

King John

Cast

King John.....*Michael Feast*
Constance.....*Eileen Atkins*
The Bastard.....*Michael Maloney*
Philip of France.....*Geoffrey Whitehead*
Hubert.....*Trevor Peacock*
Pandulph.....*Bill Nighy*
Queen Elinor*Margaret Robertson*
Dauphin*Raymond Coulthard*
Austria.....*Jonathan Tafler*
Arthur.....*Peter England*
Salisbury*Anthony Jackson*
Pembroke*Oliver Cotton*
Melun.....*Mark Lambert*
Lady Faulconbridge*Jenny Howe*
Blanch.....*Alison Reid*
Robert Faulconbridge*Nicholas Murchie*
Chatillion*Scott Cherry*

Play description

ACT I

Scene 1. King Philip of France's ambassador, Chatillion, delivers a message to King John. He demands that John give up his throne to the rightful heir, John's nephew Arthur. Infuriated, John returns the threat of war. Robert Faulconbridge and his brother Philip come to the court. Despite being the younger, Robert is claiming his brother's lands on the grounds that Philip is illegitimate. It is quickly confirmed that Philip is the bastard son of Richard Coeur de Lion, John's older brother and predecessor on the throne. On learning this, Philip willingly gives up his land to his brother and is knighted Sir Richard Plantagenet.

ACT II

Scene 1. Philip of France is encamped before the city of Angiers, with Arthur and his mother Constance, Lewis the Dauphin and his ally, the Duke of Austria. Chatillion brings news that the English King is approaching. Philip accuses John of usurping the English throne from Arthur. Elinor and Constance argue bitterly, whilst the Bastard bates Austria, accusing him of cowardice. A citizen of Angiers appears on the town walls. He explains that the people of Angiers are committed to England, but will not open their gates to anyone until they are convinced as to the identity of the rightful king. The Bastard therefore suggests that the two kings join forces, defeat Angiers and decide who is to take possession of the city afterwards. Hearing this, the citizen intervenes to suggest that peace be restored by marrying the Dauphin to King John's niece, Blanch of Spain. Both sides agree to the match and peace is made. The Bastard muses on the fickleness and hypocrisy of kings.

ACT III

Scene 1. Constance is distraught when she hears of the alliance between France and England, meaning, as it does, that Philip will no longer support Arthur's claim to the English throne. Pandulph, the Papal legate arrives. He expresses the Pope's displeasure at John's conduct. When John ignores the Pope's demands, Pandulph excommunicates him. He then urges Philip to break his alliance with England. Split between his alliances with England and the church, Philip eventually and reluctantly does as Pandulph instructs. John departs to prepare for battle.

Scene 2. In the midst of battle the Bastard enters with Austria's head. King John instructs Hubert to guard the captured Arthur.

Scene 3. Hubert affirms his loyalty to King John, who then orders him to kill young Arthur.

Scene 4. Things go badly for the French. Constance is inconsolable when she learns of Arthur's imprisonment. Pandulph cheers Lewis the Dauphin by reminding him that now that Arthur has been removed, he can, as Blanch's husband, lay claim to King John's possessions. Lewis argues that John will not necessarily kill Arthur; Pandulph is convinced otherwise.

ACT IV

Scene 1. Following King John's orders, Hubert prepares to have Arthur blinded and killed. He is, though, moved to mercy by the boy's pleas, and spares him, warning him that his uncle must not suspect he is still alive.

Scene 2. John has had himself re-crowned. The Earls of Pembroke and Salisbury are dubious about John's policies. Pembroke urges him to free Arthur, saying that the boy's imprisonment is causing discontent in the country. Hubert tells John that Arthur is dead. Pembroke reacts with bitter cynicism: "Indeed we heard how near his death he was,/Before the child himself felt he was sick." The Earls leave enraged. A messenger arrives with news that the French have invaded; also, that both Elinor and Constance are dead. Hubert describes how news of Arthur's death has set the people against the King. John blames Hubert, denying all responsibility himself. When Hubert reveals that the boy is still alive, John sends him to the irate peers, in the hope that they will be pacified.

Scene 3. Arthur dies trying to escape by jumping down from the walls of his prison. Salisbury, Pembroke and Bigot find the body and will not believe Hubert's protestations of innocence.

ACT V

Scene 1. John yields to the Pope's demands and Pandulph returns the crown to him. In return, John asks the legate to persuade the French to stop their advance.

Scene 2. Despite Pandulph's interventions, the Dauphin refuses to make peace with John.

Scene 3. King John is ill and not comforted by news that most of the French forces have been shipwrecked off the coast.

Scene 4. In the course of battle, the fatally wounded Melun warns the English peers that the Dauphin intends to kill them once he has defeated King John. They decide to return to the English camp.

Scene 5. The Dauphin learns of the English nobles' defection and of the loss of supplies in the shipwreck.

Scene 6. Hubert informs the Bastard that King John is dying, having been poisoned by a monk. The Bastard hastens to see him.

Scene 7. King John dies. Salisbury tells the Bastard and Prince Henry that Pandulph has just come from the Dauphin, with offers of peace. The Bastard swears his loyalty to Prince Henry, and concludes that England will never be conquered so long as the country remains true to itself.

Track list

Disc 1

Track 1	Act I	Scene i
Track 2	Act II	Scene i
Track 3	Act III	Scene i
Track 4	Act III	Scene ii
Track 5	Act III	Scene iii

Disk 2

Track 1	Act III	Scene iv
Track 2	Act IV	Scene i
Track 3	Act IV	Scene ii
Track 4	Act IV	Scene iii
Track 5	Act V	Scene i
Track 6	Act V	Scene ii
Track 7	Act V	Scene iii
Track 8	Act V	Scene iv
Track 9	Act V	Scene v
Track 10	Act V	Scene vi
Track 11	Act V	Scene vii