



## The Social Climber

TRANSCRIPTS OF AUDIENCE AND CAST COMMENTS  
FOLLOWING THE REHEARSED READING OF THE SOCIAL CLIMBER  
BY ACTORS & WRITERS LONDON ON 24TH JANUARY 2011

### 1. NARRATIVE CREATED FROM SOUND-BITES



#### STRUCTURE

I remember *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* from studies. It is a very difficult play in the original text. I very much like what Paddy's done with his version, because it now has a through line, and the characters are clear, and the relationships between them are much easier to follow than in the original text.

I've seen *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* with full resources of the Comédie-Française. It's been marvellous to come and see this performed in a completely different way—stripped down and getting at the core of what is there.

The original is a long, long introduction, but that is interwoven in this case with the other themes of the play, so I think it works extremely well.

It was a very complex piece, and all the pieces came together and wove in and out of it, really rather well, I thought.

Paddy has done great things with the original French text, which was very long and bulbous.

Paddy Gormley's done a wonderful job in bringing out a play.

What interested me most was to see how the piece had been restructured to give it a stronger plot and stronger impetus, and I really enjoyed that.

It's revived another Molière play, I think, and it's very good.



#### TIMELESS THEME

There's a whole industry building up around Cate Middleton now—there's Middleton's country—there'll be all the social climbers and the people who want to capitalise on it. And I just thought, this subject is something that will never date. It's always apposite, always relevant.

It's really appropriate to the modern audience: you've got this Middle Eastern character which Cléonte disguises himself as, which I think is very appropriate in the social circumstances we live in today.

*The Social Climber's* theme is up to date, although in those days it was portrayed as being aristocratic society, but nowadays it's as structured and unequal as ever.

## CHARACTERISATION

The concept of this person struggling to get up in the world was a lovely thing to watch.

Molière is very strong at portraying—whether it be someone who’s mean moneywise, or a hypochondriac—and *The Social Climber* is a very good example of that.

I actually really loved the scene where they were trying to teach [Jourdain], and he was going off on his own. He had his own ideas about what he wanted to do, and wasn’t really taking their tutelage. He was just doing what was in his head. He, then, couldn’t see the point of them. What he was doing was, frankly, rubbish, and it was lovely to see this complete absence of self-awareness of his character, who is a buffoon, but he’s the only one who can’t see it.

And the characters—although they’re, I think, pretty true to the original, they have a fresh look.

Where you had the music conductor and the dance master, I just found it extremely amusing how they were doing down the arts industry in a way. They were talking about it as if they were curing cancer, whereas really we’re just entertaining people.

We can recognise the same characters, that existed, in this play and we can immediately resonate with some of the people we meet nowadays.

## LANGUAGE

The translation was excellent.

Paddy Gormley’s script is absolutely fantastic. It sparkles.

The writing was absolutely brilliant. It was sparkling, witty, so clever, so much information in each line, *and* it was in verse.

The use of language was brilliant.

The language was extremely accessible for the modern audience, although also keeping with the period.

I loved the modern bits that came in and managed to blend so well with the writing of that time.

The great thing that Paddy has done is to create a language for this play, which is redolent of the period, but at the same time occasionally interjecting very modern phrases which create a marvellous juxtaposition.

I really enjoyed *The Social Climber* because of the language. It had such life and energy—very vivacious language, and full of jokes—very witty as well.

## VERSE

What I particularly liked about it was the dexterity of the verse. It didn’t sound like a translation. It sounded as if it had been written by a British poet.

I shut my eyes at one point to see if it would work as a radio play—just listening to the words—and it did. But it’s visual as well—it’s very, very visual.

Having it in verse gives it that extra life and vitality. There was wonderful, wonderful humour in it all the way through. I was utterly gripped. I really wanted to know what happened next.

I loved the verse, because actually it was really up to date—used modern idioms.

I always like Paddy Gormley's plays. I love the way he writes using the poetry in a very subtle way, so you sometimes just catch it.

Because it's in verse—and we were instructed to go against the verse—you still get a rhythm, a beat, within it while you're doing it.

The thing was absolutely bursting with rhymes. You had to pick which ones to do—you couldn't do them all—which mostly drove the action forward. I noticed, for example, that the end of one person's speech often rhymed with the end of the first line of the next person's speech, which tends to drive the pace of the thing forward.



## ACCESSIBILITY AND AUDIENCE APPEAL

I thought it was a brilliant production.

Each character had a really strong physical presence from the moment they were introduced to the audience, and you could see straight away their status and a little hint of what they were going to give us later on.

You can always sense, when you're sitting in an audience, whether the work and the actors have got the audience's attention and concentration, and this evening they had—really, really well.

I thought this was an excellent play really, a brilliant 17th century play written by a 21st century playwright.

It was a beautiful play. It was poetic but at the same time really accessible. It was very fluid. It came off the pages really easily. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

It kept me captivated the entire time, all the way through the story. I had a smile on my face the entire time. It was just absolutely brilliant.

Paddy's adaptation is very witty, very pacey.

It was fantastic.

I found it very alive, very attractive, full of bags of energy.

It had enormous energy and life about it. I laughed the whole way through. And I wish it the very best.

I found it utterly gripping all the way through, and absolutely delightful to experience. It really is great theatre.

It was lively, witty, and it held my attention for every moment, and I loved it.

It was funny all the way through. Everyone was gripped.

I laughed through it, and I enjoyed it hugely.

I loved it.

It's definitely a pioneering script, and I was proud to be involved.

I was gripped from beginning to end, actually. I think it's going to appeal to lots and lots of people, and I think it'll go down very well indeed. It's dynamic. It's original. People can relate to it. The characters are all very different. I think you've got something very special here.



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### 2. AUDIENCE COMMENTS IN FULL

Dermot Murphy: I really enjoyed this evening's performance. I've seen *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* with full resources of the Comédie-Française, directed by Jérôme Savary. It was a wonderful evening in the theatre. And it's been marvellous to come and see this performed in a completely different way—stripped down and getting at the core of what is there. There were great performances, but what interested me most was to see how the piece had been restructured to give it a stronger plot and stronger impetus, and I really enjoyed that. And then, amusingly with this particular piece, to hear it in verse—amusingly because of Jourdain realising that he's been a speaker of prose all his life, and that he's not a poet. What Paddy Gormley has managed to do with the language in this play is quite extraordinary. This has given it an energy and sparkle, which is something which it's so difficult to achieve. Translation is a very, very difficult task. But I felt this got across a sense of magic and enjoyment, which is there in the original, but this is something which is reworking it and looking to things that will draw in a new audience—perhaps people who wouldn't have gone to see this if they had thought they were being faced with a piece of traditional French theatre. So all congratulations, I think particularly to the translator and restructurer, but also to the director and cast who have done such a wonderful job this evening, and made it so entertaining. You can always sense, when you're sitting in an audience, whether the work and the actors have got the audience's attention and concentration, and this evening they had—really, really well.

Sally Sheringham: The moment the actors walked across the stage in turn, demonstrating what their craft was, I was completely captivated by it. It was lively, witty, and it held my attention for every moment, and I loved it.

Jeryl Burgess (Dorimène): I remember *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* from studies. It is a very difficult play in the original text. I very much like what Paddy's done with his version, because it now has a through line, and the characters are clear, and the relationships between them are much easier to follow than in the original text. So, I think it's a great play, and I'd love to see it go on to do bigger and better things.

Lisa Boss Omlie: It was fantastic. The use of language was brilliant. The actors did a brilliant job characterising it. I found it very easy to understand and very enjoyable. And I thought the music he put with it was also fantastic. So I recommend going to see it.

Teresa Jennings: I just thought *The Social Climber* was fantastic. And funny enough, as I was coming out this evening, they were talking about Cate Middleton, and that there's a whole industry building up around her now: there's Middleton's country, and tours to that, and whatever. And for anyone who'll have any sort of association, there'll be all the social climbers and the people who want to capitalise on it. And I just thought, this subject is something that will never date. It's always apposite, always relevant. Paddy's adaptation is very witty, very pacey. I loved it. Loved it.

Peter Sutton: It is extremely funny. It's funny in the mind when you visualise it, and it's also very, very funny to the brain when you think about the words that are used. I think it's extremely inventive the way the language was used, and I do actually like the restructuring. That makes very good sense because the original is a long, long introduction, and then you have the very, very funny piece about the mamamouchi. But that is interwoven in this case with the other themes of the play, so I think it works extremely well. I laughed through it, and I enjoyed it hugely.

Lea Sellers: I thought it was a brilliant production. The writing was absolutely brilliant. It was sparkling, witty, so clever, so much information in each line, *and* it was in verse. And it was very entertaining—much better than Molière originally.

Peter Saracen (Jourdain): Jourdain can be described as a comic victim. I think Molière is very strong at portraying—whether it be someone who's mean moneywise, or a hypochondriac—and *The Social Climber* is a very good example of that. Paddy Gormley's done a wonderful job in bringing out a play, because the first two acts used to be more just singing and dancing as I understand. It's revived another Molière play, I think, and it's very good. Because it's in verse—and we were instructed to go against the verse—you still get a rhythm, a beat, within it while you're doing it. I'm sure the audience pick up the fact that there is a rhyme there. I think if you did it too obviously, then it would sound artificial. But it's interesting, and I found it quite easy to do.

Ben Owora: I loved the way it interspersed the different aspects of the three or four sub-plots—I can't even remember how many there were—but it was a very complex piece, and all the pieces came together and wove in and out of it, really rather well, I thought. The tutors were a wonderful side-line to the main plots that were going on. I actually really loved the scene where they were trying to teach him, and he was going off on his own. He had his own ideas about what he wanted to do, and wasn't really taking their tutelage. He was just doing what was in his head. He, then, couldn't see the point of them. What he was doing was, frankly, rubbish, and it was lovely to see this complete absence of self-awareness of his character, who is a buffoon, but he's the only one who can't see it. And even his tutors, who are desperately trying to make him into a socialite, despair at the end of their scene.

Peter Mair: The great thing that Paddy has done is to create a language for this play, which is redolent of the period, but at the same time occasionally interjecting very modern phrases which create a marvellous juxtaposition. It's super.

Viv Lake: I really enjoyed it. There was a lovely rhythm, probably because it rhymed, but it just flowed. I liked the extra bits—the funny bits that were modern—the modern touches. I thought the cast did it absolutely fantastically, but that's because of the writing. I shut my eyes at one point to see if it would work as a radio play—just listening to the words—and it did. But it's visual as well—it's very, very visual, so I think it would look best on West End stage. And I think it's brilliant. It would be a great piece to take round to colleges and schools, to actually introduce children to Molière, because of the way it's written—it's more modern—and it would certainly be a good introduction to students.

Carolyn Pertwee: I watched the play and absolutely enjoyed it so much. I loved all the rhyming couplets, but I loved some of the modern bits that came in and managed to blend so well with the writing of that time.

Mary Piercy: I enjoyed *The Social Climber* very much indeed. I loved the language, and the way it moved through the play with modern references, which was fun.

John Petherbridge: What I particularly liked about it was the dexterity of the verse. It didn't sound like a translation. It sounded as if it had been written by a British poet. This was absolutely striking for me. I'm not sure how well it would fare in modern dress, because I think the characters are archetypal, perhaps even stereotypes. But I think, in costume it would be brilliant if we saw it as a 17th century

play—in English, obviously. I think it's very funny. I don't know the original, but it does stand up on its own. I think that any translation of a play should stand up as a play, and we should be not minded to see it as existing in another language. If the play doesn't stand up, then however good the original is, it's worthless. And I thought this was an excellent play really, a brilliant 17th century play written by a 21st century playwright. I really enjoyed it, and I hope other people are given the privilege of enjoying it as well.

Wendy Wareham: I thoroughly enjoyed Paddy's script and production. I thought it was a very interesting adaptation of Molière. It was very witty, very funny. Great use of language. And certainly should go into a major production somewhere.

Richard Ward (Fencing Master, Tailor): I think it's a wonderful play, *The Social Climber*. Paddy has done great things with the original French text, which was very long and bulbous—and I remember reading part of it when I studied French at university in the 1960s. With a combination of very apposite, modern terminology and some superb rhymes, it's accessible, if there's one single word that I would use about this play. It's enjoyable. It's accessible. And for a character actor like me, there are wonderful opportunities. Audiences will love it.

Martin Cort: I really enjoyed the play. Particularly, Paddy Gormley's script is absolutely fantastic. It sparkles. And the characters—although they're, I think, pretty true to the original, they have a fresh look. And particularly, I like the additional text he's put in, which is modern—really modern—and very amusing.

Kenneth Michaels (Director): I particularly enjoyed the language. I've always enjoyed that period of theatre history. I love the style of the piece, but I particularly love the deep textual density of Paddy's version of it. It was a wonderful text to be [asked to perform]. Blessed with a lovely cast, and I would love for it to have legs. And I look forward to the West End transfer.

Adam Bambrough: I thoroughly enjoyed it. The key thing for me was, even though it was a group of actors against the backdrop of a curtain with scripts in their hand, I actually felt like I was transformed into the world of the piece. That's mostly down to the writing, which was very accessible and, even though there's only a short time to rehearse the piece, I really enjoyed the development of the characters, and I felt some connection to the piece which, having only seen it once, is a very notable feat.

Ingrid Benussi: I came here for the first time. I saw Paddy's play, and it was absolutely amazing. It really blew me away. I expected a rehearsed reading. I expected to see people round a table and just reading pages, but it ended up being an amazing performance, and the fact that they had only a few hours to prepare it as well is just incredible. What they actually put together was absolutely fantastic. It kept me captivated the entire time, all the way through the story. I had a smile on my face the entire time. It was just absolutely brilliant. And it was so funny and yet it was just perfectly timed with all the words and the little phrases and the long phrases. It was just brilliant, just brilliant.

Stephanie Connell: I really enjoyed it. I found it very funny. I loved the verse, because actually it was really up to date—used modern idioms. And actually it's a play that I didn't really know much about. After seeing it, I think it should go on into production. It was just beautifully done and very well acted, and the language was just beautiful.

Ian Aitken: *The Social Climber's* theme is up to date, although in those days it was portrayed as being aristocratic society, but nowadays it's as structured and unequal as ever.

Nick Lee: I thought *The Social Climber* was a lovely play—a very nice hitch—that's a very nice theme—the concept of this person struggling to get up in the world was a lovely thing to watch. It was a very rounded play, and I enjoyed the lightness, particularly as it was written in rhyme as well, which added another dimension to it.

Olivia Busby: I loved *The Social Climber*. It was great fun. It was funny all the way through. Everyone was gripped. I especially loved the characters—so many diverse characters—and it was just really well written, easy to follow. Each character had a really strong physical presence from the moment they were introduced to the audience, and you could see straight away their status and a little hint of what they were going to give us later on. I loved it.

Ian Buckley: I thoroughly enjoyed *The Social Climber*. It was witty. The translation was excellent. The references that Paddy brought in at crucial moments really resonated, because they reflected something modern and contemporary, and it was a very lively, well wrought script.

Lucy Appleby: I think this play has wonderful entertainment value of bringing Molière to life in a way that would attract young audiences and be very relevant to today, and would prove to be excellent theatre. We can recognise the same characters, that existed, in this play and we can immediately resonate with some of the people we meet nowadays.

Lee Peck (Cléonte): The language was extremely accessible for the modern audience, although also keeping with the period. For me, it was a really fun piece. I think it's really appropriate to the modern audience: you've got this Middle Eastern character which Cléonte disguises himself as, which I think is very appropriate in the social circumstances we live in today. It's very funny, and very visually good for the audience. And there's a whole array of characters, and the whole acting industry take out there, which was quite ironic. Where you had the music conductor and the dance master, I just found it extremely amusing how they were doing down the arts industry in a way. They were talking about it as if they were curing cancer, whereas really we're just entertaining people. I thought it was a very funny take on that.

Dovile Rudinskaite: I found it very alive, very attractive, full of bags of energy. The language was very heightened. I'm the kind of person who likes humour. That was one of the reasons why I really liked it.

Rosemary Francis (Lucile): When I first received the script of *The Social Climber*, the thing I was most daunted about was the verse, but upon reading it, I actually found that it was easier to read than I thought. That made it—what's the word—attainable for the audience as well. It's definitely a pioneering script, and I was proud to be involved.

Robin Miller: I really enjoyed *The Social Climber* because of the language. It had such life and energy—very vivacious language, and full of jokes—very witty as well. And the rhyming is very clever. It makes the language just seem to bounce along on these lovely rhyming couplets. So it's very clever, very witty and entertaining. Good strong characters. Great play.

Michael Johnson: It was a delight. Lots of light humour. Thought-provoking, and a great evening.

Joy Toperoff: I just loved the rhyme and the rhythm, and I thought it added enormously to the pleasure that I got from the play.

Colin Pinney: I admired the way, firstly the author had translated the whole thing into rhyming couplets, but secondly, and especially, the way the actors handled them that you didn't notice they were rhyming couplets. The whole thing flowed very realistically and entertainingly.

Liz Felton: I always like Paddy Gormley's plays. I love the way he writes using the poetry, in a very subtle way, so you sometimes just catch it. Always very clever, very funny.

Maria Warner-Price: I thought it was very vibrant, very funny. The acting was really great in it. And it just opened one's eyes to some possibilities of humour and some interesting situations, so I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Edmund Dehn (Dorante): I had a wonderful time. I enjoyed the language. The thing was absolutely

bursting with rhymes. You had to pick which ones to do—you couldn't do them all—which mostly drove the action forward. I noticed, for example, that the end of one person's speech often rhymed with the end of the first line of the next person's speech, which tends to drive the pace of the thing forward. And a lot of them were making little verbal jokes, which was great fun to play. It would make a very good version to put on stage. You'd probably need to do some doubling to reduce the cast from a practical point of view. There were lots of lovely—I mean, my character was great fun to play, the philosophy master, the music and dancing masters—they were all good characters which actors would enjoy and which hopefully audiences seem to enjoy watching.

David Hampshire: It was very accessible. I'm not a huge fan of plays of that era but, having seen Paddy's, I really felt there was something different and fresh and new about it—still retaining the style of the original, but something very interesting and contemporary about it. So that was fun. And it was a very enjoyable, gripping evening.

Brian O'Connell: It was a fantastic evening, and it had everything that good theatre—good entertainment—should have. There was a great dynamic between the characters. It was beautifully scripted, engaging all the time. There was a strong narrative and, of course, you had music as well. I found it utterly gripping all the way through, and absolutely delightful to experience. It really is great theatre.

Hilary Field: I enjoyed the play tremendously. I could never ever write a whole play in verse. I don't know how Paddy did it. Having it in verse gives it that extra life and vitality. There was wonderful, wonderful humour in it all the way through. I was utterly gripped. I really wanted to know what happened next, and I hope it goes a lot further. The play really deserves to have a full production, and be published as well.

Nadia Ostacchini (Nicole): It was a beautiful play. It was poetic but at the same time really accessible. It was very fluid. It came off the pages really easily. I enjoyed it thoroughly. When I read the script, I was gripped from beginning to end, actually. I think it's going to appeal to lots and lots of people, and I think it'll go down very well indeed. It's dynamic. It's original. People can relate to it. The characters are all very different. I think you've got something very special here.

Zulema Dene: I found it *quite* delightful, extremely witty, light. It had enormous energy and life about it. I laughed the whole way through. And I wish it the very best.



**The Social Climber**