

I Cannot Say *Revoco*
The Dissenting Voice of Martin Luther

By D. Richard Tucker

Copyright 2009 by D. Richard Tucker
All rights reserved.

Dave Tucker
PO Box 4032
Kent, WA 98089
(206) 817-4196
dave@drichardtucker.com



Member
All rights & privileges.

I Cannot Say *Revoco*

by
D. Richard Tucker

CAST (7 M, 1 F)

MARTIN Luther, religious scholar, German, 34 years old

HANS Luther, his father, German

also plays

Johann von ECK, religious scholar, German

Johann von TETZEL, priest, German

also plays

MAN #1

also plays

George, MARGRAVE of Brandenburg

Johann von STAUPITZ, Augustinian monk, Luther's mentor, German

also plays

MAN #3

also plays

PRIEST, metaphorical representative of the Clergy during the Peasant War

also plays

LANDGRAVE, German royal.

Cardinal CAJETAN, High ranking Catholic official, Italian

also plays

Andreas von KARLSTADT, Church reformer, German

also plays

CHARLES, Holy Roman Emperor, Spanish

Karl von MILTITZ, Low ranking official of the Church, German

also plays

MAN #2

also plays

Thomas MUENTZER, leader of the Peasant rebellion, German

also plays

FERDINAND, Regent to Emperor, Spanish

also plays

NOBLEMAN, German noble

PHILIPP Melanchthon, young teacher and protégé to Luther, German

KATHARINA von Bora, former nun and Luther's wife, German, 26 years old

This shows the preferred method of casting, however directors may use their own discretion and add additional performers to minimize double-casting.

Time: 1517 through 1530

Setting: Various locations in Germany and Rome

I Cannot Say *Revoco*

By
D. Richard Tucker

ACT I

Scene 1

October 1517. The Chapel at Wittenberg.
SOUND: Monks singing in Latin. Lights
up on a large wooden door, the door of the
Chapel at Wittenberg. MARTIN Luther,
dressed in the robes of an Augustinian friar,
enters, stops in front of the door and nails
his paperwork to the door. The chanting
stops as the sound of his hammer echoes
throughout the space. MARTIN exits.
Blackout.

Scene 2

November 1517. MARTIN's study in
Wittenberg, represented by chairs or a
bench. Lights up on HANS Luther, waiting
impatiently. MARTIN enters quickly.

HANS

Ah, my son, the heretic!

MARTIN

Father. I was told you were here.

HANS

I came when I heard of your grave transgressions.

MARTIN

... I merely posted several topics for discussion –

HANS

I have heard of your ninety-five theses, Martin. They're heresy in the eyes of the Church.

MARTIN

They are merely points for deliberation, concerning the nature of forgiveness, the
personage of the Holy Spirit-

HANS

What you nailed to the door at Wittenberg Chapel is your own death sentence.

MARTIN

Father – there are priests and clergy, who are leading their flocks astray with the sale of indulgences.

HANS

Are not these indulgences granted by the Pope?

MARTIN

(quiet, but resolved)

Last week, a man came to me, a farmer. He had returned from the market in Torgau, having sold his harvest. He brought to me a parchment - in Latin - asking me to read it for him.

HANS

Yes?

MARTIN

It was an indulgence, promising to shorten the time that his dead father must spend in Purgatory. You see, the farmer's concern for the conditions of his father's afterlife were so great, that he sacrificed putting food on his table for his family.

HANS

And who are you to say what is more important – his son's bread or his father's soul?

MARTIN

Did God not give him the responsibility to care for his children? The commissioner of indulgences is preaching that God commands these purchases when, in fact, it can only be an act of free will. Christians need to be taught that the Pope does not intend the buying of pardons to be acts of mercy.

HANS

Martin-

MARTIN

And that he who gives to the poor does a better work than buying pardons.

HANS

But you speak against the clergy.

MARTIN

Then the clergy has erred.

HANS

You are a minister of the Church, and yet you speak against your own kind. Is this what you chose to be? Is this what you became, out of your love for God?

MARTIN

Love? I did not come to the Church out of love. The very name of Christ frightened me. When people mentioned His name, I would shudder. When I looked upon Him and the cross, I was so stuck with guilt that He seemed to me like a flash of lightning.

HANS

Lightning? I've heard that before – is everything you do based on fear, Martin?

MARTIN

Do not make light of –

HANS

I know. I've heard your story many times...about your lightning storm. How, with shaking knees, you prayed to St. Anne that if you be spared, you would become a monk.

MARTIN

I know you were angry, Father. You may not have wanted me to take this path, but it is a sweet and godly life, full of peace-

HANS

Peace? After your ninety-five theses, you shall be labeled a heretic. Have you forgotten Jan Hus? Do you want to be tortured... burned at the stake?

MARTIN

Why does it bother you?

HANS

A learned man. A lawyer. A master's degree. And all gone for naught because of an errant strike of lightning.

MARTIN

Do not mock me, Father.

HANS

(angry)

No income! No children! And in our old age, your mother I shall have to fend for ourselves. Tell me, learned scholar – you who have read the Scriptures – does it not say “Honor thy father and mother?”

(pause, then more collected)

Do not be certain that your call to the Church is, in fact, a holy one.

HANS turns to go.

MARTIN

What?

HANS

That lightning strike... that sent you scurrying off to the priesthood like a frightened rat... Did it really come from God? Or was it sent by the devil himself.

HANS exits. Light fade out. SOUND:
Three strikes of a hammer.

Skip to Scene 4

September 1518. A study in Wittenberg, represented by a bench. Lights up on MARTIN and Johann von STAUPITZ, who is dressed in the habit of an Augustinian friar.

MARTIN

I didn't expect this, Johann.

STAUPITZ

And what did you really expect? Once your Theses of Contention found the printing press, no one could stop them. I heard they were being printed in Nuremberg and Basel.

MARTIN

And Leipzig.

STAUPITZ

Many are not happy with your opinion, Martin.

MARTIN

But to be called before the Cardinal.....

STAUPITZ

You didn't think about that?

MARTIN

I was just concerned that poor are being misled.

STAUPITZ

So ...you're questioning clerical abuses, not the dogma of the Church?

MARTIN

It's - so much of this is not even in the Scriptures....And yet, I'm looked at as some kind of rebel. Am I so different from the rest of them?

STAUPITZ

Most of the clergy look to the wealthy and powerful for approval. You, on the other hand, are rarely seen with courtesans and merchants.

MARTIN

I go where I'm needed.

STAUPITZ

When I look for you, I find you in a tavern, drinking with farmers and guildsmen. You are a most unlikely priest.

MARTIN

I'm only trying to live the Scriptures.

STAUPITZ

Like I said, you're a most unlikely priest.

MARTIN

Johann... remember my trip to Rome?

STAUPITZ nods.

MARTIN (cont'd)

My grandfather, had passed away just before that, and I was deeply concerned for his soul. When we arrived in Rome, I found the Palace of the Holy Stairs and climbed the twenty-eight steps on my knees, stopping on each one to say the Lord's Prayer,. I hoped my penance would rescue my grandfather's soul, but when it was done, I couldn't help but wonder if my efforts had any effect at all. For all I knew, it was of no purpose.

(pause)

I don't understand how we can stray so far from the truth.

STAUPITZ

Did you ever ask yourself, "where does the money go?"

MARTIN shakes his head.

STAUPITZ (cont'd)

That's the answer you seek.

MARTIN

It's only about money?

STAUPITZ

Cardinal Albrecht holds three sees, the Bishop of Halberstadt, the Archbishop of Magdeburg and the Archbishop of Mainz, and yet it is prohibited to accumulate Episcopal sees. Additionally, one must be thirty years old to hold the office of Archbishop and Albrecht was confirmed at the age of twenty-three.

MARTIN

I'm not concerned with politics.

STAUPITZ

But politics drives your concerns. The Pope offered Albrecht dispensation for these issues, if Albrecht would make a rather large donation, to assist in paying for the building of St. Peter's Basilica. Albrecht borrowed the money for the donation, and received permission from the Pope to raise funds to pay this debt, by selling indulgences.

MARTIN

So this isn't about forgiveness - it's about the Pope's taste in architecture.

STAUPITZ

You can't escape the politics, Martin.

MARTIN

I look at the Church and....I feel she's being polluted by ungodly practices. Why doesn't anyone else say anything? We all see it.

STAUPITZ

Not everyone studies the Scriptures like you do.

MARTIN

Don't talk to me that way. You were the one who told me to read them for myself.

STAUPITZ

Martin. You came to me confused, not understanding the true nature of God. You were fearful, depressed, you -

MARTIN

Everything I had learned about God had taught me that I was unworthy to stand before Him. You taught me to seek the truth in the Scriptures.

STAUPITZ

And?

MARTIN

I found there was nothing I could do to justify myself....that only by God's grace and love, could I be worthy.

STAUPITZ

That's changed your life, Martin.

MARTIN

That's why it grieves me to see clergy preaching of indulgences to the church, as though buying a scroll will make the sinner worthy. They're stunting the growth of their own congregations,they're cheating God.

STAUPITZ

The Pope has given-

MARTIN

But God is in our hearts, not in a pile of relics.

STAUPITZ

Martin-

MARTIN

A coin to see this, a coin to touch that – a lock of hair from the Virgin Mary, , a piece of manna saved by Moses in the wilderness - the pockets of the ignorant are being picked by the Church. For a few coins, you can kneel at the grave of one of the saints and decrease your stay in Purgatory – which is very convenient, because of the original twelve disciples, eighteen of them are buried here in Germany.

STAUPITZ

Be careful, Martin. The Pope isn't about to let some noisy monk nail his dissent to the Chapel door. Rome is watching you closely.

MARTIN

What about the Cardinal?

STAUPITZ

We'll find out soon enough.

SOUND: Hammer strikes three times.
Blackout.

Skip to Scene 7

October 1518. Rome. CAJETAN is seated in his office, represented by his ornate chair. TETZEL enters followed by MILTITZ, who is dressed in the robes of a lower papal official.

TETZEL

Your Imminence..... Karl von Miltitz, emissary of Frederick the Wise.

CAJETAN

Welcome, von Miltitz.

MILTITZ

(bowing)
Your Imminence.

CAJETAN

You know von Tetzal, do you?

MILTITZ

Oh, yes, Your Imminence, he has an excellent reputation in my homeland.

CAJETAN

And you know why you are here?

MILTITZ

Uh.....no, Your Imminence, I....don't know.....really..

CAJETAN

Your Prince, Frederick the Wise, is to receive a high honor.

MILTITZ

Oh, well, that's wonderful, Your Imminence, that would-

CAJETAN

The Golden Rose of Virtue.

MILTITZ

That is a very high honor – about as high a honor as one can have, it's-

TETZEL

The highest honor bestowed upon a layman.

MILTITZ

Oh, yes, exactly, a very high honor, very high indeed.

(pause)

And... why would you be calling for me ,,,,Your Imminence?

CAJETAN

The Pope has asked that you deliver this honor to your Prince.

MILTITZ

Oh, that would be most wonderful, yes, Your Imminence, I would be most honored to
...take this honor to ...His Honor...the Prince.....Frederick the Wise.

CAJETAN

Come back tomorrow and I shall have the details for you so you may begin the journey.

MILTITZ

(bowing)
Yes, Your Imminence.

CAJETAN

And von Miltitz.

MILTITZ

Yes, Your Imminence?

CAJETAN

Please let Frederick know that we are interested in something in return.

MILTITZ

Yes, Your Imminence?

CAJETAN

Are you familiar with the Augustinian doctor, Martin Luther?

MILTITZ

Of course, Your Imminence, he's a very spiritual man of great renown-

CAJETAN

The Pope is most displeased with him.

MILTITZ

Though, I have always thought that he is a bit of a trouble maker...of questionable
character...a most-

CAJETAN

When you approach Frederick the Wise concerning The Golden Rose of Virtue, please
make it clear that the Pope would like to have Doctor Luther brought to Rome.

MILTITZ

I will, Your Imminence.

CAJETAN

And you will see to it that your Prince understands the relationship of this great honor, to
the status of Doctor Luther.

MILTITZ

Oh.....Yes.....Of course, Your Imminence.

CAJETAN

Very well.

CAJETAN rises and TETZEL and
MILTITZ bow. CAJETAN exits.

TETZEL

Come back tomorrow, and the Cardinal will have more information for you.

MILTITZ

What does he want with Luther?

TETZEL

Have you not heard of his many heresies?

MILTITZ

Oh, yes, of course, the heresies.....about what?

TETZEL

Forty-one of his writings have been condemned by the Pope. He has spoken out about the sale of indulgences-

MILTITZ

Oh, yes, that silly mess.

TETZEL

The sale of indulgences is a most honorable work of the Church. I have dedicated my life to this ministry.

MILTITZ

Oh, yes, indeed, very important. A most honorable ministry.

TETZEL

And because of his teaching, the revenue from indulgences has decreased to merely a third of the usual. He has written many books that speak badly of the Church, and he has written them in German, rather than Latin, and as a result, the German people are able to quote his words.

MILTITZ

Well, that's hardly fair, is it?

TETZEL

He has even damaged the reputation of the beloved Cardinal. There was a drawing posted-

MILTITZ

Oh, yes I saw it. It showed Cardinal Cajetan, only his face was like that of a donkey, and in his hoofs he was playing some instrument-

TETZEL

A harp.

MILTITZ

Yes, a harp. It was very funny and –

TETZEL

The Cardinal did not find it humorous.

MILTITZ

Most disrespectful..... and distasteful.

(awkward pause)

Well, I shall do everything in my power to bring him back to you. You can count on me. The Cardinal can count on me. I won't stand for such nonsense from my countryman.

TETZEL

The Cardinal will be pleased to hear that.

MILTITZ

Yes, please make sure he knows.

TETZEL exits.

MILTITZ (cont'd)

(calling after him)

I won't disappoint the Cardinal. Not at all.

Blackout.

Scene 8

January 1519. A tavern in Wittenberg, represented by three stools around a table. Sitting at the table, in a pleasant mood, are MARTIN, STAUPITZ, and MILTITZ drinking from large mugs.

MARTIN

So the question, is quite simple – if the Pope can forgive those sins, then why doesn't he forgive everyone's sin - out of love, not because they help pay for the Basilica?

MILTITZ

(laughing loudly)

Ah ha! That's a good one.

(to STAUPITZ, referring to LUTHER)

He's clever, is he not?

STAUPITZ nods.

MARTIN

And one more thing, suppose a soul wants to stay in Purgatory, suppose-

MILTITZ

Why would a soul want to stay in Purgatory?

MARTIN

Who knows? Maybe he still feels guilty about his temporal sins. Maybe he isn't ready to enter heaven. Maybe he has a room with an ocean side view – I don't know, just suppose he doesn't want to leave.

MILTITZ

All right, he doesn't want to leave.

MARTIN

If I buy an indulgence in his name – he has to go – against his own will. That's not fair, is it?

MILTITZ

(laughing loudly)

No, not at all.

MARTIN

Only by faith in God, can we come to Him, not through good deeds or impulsive purchases. We won't find God in the bones of the saints or the signature of the Pope. Only by faith in Him will you ever know Him.

MILTITZ

Yes, that's true.

STAUPITZ

The Pope is greatly dismayed at Martin's comments.

MILTITZ

Oh, I can understand that.

STAUPITZ

In fact, it was rumored that you had come to take Martin back to Rome.

MILTITZ

Ah.

STAUPITZ

You realize that if Martin leaves Germany, he'll be condemned in Rome and put to death.

MILTITZ

No.

STAUPITZ

They won't say it, but it's what they have in mind.

MARTIN

Of course, it's good to know that's not why you're here.

MILTITZ

Yes, I would never do such a thing. I told the Cardinal-

STAUPITZ

Cardinal?

MILTITZ

Cajetan.

MARTIN

You spoke with Cajetan?

MILTITZ

Yes...I told him...that there was no way I could turn my back on my countryman, that I would never oppose the wishes of Frederick the Wise, that Martin Luther is not his to beckon to Rome, no.

MARTIN

He asked you to bring me to Rome?

MILTITZ

Yes, but I told him under no circumstances would I do that. It was strictly out of the question.

MARTIN

So what will you tell him upon returning?

MILTITZ

The same thing I said before I left. Martin Luther is a German and belongs in Germany.

STAUPITZ

You know he's been declared a heretic.

MILTITZ

Yes, but it's got to be some kind of misunderstanding. Just keep quiet, Martin, stay in the shadows, and this will all fade away.

STAUPITZ

(knowingly)

You hear that? Stay in the shadows.

MARTIN

(getting the message)

I'm not going to be in the debates in Leipzig.

MILTITZ

What debates?

STAUPITZ

Johann von Eck is going to debate Andreas von Karlstadt, and there is a great deal of pressure for Martin to get involved.

MARTIN

I won't be in the debate – unless it's necessary.

STAUPITZ

And what defines "necessary?"

MARTIN

If Eck attacks my views publicly, I will be asked to join in, otherwise, I am merely an onlooker.

MILTITZ

Yes, you don't want any unnecessary attention. Rome is watching you closely.

STAUPITZ

Very closely.

MARTIN

(nodding)

If I break wind in Wittenberg, they can smell it in Rome.

They all laugh heartily and take another drink.

STAUPITZ

Hopefully Karlstadt can defend those viewpoints effectively.

MARTIN

I'm certain he will. I won't have to face Johann von Eck.

Blackout.

Skip to Act II, Scene 4

June 1525. Lights up on KATHARINA, wearing a peasant's dress, playing the lute or mandolin and singing. In the midst of her song, MARTIN and PHILIPP enter, wearing the britches and tunic of the middleclass. They watch, unnoticed.

KATHARINA

(singing)

MAY GOD BESTOW ON US HIS GRACE,
WITH BLESSINGS RICH PROVIDE US,
AND MAY THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS FACE
TO LIFE ETERNAL GUIDE US.
THAT WE HIS SAVING HEALTH MAY KNOW,
HIS GRACIOUS WILL AND PLEASURE,
AND ALSO TO THE HEATHEN SHOW
CHRIST'S RICHES WITHOUT MEASURE
AND UNTO GOD CONVERT THEM.

OH, LET THE PEOPLE PRAISE THY WORTH,
IN ALL GOOD WORKS INCREASING;
THE LAND SHALL PLENTEOUS FRUIT BRING FORTH,
THY WORD IS RICH IN BLESSING.
MAY GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON,
AND GOD THE SPIRIT BLESS US!
LET ALL THE WORLD PRAISE HIM ALONE,
LET SOLEMN AWE POSSESS US.
NOW LET OUR HEARTS SAY, AMEN.

KATHARINA continues playing, without noticing the men.

PHILIPP

She has a sweet voice.

MARTIN

Yes, I'm just not sure what to do with her. All the other sisters have been married off.

PHILIPP

She's had her share of suitors.

MARTIN

Really?

PHILIPP

Jerome Baumgartner.....Doctor Glatz.

MARTIN

And?

PHILIPP

She couldn't be persuaded.

MARTIN

Perhaps you should marry her.

PHILIPP

....uh...

MARTIN

She's a hard worker, Philipp. Very devout. You'll look a long time to find another woman with her character.

PHILIPP

It's just that.....

MARTIN

Have you considered marriage, Philipp?

PHILIPP chuckles.

MARTIN (cont'd)

You find that humorous?

PHILIPP

I just remembered your face, the first time you heard of monks taking wives.

MARTIN

Am I not entitled to change my opinion?

PHILIPP

I'm certain, Martin, that your view has only come through an extensive search of the Scriptures.

MARTIN

You've seen the other monks – they seem quite happy.

PHILIPP

But is that because of marriage, or the end of their vows of celibacy?

MARTIN

The monastic vow is too difficult for most men to maintain – yourself excluded, of course, I'm sure you have no issue with that, but for the average man, withholding his sexual urges is as difficult as attempting not to urinate.

PHILIPP

And for women?

MARTIN

Probably just as bad, maybe worse - there is a strong urge for motherhood. It seems to me that sexuality is as much a part of life as eating.

PHILIPP

Like the evening meal?

MARTIN

Or mid-day meal...or breakfast, even.

PHILIPP

I still struggle

MARTIN

“A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife-“

PHILIPP

“And the two shall become one.” Actually, Martin, I did hear a rumor that she was considering marriage in the near future.

MARTIN

Really? To whom?

PHILIPP

I can't remember off-hand. Perhaps just a rumor.

KATHARINA finishes playing and notices the men.

KATHARINA
 Good evening, Reverend Doctors.

MARTIN
 Good evening, Sister.

KATHARINA
 I hope I did not disturb you.

PHILIPP
 No, not at all.

MARTIN
 We were enjoying your song. You are quite accomplished.

KATHARINA
 Sometimes I prefer to use music in my prayer time.

MARTIN
 You have a lovely voice.

PHILIPP
 Did you realize that the hymn you sang was written by Doctor Luther?

KATHARINA
 (unconvincingly)
 I had no idea. I saw it in the hymnal and it quickly became my favorite.

PHILIPP
 You'll find several of Doctor Luther's hymns in the hymnal.

MARTIN
 (slightly embarrassed)
 Philip.

KATHARINA
 I did not realize that the Reverend Doctor was so talented.

PHILIPP
 He is a man of many gifts.

MARTIN
 Philipp-

PHILIPP

I beg your pardon, I have a few duties that require my attention. Good evening.

KATHARINA

Good evening, Doctor.

PHILIPP exits.

KATHARINA

You are a modest man, Doctor Luther.

MARTIN

I find that humility is a better choice than humiliation.

KATHARINA

And what would bring humiliation to you, Reverend Doctor?

MARTIN

Actually, I'm quite good at bringing in on myself.

KATHARINA laughs.

MARTIN (cont'd)

I have heard, Sister, that you are considering marriage, like the others.

KATHARINA

I assure you, Reverend Doctor, if I were to consider marriage, it would not be like the others.

MARTIN

You are not going to be wed?

KATHARINA

Why do you ask, Doctor Luther?

MARTIN

(suddenly clumsy)

It'sPhilipp had saidhe had heard of some possible union in the future.

KATHARINA

Did he tell you that he had asked me the same question?

MARTIN

..No.

KATHARINA

Then I'm certain he didn't tell you my answer.

MARTIN

Which is..?

KATHARINA

I told him that I didn't think that marriage would be for me.

MARTIN

But you would make an excellent wife.

KATHARINA

And I said there was only one man I had met, with whom I would be contented as a husband.

MARTIN

And who is that?

KATHARINA

His name is Martin Luther.

MARTIN pauses, surprised.

KATHARINA (cont'd)

I apologize if I have offended the Reverend Doctor.

MARTIN

No, no offense, though it isn't often that I've been left speechless.

KATHARINA

It is just that I feel that should I be married, I would need a man of the strongest character, and the Reverend Doctor is by far –

MARTIN

Sister.

(pause)

I am flattered, but you must realize that I myself would not make a good husband.

KATHARINA

I disagree, Doctor Luther. You are a man of intelligence, of courage... of passion.

MARTIN

I often doubt my own intelligence.

KATHARINA

Jeremiah said “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom.”

MARTIN

..... And my need for courage was thrust upon me by my enemies.

KATHARINA

Saint Paul said “So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper. I will not fear.”

MARTIN

But I fear my passion is for the Holy Scriptures.

KATHARINA

Everything that a man loves shows evidence of his love for God.

MARTIN

Who said that?

KATHARINA

Katharina von Bora.

MARTIN

You are a wonder, Sister. You have a mind of your own.

(pause, then soberly)

I fear that I cannot wed. Not that I am insensible to my flesh, for I am neither wood nor stone; but my mind is averse to wedlock because I daily expect the death of a heretic.

KATHARINA

If you are my husband, your enemies will never approach you, unless they first step across my own dead body.

MARTIN pauses, looking deeply into
KATHARINA’s eyes.

MARTIN

It would please my father. It would tease the Pope. It would certainly spite the devil.
....You realize, that as my wife, your every move would be scrutinized...and would reflect upon your husband.

KATHARINA

“To every one to whom much has been given, much shall be required.”

To read the entire script, contact dave@dritchardtucker.com