knowledge from other cultures and the lack of education, made them slow their development down, unfortunately the same as in Spain. That's why this kind of activities, cultural exchanges, is so important. The more you learn, the more you know and knowledge is freedom. The problem of these two countries is that they weren't allowed to be free because their cultures weren't promoted, as it happened here in Spain. But that was their past. People from Poland, Lithuania and also from Spain are really praiseworthy because they have been able to overcome a situation of total blockage and keep going.



Have you ever been there?

No, but I am looking forward to going there one day. Travelling is one of my matters pending. I couldn't do it when I was young because I didn't have enough money. Now, I have the money but I don't have the time. I hope I'll soon find the right time to travel, because I love travelling. For me it's essential, something very important for my development as a human being.

Is *Luar* a programme of considerable scope in Europe?

In Europe, in the world of Galician emigrants, I suppose. Although one day, a friend of mine told me that he had met a French couple who used to watch *Luar*. He asked them if they were emigrants but they said they were French and they watched *Luar* because they liked it. And they didn't have any Spanish relatives either. Anyway, this is just an exception. In general, *Luar* is watched by Galician emigrants in Europe and in America because they listen to Galician Radio and watch Galician TV too.

We are famous for spending our whole life studying English and for being unable to learn it. Where do you think the problem is?

Just the lack of work and the lack of effort. We didn't use to care about learning languages. I can't speak English because I

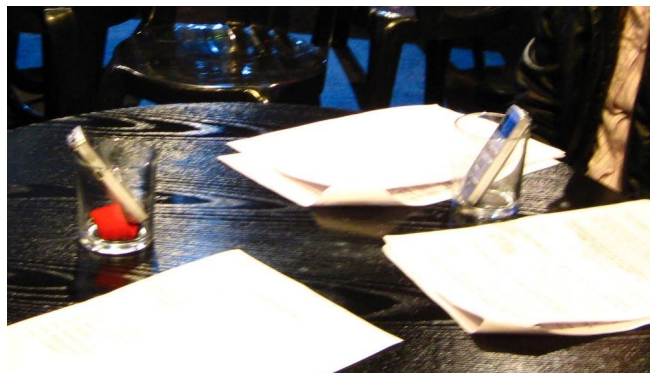
didn't need it. Now we are told to learn Galician, Spanish and English. And it annoys me because the sky is the limit as far as knowledge is concerned. We have to know these 3 languages, yes, and 4 and 5 and 6... the more languages you know, the better. It really irritates me when people say we have to speak just Galician or just Spanish. I know there are other reasons which lead to these stupid arguments. Why should you restrict knowledge? Knowledge has no limits.

Do you know any foreign language?

I can't speak any, but I know a lot of them, I know they exist: French, German, Chinese, Japanese... Ha, ha, ha. Someone who speaks Spanish, like me, have a disadvantage, because Spanish is spoken by a lot of people in a lot of countries. And that makes you lazy. And you have no problems when you travel around the world. But if it were necessary ... Ask the Galician emigrants who went to Germany or Switzerland how fast they learnt because they had to. It's a question of need, work and effort. That's all.

Let us ask you the last question, as inexperienced interviewers, is there a question you would like to answer but nobody has asked you?

No, because when they don't ask me, somehow I bring the issue into the conversation. What worries me most, because I suffer this problem, is when



people mistake a TV character and the human being in the street. You feel really lonely because nobody understands you, because people next to you don't suffer this situation. And this is a big problem I have to live with just because there are some people in the street who can't differentiate the TV presenter and the person. It's really hard to explain. I'd like to be asked about it more often. I want to make it very clear that one

would disappear. I placed the micro where I was told and that is the end of the story. I know it's not funny and I can destroy the myth but that's why I always have the micro stuck here. It's a reference for the sound technician to avoid the mess with so many microphones.

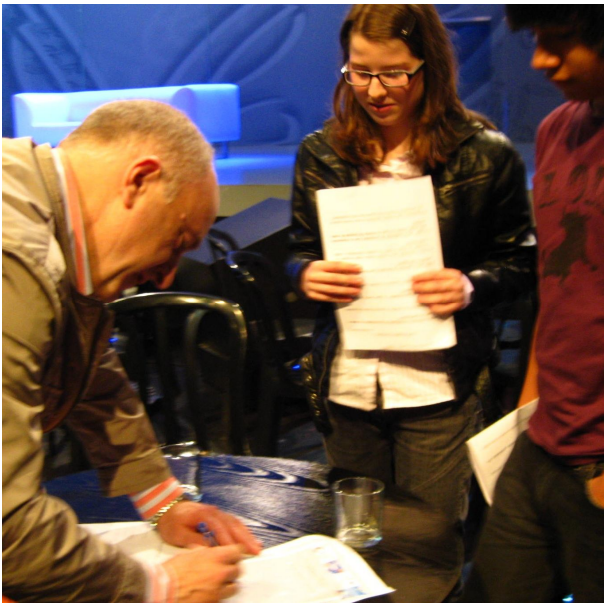
Greetings to 'Maruxa Mallo' Secondary School and to Ordes in general... and congratulations to the interviewers!

And remember, you have to greet us from *Luar* tonight!

OK. I'll do it, I promise.

So we'll tell everyone to watch the programme tonight. Ha, ha, ha.

Perfect.



thing is the puppet and another thing is the person who handles the strings of this puppet.

We haven't asked you about the microphone!

Certainly, it became so popular that my face without the micro doesn't seem Gayoso! Well, it is a technical question. You have just seen a rehearsal of *Luar*, and there is so much "noise". There are a lot of people who sing and dance... and we have to handle 15 micros at the same time through the mixing desk. Each micro has its own control and sound technicians have to handle the 15 micros at the same time. It's crazy. So, one day, one of the sound technicians told me that if I placed the micro somewhere and didn't move it, one of their fifteen problems

