

King John

SYNOPSIS

The Life and Death of King John

King Richard the First, the Lionheart, is dead, and his brother John has become King of England. The French, however, support the claim of the boy Arthur, the son of John's elder brother Geoffrey. Matching this dispute over the throne there is an argument in the Falconbridge family. Philip Falconbridge (the Bastard) is found to be the son of Richard the Lionheart. John makes him a knight, 'Sir Richard and Plantagenet', using the name of the royal family. The Bastard helps John in his wars against the French.

Both English and French forces threaten the town of Angiers, but a citizen suggests that the opponents should be united through a marriage between Lewis the Dauphin, heir to the French throne, and John's niece, Lady Blanche.

Arthur's mother Constance is furious that this marriage means the French King will stop supporting her son's claim and criticizes his lack of principles. At the same time John is excommunicated by the Pope for rejecting the Pope's choice for the post of Archbishop of Canterbury. The Papal Legate, Cardinal Pandulph, urges the French to resume the war against the English. He threatens the French King with excommunication if he remains allied with John.

Arthur is captured and John tells his servant Hubert to execute the boy. Hubert does not do it, but Arthur falls off a wall while trying to escape. The lords turn against John, believing he has murdered Arthur. John decides to change his mind and agree to the Pope's wishes. A French invasion force is shipwrecked, and the lords return to John, but he has been poisoned and dies, leaving his son Henry as the new king.

Media:

DVD:

King John (BBC TV Shakespeare 1984), dir. David Giles

CD Audio:

King John (Arkangel Complete Shakespeare)

[Michael Mitchell]