

## Measure for Measure

### SYNOPSIS

#### *Measure for Measure*

The Duke of Vienna decides to leave the city for a while and appoints his deputy, Angelo, to govern while he is away. Angelo decides to improve moral behaviour in the city, so he revives laws against sexual freedom which have fallen into disuse. Under these laws a young man, Claudio, is sentenced to death for having made his fiancée Juliet pregnant before their wedding.

Claudio's friend Lucio asks Claudio's sister Isabella, a nun who has just entered a convent, to plead with Angelo for his life. Angelo promises to free Claudio if she will sleep with him. Isabella refuses, and tells her brother that she must keep her honour as a chaste nun, even if it means his death.

The Duke has in fact stayed in Vienna disguised as a friar, observing how Angelo rules, and he now persuades Isabella to do what Angelo has demanded. Her place in Angelo's bed is secretly taken by Mariana, Angelo's former fiancée, who he deserted.

The next day Angelo breaks his promise and orders Claudio's execution, but his plans are foiled by the Duke using a substitution. When the Duke officially returns the various plots are revealed and he applies his own ideas of justice.

Media:

DVD:

*Measure for Measure* (BBC TV Shakespeare 1979), dir. Desmond Davies

*Measure for Measure* (2006), dir. Bob Komar (a contemporary reworking set in the British Army)

Not commercially available:

*Measure for Measure* (BBC TV 1994), dir. David Thacker

*Measure for Measure* (BBC TV 2004), Idir. Janet Fraser, live broadcast from Shakespeare's Globe

CD Audio:

*Measure for Measure* (Arkangel Complete Shakespeare)

[Michael Mitchell]