

***The Would-Be Gentleman***  
***(Le Bourgeois gentilhomme)***  
**(1670)**

Monsieur Jourdain, who has inherited his wealth from his father, a cloth merchant, has lately conceived a burning ambition: to dazzle the world by acquiring those airs and accomplishments he so much admires in “persons of quality”. He even aspires to win the favour of a charming Marquise (Dorimène) by giving a lavish banquet in her honour. A fashionable tailor has been commissioned to outfit Monsieur Jourdain with appropriate splendour, and instructors in fencing and philosophy will undertake to clothe him with the requisite graces. Attired in his new dressing gown, Monsieur Jourdain displays abysmal ignorance and lack of taste as he questions the music and dancing masters engaged for the banquet. These two men, proud of their respective arts, soon become involved in a noisy brawl with the fencing master and the instructor in philosophy. The latter, once peace is restored, discovers that Philosophy is somewhat beyond his pupil and the lesson degenerates into an exercise in pronunciation. Monsieur Jourdain then dons his new attire amid fitting ceremonies. Despite the ridicule heaped on him by his wife and their maid servant Nicole, Monsieur Jourdain stubbornly continues to lend money to the smooth-tongued Dorante who has been pretending to act as a go-between with Dorimène while planning to marry the lady himself. Just as stubbornly, Monsieur Jourdain insists that his daughter must marry a nobleman, rather than Cléonte whom she loves. The prospects for Lucile appear bleak; but a ray of hope remains. Covielle, Cléonte’s valet, has conceived an elaborate scheme that may yet save the situation.

**— INTERMISSION —**

The banquet prepared for Dorimène is in full swing when Madame Jourdain, warned by Nicole, returns home and bursts in on the party. In her anger she spares no one, and her husband’s noble guests are obliged to make a hasty exit. Monsieur Jourdain is disconsolate; but he soon brightens up when Covielle, in disguise, informs him that the son of the Grand Turk wishes to marry Lucile and that, before the marriage takes place, he plans to raise Monsieur Jourdain to the dignity of “Mamamouchi”. The prospective father-in-law is delighted when the son of the Grand Turk—Cléonte in disguise—appears on the scene in person. Monsieur Jourdain proudly receives his new title at an impressive ceremony that takes the form of a Turkish ballet. Madame Jourdain, however, is not impressed. Both she and Lucile reject the proposed marriage, but quickly give their consent when they learn that His Turkish Highness is really Cléonte. And two further happy events will add to the general rejoicing: Dorante will wed Dorimène and Covielle will marry Nicole.