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Fortune's Fool

A Play

Ivan Turgenev

in a version by Mike Poulton

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH

FOUNDED 1830

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This version of the play includes revisions made by the author in 2013.

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FORTUNE'S FOOL was first performed at Chichester Festival Theatre on 27th August 1996 with the following cast:

KUZOVKIN . . . . . Alan Bates
OLGA PETROVNA . . . . . Rachel Pickup
PAVEL YELETSKY . . . . . Benedick Bates
TROPATCHOV . . . . . Desmond Barrit
KARPATCHOV . . . . . Richard Braine
IVANOV . . . . . David Collings
TREMBINSKY . . . . . John Turner
YEGOR . . . . . John Bardon
PYOTR . . . . . Ashley Artus
VASKA . . . . . Alan Maher
IVANOVA . . . . . Jean Challis
ANPADIST . . . . . Jimmy Gardner
MASHA . . . . . Mary Rose

DIRECTOR . . . . . Gale Edwards
DESIGNER . . . . . Peter J Davidson
LIGHTING DESIGNER . . . . . Mark L McCullough
MUSIC . . . . . Jason Carr

Subsequently performed at the Music Box Theatre, New York, in April 2002, with the following cast:

Above Stairs (in order of appearance)
VASSILY SEMYONITCH KUZOVKIN . . . . . Alan Bates
IVAN KUZMITCH IVANOV . . . . . George Morfogen
OLGA PETROVNA . . . . . Enid Graham
PAVEL NIKOLAITCH YELETSKY ("PAUL") . . . . . Benedick Bates
FLEGONT ALEXANDROVITCH TROPATCHOV . . . . . Frank Langella
KARPATCHOV ("LITTLE FISH") . . . . . Timothy Doyle

Below Stairs (in order of appearance)
IVANOVA . . . . . Lola Pashalinski
TREMBINSKY . . . . . Edwin C Owens
PYOTR . . . . . Jeremy Hollingworth
SERVANTS . . . . . Beth Bartley, Ann Ducati
Patrick Hallahan, John Newton

DIRECTOR . . . . . Arthur Penn
DESIGNER . . . . . John Arnone
LIGHTING DESIGNER . . . . . Brian Nason
SOUND . . . . . Brian Ronan

The play was revived in a new production at The Old Vic, London, on 6 December 2013, with the following cast:

PYOTR . . . . . Dyfan Dwyfor
KUZOVKIN . . . . . Iain Glen
MASHA . . . . . Emily Tucker
AKULINA . . . . . Bryonie Pritchard
PRASKOVYA IVANOVA . . . . . Janet Fullerlove
TREMBINSKY . . . . . Daniel Cerqueira
IVANOV . . . . . John McAndrew
YEGOR . . . . . Patrick Cremin
ANPADIST . . . . . Simon Markey
VASKA . . . . . Paul Ham
OLGA . . . . . Lucy Briggs-Owen
YELETSKY . . . . . Alexander Vlahos
TROPATCHOV . . . . . Richard McCabe
KARPATCHOV . . . . . Richard Henders

Understudies:

KUZOVKIN/IVANOV . . . . . Patrick Cremin
PRASKOVYA IVANOVA . . . . . Bryonie Pritchard
PYOTR/YELETSKY . . . . . Paul Ham
TREMBINSKY/TROPATCHOV/KARPATCHOV . . . . . Simon Markey
OLGA . . . . . Emily Tucker

DIRECTOR . . . . . Lucy Bailey
DESIGNER . . . . . William Dudley
LIGHTING . . . . . Bruno Poet
MUSIC . . . . . John Eacott
SOUND . . . . . Mic Pool
MOVEMENT . . . . . Leah Hausman
CASTING . . . . . Sarah Bird

For David Hunt

PROLOGUE

Darkness before dawn. It's Autumn

Pyotr, in livery, enters carrying a candle, a big jug of hot water and a towel, an ironed shirt, a jacket, trousers and polished boots. He taps quietly on the door of the cupboard and listens. Nothing happens. He taps again and opens the cupboard door. Kuzovkin is lying awake

Pyotr Sir.
Kuzovkin Good morning, Pyotr.
Pyotr You'd better hurry, sir. Everybody will be ——
Kuzovkin Yes... yes. I know ——
Pyotr I'll bring your things.
Kuzovkin Thank you.

Kuzovkin comes down from his shelf. Pyotr hands him his trousers, which he hurriedly puts on

The maids start to arrive. One carries a lamp

Kuzovkin takes his dressing gown from the shelf and puts it on. He puts on his boots. Pyotr collects Kuzovkin's possessions from the shelf. The maids start to take sheets, pillowcases, and tablecloths and table napkins from the linen cupboard. One checks the list behind the door. She notes what is removed in a notebook

Praskovya enters, as Kuzovkin and Pyotr start to exit

Praskovya (*the slightest bob. Cold*) Good morning.
Kuzovkin Good morning, Praskovya Ivanova.
Praskovya Why are there no flowers in the master bedroom, Masha? No — I don't want excuses — just... Give me the card. I'll do the lists — you'd better go and speak to the head gardener. And run! Must I do everything myself? Pyotr — is the table laid? Silver in the book?

Pyotr (*calling back*) The silver's out of the safe, counted and booked – everything's polished.
Praskovya I said is the table laid?
Pyotr No.
Praskovya Well when are you going to start laying?
Pyotr After you've sorted out the tablecloths.

ACT I

A rich country house in mid-nineteenth century Russia coming to life

The main playing area is a room with doors leading out to the extensive gardens. A table is being laid for a celebration buffet lunch. Pyotr supervises everything. A door leading to an entrance hall. In a window seat is a folding table with a chess board on it

Trembinsky, the steward/butler — "Muddler" — is interfering with Pyotr's organisation and the servants who are putting the finishing touches to the laying of the table

Trembinsky Get a move on, get a move on, lad! Look at the time.
Pyotr I know, I know ——
Trembinsky Any second now the happy couple will walk through that door an' if everything's not as ——
Pyotr Everything's in order. I'll fetch the bread and salt ——
Trembinsky No you won't! Not yet. Is the band ready to play?
Pyotr Ready as it'll ever be.
Trembinsky Eh?
Pyotr They're not very good.
Trembinsky They're all we've got.
Pyotr Sounded like a funeral to me ——
Trembinsky No help for it — any minute they'll be coming up the path. (*to himself*) Path? Have the paths been weeded? Is the grass cut?
Pyotr Yes, Nartzis Konstantinitch. Paths, gardens — saw to it myself. I went down to the village... loaded a cart with all the old folk, children, layabouts — anybody we could get. They were hard at it all day yesterday.
Trembinsky Hard at what?
Pyotr Weeding. Gardening.
Trembinsky Remind me again. Who you are?
Pyotr Me?
Trembinsky You. Yes you — who are you?
Pyotr You know me, Nartzis Konstantinitch. I'm Pyotr.

Trembinsky No — you're a footman, my boy, that's what you are. You're indoors, below stairs, cleaning lamps and what have you. What you're not is outdoors. It's not your job to load carts with old folk, children and layabouts – not without my say so. Gardens is nothing to do with you. Don't get above yourself.

Kuzovkin comes through the hall. He catches Pyotr's eye and indicates his missing tie

Pyotr goes

Kuzovkin makes his way towards his table in the window. Trembinsky is horrified at his presence, but unsure of how to get rid of him. Kuzovkin is aware of Trembinsky's dilemma. He bows politely — the gracious acknowledgement of an inferior by a superior. Trembinsky nods overcasually and turns his back

Trembinsky Thinking of staying in here, Vassily Semyonitch, sir?
Kuzovkin Hmm?
Trembinsky Thing is... The young mistress and her new husband will be arriving any minute. From Petersburg ——
Kuzovkin Yes I know.
Trembinsky Thinking of waiting in here was you? Going to present yourself?
Kuzovkin Of course.
Trembinsky Then shouldn't you... Is that your best suit?
Kuzovkin In fact it's my only suit, Nartzis Konstantinitch, as you know very well.

Faintly we hear a band rehearsing something like a funeral march

Trembinsky Ah well... None of my business. May I suggest you sit over there in your corner while they're getting their lunch ready? We don't want to be in the way do we?

Kuzovkin, amused, bows politely

Holy Saint Basil — listen to that horrible noise — is that the best they can do? Pyotr! Pyotr! Where's the lad got to?

Ivanov, a little nervous, has appeared in the doorway. He is another impoverished gentleman

Trembinsky is not sure what to make of him

Ivanov (*in the inner hall*) I hope I'm not intruding.
Trembinsky (*servile*) Not at all, sir, not at all. What was you wanting?
Ivanov I'm Ivanov. Ivan Kuzmitch Ivanov — a friend of Vassily Semyonitch — the gentleman over there ——
Kuzovkin It's all right. He's with me.
Trembinsky But we're expecting the new master and mistress. It's not convenient ——
Kuzovkin He's our neighbour. I invited him — we have a game of chess to finish.
Trembinsky This is hardly the time and place for fun and games, gentlemen.

Ivanov, covered with confusion, tries to steal away. Pyotr comes in with a tie for Kuzovkin

Where've you been, lad?
Kuzovkin Thank you, Pyotr.
Trembinsky (*aside*) How many times must I tell you? Don't encourage him. Come with me. We've got to sort out this music. Can you play an instrument?

Trembinsky and Pyotr exit

Ivanov lurks in the inner hall more out than in

Kuzovkin (*after a pause*) Vanya?... Vanya!
Ivanov Hmmm?
Kuzovkin Come in, Vanya. They've gone. Come over to my table. You'll feel safer here... This is my corner. Please. Sit down.
Ivanov They're setting the table lunch. Shouldn't we get out of their way? Let's go along to your room.
Kuzovkin Unfortunately my room is also the linen cupboard and just at the moment it's full of housemaids, pummelling eiderdowns. We're fine here.
Ivanov Why don't you come over to my place, then?
Kuzovkin But why? What are you afraid of? No, Vanya, I must stay — I want you to stay too, so sit down. Olga Petrovna is coming home at last — with her new husband. Surely you want to meet them?
Ivanov They won't want to meet me.
Kuzovkin How can you say that! Of course they will! All the way from Petersburg... It's the first time she's been home for more than

six years. Nearer seven. It's our duty to make her feel welcome — her bridegroom too — aren't you curious to see what he's like?

Ivanov Not really. I imagine one bridegroom's much the same as any other. Seen one seen them all.

Kuzovkin Oh, Vanya!

Ivanov Grinning like cats that've got the cream.

Kuzovkin You mustn't let Nartzis Konstantinitch intimidate you. All his noise and bluster — it's what he's paid for. Never forget: we are gentlemen. They are only servants.

Ivanov I know that. But do they see it that way?

Kuzovkin It's how we see things... That's what's important.

Ivanov I suppose he's a rich man — the bridegroom?

Kuzovkin I don't know. But he's the husband Olga Petrovna has chosen, so he'll be a good man, a fine man. He's young – but he's already a member of the government — highly thought of in Court circles.

Ivanov A proud man then. He's sure to look down on us.

Kuzovkin No true gentleman looks down on another of his class.

Ivanov What if he throws us out?

Kuzovkin What on Earth do you mean, Vanya? Why should he throw us out?

Ivanov The truth is I meant you, Vassily Semyonitch. What if he throws you out? (*Pause*) I'm sorry. Of course he wouldn't. I should never have said such a thing.

Kuzovkin No, Vanya, you're quite right. I must consider the possibility ——

Ivanov Oh, my friend ——

Kuzovkin For weeks I've done little else but consider the possibility. Day and night... the worry of it all... I live here on the charity of this household. Today the house will have a new master, and he may indeed throw me out. It has to be faced. Ha! Just look at the two of us — the state we're in: both gentlemen — the best stock...

Ivanov Both stony broke ——

Kuzovkin Both fallen on hard times... but there's a difference. Whatever people may say of you, you still have land — a home of your own — a place to lay your head ——

Ivanov That's what keeps me poor. Every penny of my income — and more — much more — goes on that tottering, freezing ancestral pile — maintenance and repairs — I'd be better to let it fall down and bed down in the warm straw in the stables ——

Kuzovkin You have a home... together with the good land it stands on. You can stoop down and pick up handfuls of our Mother Russia. That means everything. I have nothing. For years I've lived on charity. Even the clothes I wear are other people's cast offs. Never anything

I can call my own. Can you imagine the effect that has had... on my soul?

Ivanov I know, I know. I'm sorry. Of course the new master won't throw you out. The old one didn't, did he? And what a brute that man was! Nobody should have had to suffer as you did... There I go again! (*Pause*) I'm sure they'll let you stay on. (*Pause*) He won't be like the rest of the Petersburg set.

Kuzovkin What do you mean?

Ivanov Oh you know what they're like.

Kuzovkin What are they like?

Ivanov Cold — heartless — selfish — cruel ——

Kuzovkin Vanya!

Ivanov I don't wish to pre-judge him of course. He may be a perfectly decent sort — how would I know? I've never met him ——

Kuzovkin No you haven't. (*A moment's silence*) I can't believe that Olga Petrovna would marry any but the best and noblest of his kind. If you knew her as I do... She's everything that's gentle, and good, and kind. I've loved her since she was a tiny child — she'll speak up for me.

Ivanov She was still a child when her mother died. She may have forgotten who you are. Have you considered that possibility? How old was she when she left here?

Kuzovkin She was thirteen years and four months ——

Ivanov And since then she's lived with her aunt in Petersburg. That sort of life changes people — hardens them. Petersburg's a terrible place, you know — money, greed, power. You remember only the little girl who shared her secrets with you, came running when she grazed her knees... That sort of innocence fades, you know. Don't build up your hopes. I say this because I don't want you to be hurt. Prepare yourself for the worst — She may not even recognise you... I'm sorry...

Kuzovkin You're wrong.

Ivanov I hope I am, but you must face facts ——

Kuzovkin That's enough, Vanya ——

Ivanov I'm only ——

Kuzovkin I don't wish to discuss it.

Ivanov Very well. I'll not say another word. (*Pause*) It's just that ——

Kuzovkin Stop it! Are we going on with our game or not? Well?

Ivanov remains silent

Now don't be like that.

Ivanov I'm not.

Kuzovkin Good. Especially as you were winning. (*He begins to set up a chess end game, consulting a notebook for the position of the pieces*)
Ivanov Was I?
Kuzovkin Mmm. I'd just lost a castle.
Ivanov It doesn't seem (*consults his book*) right ——
Kuzovkin What?
Ivanov To be sitting here playing chess as if nothing's happened. When your whole life might be about to fall in ruins ——
Kuzovkin That's enough! Don't start again, Vanya. Please! Pass me the box.
Ivanov Any minute now the happy couple will be arriving.
Kuzovkin And when they do we'll break off our game. Come on. It was your move.
Ivanov They'll kick us out. (*Pause*) The servants will be laughing up their sleeves. The embarrassment will be excruciating. Are you sure my knight was there?
Kuzovkin (*consulting notebook*) King's bishop four? Yes. It's right.
Ivanov Oh. I thought it was too good to be true. (*He moves a piece*) Check.
Kuzovkin I was prepared for that. So... (*he moves*)
Ivanov Then you force me... to... (*he moves*)
Kuzovkin Are you quite sure? I'll let you take it back if you want to.
Ivanov Oh? What have I done now?
Kuzovkin The bishop. Look at the bishop.
Ivanov Ah... Hmm... Well...

Suddenly everybody in the hall, offstage is shouting. "They're here", "they're coming", etc. Kuzovkin and Ivanov don't react

Kuzovkin (*pause*) I think they're coming.
Ivanov I'd be much happier if you let me go. Please, my friend ——
Kuzovkin Stay where you are.
Pyotr (*looking in*) They're coming up the drive, sir. (*He goes*)
Kuzovkin (*suddenly nervous*) Perhaps you were right — maybe we should go ——
Ivanov Too late for that. We must stand our ground. (*Calling to Pyotr*) You boy! How do you know they're coming?
Pyotr (*looking in from the hall*) The signal from the lodge has come. Old Mishka's on the roof waving his red flannel nightshirt. That means they've turned into the drive.

Trembinsky enters, the hall perfectly calm for once

Trembinsky (*behind Pyotr*) What's happening? Look at the state of your gloves — do up your buttons — your buttons!
Pyotr (*changing his gloves for an immaculate white pair*) They're coming up the drive.
Trembinsky No they're not.
Pyotr Nartzis Konstantinitch — I'm telling you ——
Trembinsky Come here — (*he tries to adjusts Pyotr's livery — there's nothing wrong with it*) I'll tell you when the carriage is coming. Stand still!
Praskovya Ivanova Muddler? (*In the hall doorway, followed by maids*) Are they here?
Trembinsky No. It's a false alarm. And don't call me that – not in front of… (*to Pyotr*) See what you've done. Tell 'em to stand down — send the girls back to their posts.
Praskovya Ivanova You old fool ——

She goes

Pyotr I think you'll find ——
Trembinsky I'm warning you, lad, shut it! Now get up to the attic and watch for the signal. When they pull into the drive Old Mishka will wave his red nightshirt from the roof of the lodge.
Pyotr He is. He has.
Trembinsky What!
Pyotr That's what I was trying to tell you. He's waving it.
Trembinsky What!
Pyotr But you won't listen — you never listen ——
Trembinsky He can't be! Why wasn't I told? (*He runs off followed by Pyotr*) They're coming! They're coming! They're coming!

Shouts from off: "No they're not," They're not," "It's a false alarm!" etc.

They are! They are!
Kuzovkin Saint John and all the Holy Innocents stand by me.

Pyotr enters the garden room, carrying a tray with the traditional welcoming gifts of a huge ring of bread and salt and puts it on the table

Pyotr I've brought the bread and salt.
Praskovya Ivanova (*in the doorway*) Are they coming?

Pyotr Yes. Mishka's sent the signal.
Praskovya Ivanova (*shouting off*) To your places, girls. To your places. (*off*) Where's the bread and salt?
Trembinsky (*pushing past her*) Pyotr! Pyotr! Where's the bread and salt?
Praskovya Ivanova Where's the bread and salt?

Pyotr turns and shows the tray

Trembinsky Well why aren't you out on the front steps with it?
Pyotr All right! All right! I know what I'm doing. (*To Kuzovkin*) I'm the only one that does in this house.

He goes out into the hall

Praskovya Ivanova is shepherding as many maids as is practicable, all in their best dresses, into the hall. They collide with Pyotr who manages not to drop the tray

Steady on! Watch out!
Praskovya Ivanova In here, girls. Line up in here.
Trembinsky No not in here! What are you playing at, woman? Get 'em lined up on the front steps!
Praskovya Ivanova Masha said you said in here!
Trembinsky I said nothing of the sort! Out! Out! Out!
Praskovya Ivanova Ignore him. Stay where you are, girls. Masha, tell Pyotr to come back here with the bread and salt.

Great confusion from outside. Noises off from the party of servants waiting outside: shouts of "They're here!" "Where's Trembinsky?" "Bread and salt" etc. etc. "Quiet!" "Shhhh!". Pyotr returns with the bread and salt and stands to attention behind Trembinsky, who is terrified. Praskovya and the girls line up

Trembinsky Everybody get ready. Silence!

Silence

Ivanov I think I might just slip away.
Kuzovkin No — I need you.

Silence. Kuzovkin is almost overcome with emotion. This puzzles Ivanov. Suddenly the band starts playing, what sounds like a funeral march,

badly and out of tune. The sound of a carriage drawing up. Conversation. The band fizzles out. More laughter

Praskovya Ivanov Well open the door for them, you old fool! Have you forgotten how to do your job?

Trembinsky rushes out. A moment later he throws open the doors

Olga This way! In here!

Olga Petrovna comes into the hall laughing, followed by Yeletsky, her husband. All bow or curtsey

Pyotr Welcome home, dear Madam. Welcome, Master.

He offers the ceremonial bread and salt. Yeletsky breaks off a piece of bread, takes a pinch of salt and eats it. He laughs delightedly. Our first impression is of a good, decent man. Everybody cheers. A maid presents Olga with a huge bunch of flowers

Olga At last! At last. Come in, Paul. And welcome! Welcome to your home. Dear, enchanted old house! Magical home! After seven years... Don't worry, I'll be sensible again in a moment — but just now! (*To the servants*) Thank you, thank you, thank you! Everything so perfect — your welcome — the wonderful band!

Trembinsky Well ——

Olga Nothing has changed. Wonderful! Just as I remember it. (*To Yeletsky, laughing*) Oh give it back to him, Paul — you look ridiculous!

Yeletsky gives the huge bread ring and the salt to Pyotr who gives it to a maid. Olga hands the flowers to Masha, then runs and hugs Yeletsky, laughing

This is my husband — your master. You must obey him – and you must love him as I love him, and do everything in your power to make his life here one of perfect contentment and joy. Oh Paul!

She weeps. Yeletsky hugs her. They seem to forget for a moment that there are other people on stage

Trembinsky Will you be wanting a bite...? Er... to eat? Glass of tea perhaps? Something after your long journey?

Olga No. No thank you. Not for the moment. (*To Yeletsky*) I'm going to show you ever inch of the house — I want you to fall in love with it — I want to see you sitting in your study — loving every book, every nook, every cranny ——

Yeletsky I do — I already love it.

Olga No you don't, how can you? I haven't shown it to you yet.

Yeletsky Because you love it, I love it

Ivanov (*looking at Kuzovkin*) What did I tell you? Like a cat that's got the cream.

Olga Oh Paul! It's not enough. Love things for what they are. Not just for my sake. (*She looks at Kuzovkin as if she is trying to remember… But:*)

Praskovya Ivanova (*taking Olga's hat and coat*) Oh dear lady! Oh my darling child!

Olga smiles and hugs her

Olga Dearest Nanny. You don't seem a day older — the trees in the drive are much, much taller than when I left them — but you're exactly as I remember you — just the same. God bless you!

Praskovya Ivanova Oh my darling child!

Olga This room's much smaller though. It used to be enormous!

Yeletsky The last time you stood here you were a little girl. I doubt you could reach the windowsills ——

Olga Nonsense, Paul — I was thirteen years old.

Kuzovkin (*to himself*) And four months. (*She hears him and approaches him. He goes up to her*) Olga Petrovna, may I... (*his voice breaks*)

Olga (*slowly remembering*) Vassily?... Vassily Petrovitch? My dear friend — it's lovely to see you. How kind of you to be here still. (*She is a little more reserved than her language suggests*)

Kuzovkin Dear child — Dear lady — I ——

Olga You must forgive me. I didn't notice you at first — hiding away in the corner ——

Kuzovkin Yes — will you allow me — (*kisses her hand*) I'm happy – overjoyed to see you. (*tears in his eyes*)

Olga Paul, come here. I want you to meet Vassily Petrovitch, our dear, dear friend.

Yeletsky (*bows*) Delighted. A pleasure to know you, sir.

Kuzovkin (*bows. Ivanov also bows but nobody has noticed him yet*) Happy man!... Many, many congratulations... We are all so... happy for you both... Er, may I... (*He goes over to Ivanov*)

Yeletsky (*to Olga*) Who is he?

Olga (*amused*) Shhh! A dear, sweet man. I believe he lives here.

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