

ROMERO*
by Xiomara Cornejo

SYNOPSIS: In a magic journey through time, Archbishop Oscar A. Romero, the Catholic priest of El Salvador who sacrificed his life for the liberation of the poor, is called upon by the heavens for sainthood. Romero struggles to accept the call to sainthood while the people continue to suffer. Through music, projection, stiling, and papier-mâché puppetry, we bear witness to Romero's transformation to sainthood and his social justice legacy alongside the poor.

CHARACTERS:

Monsignor Oscar A. Romero: Salvadoran Catholic priest, once passive and uninvolved, but now a gifted orator and defender of the poor.

Father Rutilio Grande: Murdered revolutionary priest, activist, dear friend of Romero, who organized peasant workers in El Salvador.

1st Archangel: An old man/angel in heaven who was murdered alongside Father Rutilio Grande by the right-wing military in El Salvador.

2nd Archangel: A fifteen-year-old boy/angel in heaven who was murdered alongside Father Rutilio Grande by the right-wing military in El Salvador.

Eduardo: Peasant worker and union organizer. An important leader of the leftist guerrillas.

Gina: University student, activist, and photojournalist. Wants to live forever.

Musa: Death squad member and hit man who shoots Monsignor Romero. A ticking bomb.

Carmen: Migrant crossing the U.S. border on *La Bestia* train. Infectious personality.

Santiago: A fifteen-year-old Mara Salvatrucha (MS) gang member. Loyal to his gang.

OPENING SCENE: A spotlight on a 1980's papier-mâché radio. We hear Romero's speech to the right-wing military ordering soldiers to disobey instructions to kill and instead honor the non-violent laws of God. Suddenly, we are inside the church on the day Romero is murdered while giving mass. Archangels and all play characters are present singing *Sacris Solemnis* acapella to the tune of Beethoven's Symphony No.7 in A Major op. 92-II Allegretto. An unknown figure enters the church and shoots Romero dead. Romero is caught by the Archangels stretched out like Jesus on the cross; "**Martyr**," the first stage of canonization for sainthood begins.

ACT ONE: In heaven (a beach in El Salvador), Romero is summoned for sainthood by the Heavenly Courts of Justice. Burdened by guilt over the poor's ongoing suffering, Romero rejects the nomination despite the Archangels who warn him against the consequences. "**Witness**," the second stage of canonization begins as we see Romero's devotion for the oppressed through first-hand accounts by peasant workers, union organizers, and student activists in the 80s and 90s. Still, Romero ignores the call for sainthood, transporting us back to a dangerous encounter with his murderer whom Romero was unable to save. Out of protest, Romero abandons heaven and returns to the mortal world to save souls.

ACT TWO: The fourth stage of canonization, "**Miracle**," begins as we witness two of Romero's miraculous interventions in the present mortal world during a migrant's dangerous travel on top of *La Bestia*, the train migrants board from Central America to cross into the U.S border; and inside a packed Salvadoran jail cell before the release of a teenage gang leader.

FINAL SCENE: Romero is found by the Archangels who bring him to heaven to face a God-like Father Grande. Romero ready to face the consequences of his actions, pleas for forgiveness, and discovers he is not to blame for the poor's misfortunes. Humbled to learn that the people, and not the Catholic church, summoned him to sainthood, Romero accepts and is transformed into Saint Oscar A. Romero on stage; The final stage of canonization, "**Saint**," is complete.