



THE STUDENTS OF RUSSIAN PRESENT

MISTRESS INTO MAID

by A.S. Pushkin

TUESDAY 7TH MARCH, 2023

6:00 PM

**DURHAM UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND
LEARNING CENTRE, ROOM 113**

MISTRESS INTO MAID

Alexander Pushkin



The performance is dedicated to the cherished memory of Svetlana M. Guseva, who had a thorough knowledge of and a deep love to the Russian culture.

Programme

Scene 1. The scene starts with the Narrator describing the life of Ivan Petrovich Berestov, who settled in the village after his military service. He is a well-respected member of the local community given his ability to run his own clothing factory. His only enemy is his neighbour, Gregory Petrovich Muromsky; a man who follows English fashions when organising his household. The two men argue whether Russians should follow Western trends or the traditional Russian ones.

Scene 2. Muromsky is an Anglophile. He calls his daughter, Elizabeth, by an English name Betsy, and hired an English governess, Miss Jackson, to teach her English. After the end of the lesson, Lisa confesses that she would like to meet Berestov's son, who just arrived from university.

Scene 3. Lisa's peasant girl, Nastya, asks for her permission to visit the Berestov's household as there are birthday celebrations. Lisa allows Nastya to go but asks to find out about Aleksey Berestov.

Scene 4. After the birthday celebrations, the youngsters are going out onto the streets to dance traditional folk dances and play games. Aleksey joins the fun.

Scene 5. Nastya tells Lisa about the young Berestov, but it takes her some time to do so, which frustrates Lisa greatly. Nastya says that Aleksey is a handsome, wildly passionate young man and that he was flirting with everyone. Lisa is keen to meet Aleksey. Both girls hatch a plan to dress Lisa in peasant clothes so she can meet Aleksey during his walk in the forest.

Scene 6. Nastya is dressing Lisa up in peasant clothes. Lisa asks Nastya to tell Miss Jackson if the latter notices her absence that she is now living according to the English customs and has gone on a morning walk.

Scene 7. Lisa, wearing peasant clothes, is walking in the forest. As she hoped, she bumps onto Aleksey, hunting. Lisa tells him that she is Akulina, a blacksmith's daughter to which Aleksey tells her that he is a valet to the Muromskys. Akulina observes that he looks like a gentleman. Aleksey tries to hug Akulina, but she tells him to keep his hands off her. This amuses Aleksey greatly. He suggests that he will visit her father. Petrified of being found out, Akulina (Lisa) promises to come to the same place tomorrow.

So, they continued to meet up in the forest every day throughout the summer.

Scene 8. Gregory Petrovich had a hunting accident and Berestov helped him, so he asked the Berestovs (father and son) to come for lunch the next day. He tells Lisa about it. Scared that she will be found out, Lisa refuses to meet the guests. Nastya suggests that Lisa should dress up in the English fashion, copying the style of Miss Jackson. Lisa then informs her father that she will be present at lunch, but under the condition that whatever she does, her father won't be surprised or displeased.

Scene 9. The servants of the Muromsky household are preparing the place for the guests while Muromsky is showing the Berestovs around the estate. Gregory Petrovich is bored out of his wits by his neighbour's talk about the English culture, but politely does not show it. Aleksey is in the same state. Entering the stage, the men discuss the weather. Lisa with a lot of make-up and wearing ridiculous dress enters the scene and is introduced to the guests. She engages in small talk with Aleksey, asking him about his plans for his military career and attempts to make him jealous. When the guests leave the father expresses his surprise at Lisa's behaviour and Lisa remembers that she needs to talk to Miss Jackson.

Scene 10. Lisa rushes to Miss Jackson's room to apologise. Ms Jackson thought that Lisa was attempting to make fun of her by dressing like that and using her makeup without her permission. Lisa persuades her that she just wanted to be as beautiful as Miss Jackson. Touched, Ms Jackson gifts her some makeup.

Scene 11. The friendship between the two fathers have grown stronger. For Muromsky, it brings many benefits, such as providing Lisa with a wealthy husband. He leaves the scene to write a letter to Berestov. Berestov enters the scene and tells the audience that his goal in this relationship is to make close links with the nobility when marrying his son off.

Scene 12. The fathers strike a deal to try to make their children meet up more often, so they fall in love with each other.

Scene 13. Lisa-Akulina in her peasant dress and Aleksey meet again in the forest. They discuss the previous evening. Akulina asks what he thinks of the daughter of the house and Aleksey says that he didn't like her and finds Akulina far smarter and more attractive. When Akulina says that she cannot read, Aleksey starts teaching her the alphabet. Within days, she is able to read and then write and the two start exchanging letters.

Scene 14. Ivan Petrovich and his son are discussing the future. Father mentions that he wants his son to marry Lisa Muromsky. Aleksey refuses and says that he does not love her. His father threatens to disinherit him. Fuming, Aleksey leaves the room.

Scene 15. Aleksey writes a very moving letter to Akulina proclaiming his love and proposing marriage. He says that they will live by their own labour and will love each other forever.

Scene 16. Lisa is reading Aleksey's letter when Aleksey bursts into her room. He sees Akulina and realizes that Lisa is the girl he loves. Lisa's father enters the scene and happily blesses the couple to get married.



Cast

Narrator – Katie Tour
Gregory I. Muromsky – Oliver Colbran
Ivan P. Berestov – Conrad Dodd
Liza Muromskaya/ Akulina – Hannah Nicholls
Aleksey Berestov – Harry Bell
Nastya – Madeleine Jablonowska
Miss Jackson – Grace Lloyd
Muromsky's butler – Guy Collins
Technical support – Rimma Snesar-Sanchez

Dancers

Catherine Kitto, Lara Robb, Beth Iley, Lauley Exton, Guy Collins, Felipe Mitjans-Prieto, Luis Costa-Violas-E-Sa

Script, stage direction, musical accompaniment (accordion): Olga Zabolkina

Poster and programme design: Yelena Sheppard

Musical contributions from

🌀 Folk Ensemble "Russian Style" (directed by Arkady Timofeev) from Kostroma, Russia

🌀 Dmitry Ibragimov, Andrei Sandalov and Kostroma Philharmonic Folk Orchestra conducted by Vladimir I. Sorozhkin

🌀 Folk Ensemble "Russian Virtuosos" (directed by Dmitry Dmitrienko)

🌀 Yaromir Bagrov and Miroyar Bagrov (from Art School No 2, Kostroma)

Thank you to everyone involved!

