

A King Makes His Stand

King Charles III

Starring Tim Pigott-Smith in an adaptation of the hit Broadway play about a possible future for Britain's Prince Charles

Sunday, May 14th, 2017 at 9pm ET on MASTERPIECE on PBS

A willful king ... a prophetic ghost ... family betrayals ... revenge! It sounds like a play by Shakespeare, but it's a drama about the future. MASTERPIECE presents an adaptation of the Tony®-nominated hit Broadway show *King Charles III*, starring the late Tim Pigott-Smith as Prince Charles after his accession to the throne, sometime in the years ahead.

Mr. Pigott-Smith, who died unexpectedly on April 7th, had appeared in several MASTERPIECE productions, including *The Jewel in the Crown* and most recently *Downton Abbey*. MASTERPIECE Executive Producer Rebecca Eaton commented, "The MASTERPIECE family is heartbroken at the loss of Tim Pigott-Smith, a wonderful actor and a warm and charming man. We are going to miss him." *King Charles III* playwright Mike Bartlett remembered him as "one of the real greats, both as an actor and a man."

King Charles III is a co-production with Drama Republic for the BBC and airs on MASTERPIECE in a single 90-minute production on PBS in May 2017.

Daringly scripted in blank verse by Bartlett (*Doctor Foster*, *Doctor Who*) and directed by Rupert Goold (*The Hollow Crown*), *King Charles III* focuses on the crisis-strewn transition of power after the eventual death of Queen Elizabeth II, currently the longest-serving monarch in British history. For his part, Charles is the longest heir-in-waiting ever, and Bartlett envisions the turmoil that rocks the monarchy when his turn finally comes.

Also starring are Oliver Chris (*Breathless*) as Charles's heir, Prince William, Duke of Cambridge; Charlotte Riley (*In the Heart of the Sea*, *Peaky Blinders*) as William's bride, Kate; Richard Goulding (*Ripper Street*) as Charles's younger son, Prince Harry; Tamara Lawrance (*Undercover*) as Harry's love interest and self-proclaimed revolutionary, Jess Edwards; Margot Leicester (*MI-5*) as Charles's doting wife, Camilla; and Adam James (*Grantchester*, *Doctor Foster*) as the polished British prime minister, Tristan Evans.

The original London staging of *King Charles III* won Best New Play accolades from both the Laurence Olivier Awards and the Critics' Circle Theatre Awards. Moving across the Atlantic, it garnered five Tony® nominations during its Broadway run. The *New York Times* hailed the production as "flat-out brilliant ... dazzlingly presumptuous." And in London, *The New Statesman* marveled at the playwright's audacity: "If the Lord Chamberlain still policed the stage, Bartlett would be in the Tower."

— more —

Shakespeare-lovers will detect echoes of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, and *Henry IV*, among other of the Bard's works. They will also revel in the rhythmic music of blank verse—unrhymed iambic pentameter—which captures the natural flow of the English language and which Elizabethan dramatists helped popularize, revived by Bartlett to startling effect.

“Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.” That piece of blank verse is from Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part II*, and it perfectly portrays the hero's quandary in *King Charles III*.

King Charles III is a Drama Republic production for BBC and MASTERPIECE. The screenwriter is Mike Bartlett and the director is Rupert Goold. The executive producers for Drama Republic are Greg Brenman and Roanna Benn, alongside Mike Bartlett and Rupert Goold, and Piers Wenger for the BBC. The executive producer for MASTERPIECE is Rebecca Eaton.

About MASTERPIECE

The top-rated primetime show on PBS, MASTERPIECE celebrated its 45th anniversary in 2016. MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston. Rebecca Eaton is executive producer. Funding for the series is provided by Viking River Cruises and Farmers Insurance® with additional support from public television viewers and contributors to The MASTERPIECE Trust. MASTERPIECE is known for presenting iconic shows such as *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Prime Suspect*, *The Forsyte Saga*, *Poldark*, *Sherlock*, *Downton Abbey*, and *Victoria*.

pbs.org/masterpiece

MASTERPIECE Press Contacts

Ellen Dockser, ellen_dockser@wgbh.org, 617-300-5338

Laura Garvey, laura_garvey@wgbh.org, 617-300-5342

Heidi Schaeffer, heidi.schaeffer@pmkbnc.com, 310-854-4800

April 2017