

## PRESS RELEASE

Here is a masterpiece, pure and simple.

—*The London Times*



The prince the world forgot

# THE LOST PRINCE

on MASTERPIECE THEATRE

Sundays, October 17 and 24, 2004, 9 to 11pm ET on PBS

The mysterious, hidden-away little brother of two English kings who was also uncle of the current queen is the subject of a powerful drama by award-winning playwright Stephen Poliakoff, on *The Lost Prince*, airing on MASTERPIECE THEATRE, Sundays, October 17 and 24, 9 to 11pm on PBS (check local listings). One of the most acclaimed dramas ever to air in the UK, *The Lost Prince* is the premiere of MASTERPIECE THEATRE's 34th season.

Born in 1905, Prince John was the youngest child of George V and Mary, the brother of Edward VIII and George VI, and the uncle of Queen Elizabeth II. Due to his epilepsy and an unidentified learning disability, from an early age he was sequestered on a royal estate with his nanny.

"His short life started at the height of the imperial splendor of the British Empire, and when he died the whole of that empire had been ripped apart by the First World War," says writer-director Poliakoff (*Shooting the Past*). "It was an extraordinary dramatic arc—this little boy who was forgotten while the world around him completely lost control."

During its British broadcast, *The Lost Prince* caused a sensation due to its revelations about the young prince and his dysfunctional royal family.

"The cast is verging on *Gosford Park*-impressive," said Stephanie Merrit of *The Observer*. "Any film with a brave, sick child at its center has the potential to fall into mawkishness, but Poliakoff is one writer-director who doesn't even come close: Johnnie's cheery optimism and the fierce devotion of those around him is uplifting."

"Not since L.P. Hartley's achingly sad novel *The Go-Between* have I encountered a more moving elegy for the Edwardian age," echoed Peter Paterson of *The Daily Mail*.

Matthew Thomas stars as the teenage Prince John, with Daniel Williams as the younger Johnnie. Gina McKee (*The Forsyte Saga*) is his devoted nanny, Lalla, who conceals the frequency of the boy's seizures from his parents. When they become aware of his condition, they exile Johnnie and Lalla to a secluded cottage, preventing embarrassment to the royal family.

The remarkable cast also includes Miranda Richardson (*The Hours*, *Phantom of the Opera*) as Queen Mary; Tom Hollander (*Gosford Park*) as George V; Michael Gambon (*Harry Potter and the*

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*Prisoner of Azkaban, Gosford Park*) as Johnnie's grandfather, Edward VII; and Bibi Andersson (*The Seventh Seal*) as his doting grandmother, Queen Alexandra.

Also featured are Bill Nighy (*Love Actually, State of Play*) as Lord Stamfordham, confidant to the king and the young princes; Rollo Weeks as Johnnie's sibling-protector, Prince George; and Frank Finlay (*The Pianist*) as Prime Minister Asquith, who easily intimidates everyone except Johnnie.

A two-part documentary, *The King, the Kaiser, and the Tsar*, accompanies each episode of *The Lost Prince*, covering the tragedy that plunged the kindred royal houses of Europe into the cataclysm of World War I. The leaders of the combatant nations included Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, who were first cousins to George V, and like irascible, aloof uncles to Prince John.

Poliakoff was inspired to make the film when he saw a haunting photograph of Prince John in a British newspaper. At first unable to learn more than a few snippets of information about the boy, he gradually assembled a compelling portrait of a funny, fascinating, and misunderstood kid.

"It was a chance to celebrate a child with disability," says Poliakoff, "to show him not as a victim but as somebody who does progress, does achieve a kind of equilibrium at the end of the story so that everybody notices him; and he's able to do it on an epic scale."

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*The Lost Prince* is a Talkback production (a Fremantle Company), in association with co-producers BBC Films and WGBH Boston. It was written and directed by Stephen Poliakoff. The producer is John Chapman. Peter Fincham, David Thompson, and Joanna Beresford are executive producers for BBC. Rebecca Eaton is executive producer for WGBH.

MASTERPIECE THEATRE has been presented on PBS by WGBH since 1971. Rebecca Eaton is executive producer. Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Russell Baker is program host. *The Lost Prince* will be available on DVD from BBC Video on October 28, 2004.

MASTERPIECE THEATRE is closed captioned for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers, and described for people who are blind or visually impaired by the Media Access Group at WGBH. The descriptive narration is available on the SAP channel of stereo TVs and VCRs. For more information about MASTERPIECE THEATRE, visit the series Web site at [pbs.org/masterpiece](http://pbs.org/masterpiece).

WGBH Boston is America's preeminent public broadcasting producer. One-third of PBS's primetime lineup and companion Web content, as well as many public radio favorites, are produced by WGBH. The station also is a pioneer in educational multimedia and in access technologies for people with disabilities.

Press materials and photography are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pbs.org/pressroom) and [pressroom.wgbh.org](http://pressroom.wgbh.org).

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