

Cymbeline

SYNOPSIS

The Tragedy of Cymbeline

Cymbeline, King of Britain at the time of Augustus Caesar, has a daughter called Imogen and two sons, who were stolen in infancy. The Queen, his second wife, has a son called Cloten, and Cymbeline would like Imogen and Cloten to marry. However, Imogen has secretly married a commoner, Posthumus Leonatus. Cymbeline banishes Posthumus to Rome, where he meets Iachimo, who makes a bet with him that he can seduce Imogen.

When he arrives in Britain Iachimo finds that Imogen is absolutely faithful, so he uses a trick. He hides in a chest in her bedroom to obtain evidence which convinces Posthumus that he has really slept with her and won the bet. Posthumus orders his servant Pisanio to kill Imogen at Milford Haven, in Wales, but Pisanio cannot kill her and advises her to disguise herself as Fidele, a servant boy. In Wales she then meets her brothers Guiderius and Arivagus, who were kidnapped twenty years earlier by the banished nobleman Belarius.

Cloten pursues Imogen to Wales dressed in Posthumus' clothes, determined to rape her and kill Posthumus. Instead he is killed by one of her brothers, who cut off his head and lay it beside Imogen, who has taken a potion to make her appear dead. When she revives, Imogen, as Fidele, joins the Roman army which has invaded Britain because Cymbeline has not paid money in tribute to Rome. Posthumus and the two princes help to defeat the Roman army. A final scene of explanations leads to public and private reconciliation.

Media:

DVD:

Cymbeline (BBC TV Shakespeare 1983), dir. Elijah Moshinsky

CD Audio:

Cymbeline (Arkangel Complete Shakespeare)

[Michael Mitchell]