

The Metropolitan Opera



# Educator's Guide



Photo: Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera

*Manon Lescaut*  
February 16, 2008



# Manon Lescaut— For Love or Money

Passion. Betrayal. Unconditional love. No other art form can convey these elemental human experiences as powerfully as opera—and these are the hallmarks of Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*. Though set in 18th-century France, the tale of Manon and her lover des Grieux is utterly contemporary.

The Metropolitan Opera’s production of *Manon Lescaut* sweeps its audience into a maelstrom of emotion. But *Manon Lescaut* is no mere melodrama. Puccini provides an opportunity to observe closely the life path of a single individual—the ways in which she changes, learns and grows by means of the choices she makes. No topic could be more relevant to an audience of young people.

This guide offers a variety of experiences designed not only to enrich enjoyment of the *Live in HD* transmission of *Manon Lescaut*, but also to help young people engage with the opera’s eternal themes and appreciate how the composer enables the artists of the Met to bring them gloriously to life.



## THE WORK MANON LESCAUT

Composed by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto after a novel by Abbé Prévost

First performed 1893 in Turin, Italy

## THE MET PRODUCTION

James Levine, Conductor

Gina Lapinski, Director

Starring:

Karita Mattila (Manon Lescaut)

Marcello Giordani (des Grieux)

Dwayne Croft (Lescaut)

Dale Travis (Geronte)

**FUN FACT:** Giacomo Puccini first traveled to the United States at age 48, in 1907—for the Metropolitan Opera premiere of *Manon Lescaut*.

Finnish soprano Karita Mattila and Italian tenor Marcello Giordani as Manon Lescaut and the Chevalier des Grieux in Act III of the Met’s production of *Manon Lescaut*. All photos in this guide by Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera.

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## THE GUIDE INCLUDES FOUR TYPES OF ACTIVITIES:

- Two full-length activities, designed to support your ongoing curriculum
- Five “Coming Attractions”—opportunities to focus briefly on bits of music from Manon Lescaut to cultivate familiarity with the work
- Activities for students to enjoy during the Metropolitan Opera HD transmission, calling attention to special aspects of this production. Reproducible activity sheets can be found on the last two pages of this guide
- A post-transmission activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into students’ wider views of the performing arts

# Manon Lescaut: Love Is All You Need

The activities in this guide address several aspects of *Manon Lescaut*:

- Puccini’s rich, complex exploration of the nature of love
- the growth of the central character across the opera’s four acts
- Puccini’s use of dramatic structure and music to support character and plot development
- the opera as a work of art, involving a wide range of creative decisions by the composer, the librettist, and the artists of the Metropolitan Opera

The guide seeks not only to acquaint students with *Manon Lescaut*, but also to encourage them to think more broadly about opera—and the performing arts in general—as means of personal and philosophical expression. Little prior knowledge is required for the activities. If you’d like to present *Manon Lescaut* in a more formal, traditional way, please take advantage of the introductory activity in the companion publication, *Opera: the Basics*.

## THE STORY

Act I. Amiens, France, around 1720. Edmondo, his fellow students and their girlfriends are enjoying the summer evening on a public square. They welcome the young Chevalier des Grieux, who sings a jaunty serenade to the girls (“Tra voi, belle”). Soon the courtyard stirs with the arrival of a carriage bearing Manon and her brother, Lescaut, who is escorting his sister to a convent at their father’s orders. Sharing the coach with them is Geronte, an old and wealthy Parisian gallant.

While the innkeeper shows Lescaut and Geronte to their rooms, des Grieux introduces himself to Manon. She is intrigued by him and agrees to meet him later, then joins her brother. The



Chevalier realizes he has fallen in love (“Donna non vidi mai”). Geronte, who also has designs on Manon, bribes the innkeeper to arrange for Manon’s abduction. Edmondo, who has overheard the conversation, warns des Grieux.

As evening falls, Manon keeps her promise and meets des Grieux, who persuades her to evade both the convent and her elderly admirer by running off to Paris with him instead (Duet: “Vedete? Io son fedele”). Geronte returns to find the young lovers escaping in the carriage he hired for himself and Manon; furious, he is calmed by Lescaut, who assures him a girl like Manon who loves luxury will be easy to lure away from a poor student.

**Act II.** Manon has left des Grieux and is living in a sumptuous Paris apartment as Geronte’s mistress. When Lescaut arrives to congratulate her on her success, she sadly replies that luxury cannot make

Manon and des Grieux share an illicit moment.



up for the loss of des Grieux (“In quelle trine morbide”). The arrival of a group of musicians who sing a madrigal in her honor does not change her mood, but Manon’s vanity is aroused when Geronte appears with some of his friends to pay tribute to her beauty. The men watch her dancing lesson, while she sings a love song to the strains of a minuet (“L’ora, o Tirsi”).

Lescaut goes off to find des Grieux. After the guests have left, the Chevalier confronts Manon (Duet: “Tu, tu, amore? Tu?”). He first reproaches her as unfaithful, but soon gives in to her beauty and insistent declarations of true love. Geronte returns to find them in each other’s arms. When Manon holds up a mirror to mock his age, he leaves, threatening revenge.

Lescaut bursts in to warn the lovers that the city guards are on their way, but Manon, in spite of des Grieux’s reproach (“Ah, Manon, mi tradisce”), insists on gathering her jewels first. The delay proves disastrous: led in by Geronte, gendarmes arrest Manon for theft and drag her off to prison.

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**FUN FACT:** Only nine years before Puccini began writing this opera, audiences had seen the premiere of Jules Massenet’s *Manon*, based on the same novel. Puccini reportedly said, “Manon is a heroine I believe in and therefore she cannot fail to win the hearts of the public. Why shouldn’t there be two operas about her? A woman like Manon can have more than one lover.”

Act III. On a street by the harbor of Le Havre, des Grieux and Lescaut wait for dawn, hoping to rescue Manon from deportation to America. When she appears at the bars of her prison, the lovers once again exchange vows and words of hope. The sound of a shot indicates that Lescaut’s plot has been discovered.

A band of soldiers lead in the women prisoners, who are each called by name to board the ship, while a curious crowd gathers to comment on their appearance. Des Grieux desperately begs the Captain to let him accompany Manon to the New World (“Guardate, pazzo son!”). Moved, the Captain agrees.

Act IV. Wandering in a wasteland where she and des Grieux have fled after landing at New Orleans, the ailing Manon is at the end of her strength and cannot go any farther. When des Grieux goes off in search of help, she is overcome by terror and despair (“Sola, perduta, abbandonata!”). Des Grieux returns, but Manon dies in his arms.

## Silly Love Songs?

### A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

No matter how you look at it, *Manon Lescaut* is a love story. That doesn't make it a simple affair. As the opera unfolds, the word "love" comes to mean different things for different characters at different times. In Act I Manon herself never utters the word, but des Grieux does, and often. In Act II, the situation reverses: it's Manon who speaks repeatedly of love, with only an occasional echo from des Grieux. Later, the situation changes yet again. In this activity, students will look closely at the sounds and senses of "love" in *Manon Lescaut*. They will:

- identify and characterize Puccini's uses of the word "love"
- construct understandings of the various types of love Puccini depicts
- consider the role specific word choices make in the overall structure of a literary work
- become acquainted with key characters, their relationships, and some of the music in *Manon Lescaut* in advance of the Met's HD transmission.

**STEPS** Love can be a charged issue for adolescents; it may therefore be difficult to discuss in the public setting of a classroom. The activity is designed to give students a chance to talk about varieties of love without potential embarrassment—by focusing on fictional characters, not personal experience. By the same token, it can be difficult for adolescents to recognize meaningful patterns of language in a literary work. The activity is therefore designed to let students construct their own categories based on the examples offered. There's no one "correct" view on how Manon or des Grieux express—or experience—their feelings. After constructing their categories, students will be asked to apply them to contemporary songs about love.

### IN PREPARATION

For this activity, each student will need a photocopy of the printed resources for the activity, found on pages 32 through 34 of this guide.

You will also need the accompanying recording of selections from *Manon Lescaut*.

If possible, have students familiarize themselves with the story of *Manon Lescaut* before the class session. You may want to photocopy the synopsis at the beginning of this guide and distribute it in advance.

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Language Arts, Music, and Social Sciences (Psychology)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explore the way composers present characters' worldviews and feelings through patterns in words and music
- To consider the use of music to support, embellish, and/or comment on the literal meaning of characters' words
- To prompt curiosity about the Met's approach to this opera

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**FUN FACT:** No author is credited with the libretto for *Manon Lescaut*—because at least seven men contributed to it, including the opera’s first producer and Puccini himself. That doesn’t even count Abbé Prévost, upon whose novel the opera is based.

**Step 1:** Introduce the opera to your students, emphasizing the through-line of an ongoing relationship between Manon Lescaut and the Chevalier des Grieux. Try not to use the word “love” yourself. Rather, ask students to characterize the relationship, so the notion of “love” comes first from them, not you.

**Step 2:** Once the word “love” comes up in the discussion, respond by asking students what that term means. On the blackboard, make notes about their replies. You may need to move the discussion forward with such questions as:

- Is all love the same?
- Is loving a mother or father the same as loving a girlfriend or boyfriend? What differences would you point out?
- In what different ways can love be expressed?
- Is there a difference between “loving” someone and “being in love” with someone?
- Is loving a pet like either of those experiences?
- How many people have ever said “I loved that movie”? What does “love” mean there? How about in “I love those jeans”?

**Step 3:** Work for a few minutes with the class to develop three or more categories of types of love. Assure students that they’re not committing themselves permanently; the categories may change as the discussion continues.

**Step 4:** You may now want to characterize *Manon Lescaut* as a love story. But since its characters speak without the intervention of a narrator, it can be interesting to look at the way that story takes form—to notice the words Puccini put into his characters’ mouths, then to work backward from what they’re singing to what they’re thinking and feeling.

Introduce this notable aspect of *Manon Lescaut*’s libretto: in Act I, by and large, only des Grieux mentions love. In Act II, by and large, only Manon Lescaut does. In Acts III and IV, they both do. By looking closely at the ways they use the term, we can learn a great deal about Manon, des Grieux, and Puccini’s ideas about love.



**Step 5:** Distribute the resource with translated excerpts from the libretto. Then, before students turn their attention to the words on paper, play the selection. Have students jot down and/or discuss their responses to the music. Without knowing what the character is literally saying, what do they think Puccini is conveying with this music? Now play the selection a second time as students read along. Do the words change their thoughts? How would they characterize the notion of love expressed in this selection?

#### **Act I**

**Track 1:** The first voice we hear is that of des Grieux's friend Edmondo. Des Grieux has just shown up. He's apparently been away for a while. Edmondo kiddingly asks whether des Grieux has fallen in love. The second voice is des Grieux himself—the first time we ever hear him—and his very first word is “L'amor!”—love. In fact, he repeats it before going on to ridicule it. What do your students think this very short selection says about des Grieux and his initial attitudes toward love? When des Grieux speaks of love as a “comedy” or “tragedy,” what kind of love do students think he's talking about? What's the underlying notion of love here?

**Track 2:** This is des Grieux's first aria, known as “Tra voi, belle” (Which of you beauties...?). It comes only seconds after Track 1 and continues des Grieux's first thoughts about love. Students should pay attention to the melody—lilting, sweet, light-hearted. When des Grieux even mentions the possibility of falling in love forever, his friends interrupt with a merry laugh.

**Track 3:** This selection presents the first bars of the aria “Donna non vidi mai” (“I've never seen such a woman...”). Des Grieux has just met Manon Lescaut, who has gone off to see her brother. Alone now, des Grieux expresses the feelings she's aroused in him. Notice how different the music is from that of “Tra voi, belle”—not jaunty but slow, lyrical, even dreamy, underlain with harp and



In Act I, Manon is an innocent and impressionable girl.

strings. At the end of the selection, des Grieux says it would be inspiring simply to say “I love you” to Manon. How does this coincide with his earlier statements on love? Has he changed his mind about what love is? About the possibility of his own emotions?

**Track 4:** Tracks 4, 5, and 6 come a few minutes later. The wealthy old man Geronte has hatched a plan to abduct Manon. Edmondo, overhearing, has passed the information on to des Grieux. Track 4 finds des Grieux declaring his love to Manon. Students should listen for clues not only in des Grieux’s declaration, but also in Manon’s reply. What does she make of the whole idea?

**Track 5:** The conversation continues. Manon continues to resist des Grieux’s sweet talk. But Puccini now binds their voices in a duet. Why have them sing at the same time? What might be happening here?

**Track 6:** By now, des Grieux has warned Manon that Geronte plans to abduct her. He proposes that she run off with him instead. Sensibly, Manon asks, “*You’re* going to abduct me?” Des Grieux responds with one of the strangest mentions of love in the opera: “*vi rapisce amore*”—love is abducting you! What do students think he means by this? Does he sound sincere? What notion of love seems to be in his thoughts? Manon responds “Oh, no!”—but then she does run away with him. Why? Has she accepted des Grieux’s view? What kind of future might Manon envision?

## Act II

Between Acts I and II, considerable time has elapsed. Manon and des Grieux lived together for a while, but Manon has left the poor student to take up with wealthy Geronte after all. The first part of Act II depicts the luxury in which she now lives, how she takes this luxury for granted, and how bored she claims to be. She sends out her brother, Lescaut, to find her young lover. As our selections begin, des Grieux has arrived. Manon has begged his forgiveness. Now their next discussion of love begins.

**Track 7:** The tables have turned. Des Grieux is resisting Manon's advances. He calls her a temptress, working her magic on him. Manon responds, "È fascino d'amor; cedi, son tua!" (It's the magic of love. Yield! I'm yours.) Listening to her voice, considering her words, how would students characterize the love she's talking about? Is it the same as des Grieux's Act I love? What could have happened in Manon's life to cause the change?

**Track 8:** Geronte finds des Grieux and Manon together. He calls Manon ungrateful, but that's not all he has to say. He talks of his own "vero amore"—true love—for her. What could he mean? Does he see Manon as more than the mistress of a wealthy old man (himself)?

In Act II, Manon develops a taste for fine clothes and the trappings of wealth.



**Track 9:** Now hear Manon’s reply to Geronte. “Love?” she sings here, holding up a mirror. “Love? Look at yourself!” What does this say about Manon’s notion of love? What must des Grieux think of this exchange? What do your students think of Manon’s position? Agree? Disagree? Why?

**Track 10:** As Act II ends, Manon and des Grieux are scurrying to escape Geronte’s house before the police arrive. In the middle of the escape scene, we hear this exchange. Manon’s talk of love has vanished. She exclaims, “It would be imprudent to leave all this gold behind, my treasures!” Now it’s des Grieux who finally uses the term “love”—“All I want to save is your love.” Does the information in this selection prompt students to revise their view of Manon? Of des Grieux?

#### Acts III and IV

The “love” of which these lovers speak changes yet again in the second half of the opera. Track 11 finds des Grieux at Manon’s prison cell, hoping he might help her escape. With Track 12, we skip to Act IV and the final conversation between Manon and des Grieux.

**Track 11:** We find Manon in prison. She calls des Grieux “amore” and is apparently amazed he’s come to save her. More smooth talk? Listen, as des Grieux replies, not just to his own impassioned declaration of love, but to the way Manon interrupts him at the end of each line, repeating “amore.” What do students think of Manon now?

In **Track 12**, a dying Manon declares her love for des Grieux one last time. Does this declaration seem different to students? How? What do they hear in the music, or read in the words, that creates this impression? Is Manon’s love purely physical, or does she express something else here? Add to the mix of thoughts by listening to **Track 13**. These are Manon’s last words, and the last words of the opera: “My love will not die.” What could that



sentiment mean? What do students think Puccini means to tell us about love?

**Step 6:** To wrap up the discussion, as individuals or in pairs, students can write their own dictionary-style definitions of love. Using quotations from *Manon Lescaut* as examples, they can lay out the distinct meanings “love” has to Puccini’s characters in a variety of situations.

**FOLLOW-UP** All this talk about love may seem highly theoretical—connected only to an old Italian opera. What does it have to do with our lives today? Students won’t have to think long to think of places where love comes up in our culture every day—movies, TV talk shows, soap operas, pop songs. For homework, each student should choose a current popular song that includes the word “love.” Consider that song in light of the categories and varieties of love found in *Manon Lescaut*. What’s the “love viewpoint” of the song? Is a man speaking or a woman? What feelings does he or she express? What—if anything—does he or she want, or expect, from the beloved? How might this cultural depiction of love affect a listener’s thinking? How might Puccini’s view of love influence an opera audience?

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## IN PREPARATION

For this activity, each student will need a photocopy of the printed resources found on pages 35 and 36 of this guide.

You will also need the accompanying recording of selections from *Manon Lescaut*.

In order to help students organize and record their thoughts, you may want to prepare and distribute copies of the chart discussed below.

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## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies (History and Psychology),  
Language Arts, and Music

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To practice careful, critical listening
- To consider changes in women's social roles and opportunities over time
- To distinguish between universals and particulars bound by time and place in a work of fiction
- To prompt curiosity about the interpretation of *Manon Lescaut* in the Met Live in HD production

## *The Education of Manon Lescaut* A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

It has been observed that Puccini's version of *Manon Lescaut* is less a coherent narrative than a set of scenes from the tempestuous life of one 18th-century woman. This activity approaches that aspect of the opera as a virtue. Students will take a close look at Manon's "education"—the experiences that affect her life and demeanor across the course of the opera. The approach can be adapted to the concerns of different subject areas: in social studies classrooms, students might apply knowledge of women's social position two centuries ago to the particulars of Manon's story, while language arts classes may concentrate on the methods of developing a character in fiction. All students will:

- observe the techniques Puccini employs to present Manon as a living, changing, fully human character;
- consider the complex motivations, perspectives, and feelings which influence Manon's choices and behaviors;
- imagine alternative "futures" for characters in the opera;
- acquaint themselves with some of the music in *Manon Lescaut* in advance of the Met's HD transmission.



Manon's final moments.

## STEPS

In this activity, students will examine three stages in the life of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. At each stage, they'll ponder four questions about Manon's attitudes and behavior:

- A. How does Manon see herself?
- B. What evidence in the opera supports that assessment?
- C. What historical circumstances might affect Manon's self-image and/or behavior?
- D. What else might Manon have done in this situation?

At the end of the lesson, students will consider a fifth question, aimed at turning their thoughts from the particular case of Manon to the general social situation of women in the 18th century: might a woman in the 21st century feel the same way, or do the same things, as Manon?

[Though the objectives of the activity can be achieved based solely upon knowledge of *Manon Lescaut*, general knowledge, and conjecture, students in some subject-area classrooms might also do some research before answering questions C. and D.]

**Step 1:** Introduce the subject of the activity—a close-up look at the life of Manon Lescaut, an 18th-century woman depicted by Giacomo Puccini toward the end of the 19th century. Present the four analytic questions. Set up a chart on the chalkboard to record students' responses:

	Act I	Act II	Act IV
Manon			
Evidence			
History			
Alternatives			

Notice that the bottom line of the chart is left blank until the end of the lesson. If you make copies of the chart, be sure to leave plenty of room in each cell—to account for students’ handwriting.

### Step 2: Reviewing the Basics

To ground the discussion, make sure students are aware of the following basic facts about *Manon Lescaut*:

- Puccini based his opera on an 18th-century French novel by Abbé Prévost.
- The locations of the four acts are all real places. Acts I, II, and III take place in three French cities—the small town of Amiens, Paris, and the seaport city of Le Havre. Act IV takes place in “Louisiana,” but this doesn’t necessarily refer to the modern state of Louisiana. It could be anywhere in the territory that became part of the United States under the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, stretching across the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains as far northwest as Montana.
- Women, and especially poor women, were treated very differently at three different moments in time: the time of the opera, Puccini’s own time, and our time. (During this lesson, we’ll consider 18th-century France, not Puccini’s 19th-century Italy.)
- Each act of *Manon Lescaut* finds the central character in a different situation. In Act I, she’s a young girl being sent off to a convent. In Act II, she’s the consort of a wealthy old man. This activity doesn’t address Act III, where she’s in prison for allegedly stealing from that old man, but Act IV finds her experiencing the consequences: wandering helpless in a vast American desert.

### Step 3: A Close Look at Manon, Act by Act

Now it’s time to listen to Manon as she presents herself in three different phases of the opera—and of her life. Selections from *Manon Lescaut* will be used as clues to form a picture of Manon and to chart the growth and change in her self-image and her actions. Have the class listen to each selection, then discuss the music, the words, and the singer’s expression. After listening to



all the selections in each act, students can fill in the chart, either as a class or individually.

#### Act I

**Track 14:** In this very brief selection, the 18-year-old Manon first introduces herself to des Grieux. This haunting bit of melody recurs throughout the opera (see Coming Attraction: “I’m called Manon Lescaut”—the Motif). It establishes Manon as a sad, frightened country girl.

**Track 15:** Here, moments later, Manon tells des Grieux that she’s leaving the next day to go live in a convent. Have students pay special attention to the melody she uses: it’s the same sad strain with which she introduced herself. Though her words express bare fact, the melody reveals Manon’s feelings.

**Track 16:** In this third snippet from Act I, Manon at last says in words what students will have deduced from her music and her tone: she doesn’t feel very good about herself. She sees herself as a poor, sad girl with a bleak future.

#### Act II

A good deal of time elapses between the first two acts of *Manon Lescaut*. Students will hear a very different woman in this set of selections. You may want to wait until after they’ve heard the first selection before explaining the change in her circumstances.

**Track 17:** This selection comes right at the start of Act II. We find Manon dressing to go out. She is talking to her private hairdresser. How would students characterize her tone of voice here? Does this sound like the girl in Act I? What do they make of the words she’s barking out—her commands, her commentary, and her attitude toward the person working for her?

**Track 18:** A group of madrigal singers have just performed for Manon’s private enjoyment. Her personal dancing teacher has

#### FUN FACT

Puccini spent several years writing *Manon Lescaut*. Meanwhile, his friends were getting famous. In 1890, his friend Mascagni rocketed to fame with his opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*. In 1892, Leoncavallo scored a huge success with *I Pagliacci*. Some of Puccini’s sponsors wanted to cancel their arrangement with him. If *Manon Lescaut* had not succeeded, he might have given up all together. Fortunately, it was an instant hit.



Manon at her makeup table.

arrived. In this selection, we hear Manon's reaction to these luxuries. Again, students should consider music, tone of voice and words—in particular that universal adolescent lament, "M'annoio!"—I'm bored by them!

**Track 19:** Here we listen in on a bit of dialogue between Manon and her lover/patron, Geronte. He refers to her as his shining joy. She responds with distinct sarcasm, as if he were fortunate to be able to wait for her with his wealthy friends.

**Track 20:** The Manon of Act II becomes more complicated with this selection. Her former lover, des Grieux, has arrived. She wants him back. She asks forgiveness. But what do your students make of the fact that she mentions her wealth in the next breath, then offers him colorful jewels?

**Track 21:** Now Manon tries a different tactic with des Grieux. First, she asks "Am I not as beautiful as I was?" Do your students

find this question sincere? Manipulative? Indicative of low self-esteem? In reply, des Grieux calls her a temptress, and Manon shifts her approach yet again—calling upon him to “yield” to the magic of love. At this point, students may want to take a moment to compare this Manon to the girl in Act I.

**Track 22:** Act II ends with a quickly paced scene in which Manon and des Grieux try to escape Geronte’s home before the police arrive. Moments earlier, in this selection, Manon comments on the need to leave. What do students make of her use of the word “peccato,” meaning “sin”? Where do Manon’s priorities seem to lie?

#### Act IV

Acts III and IV deal with punishment. Act III begins with Manon in prison and ends with her exile to America (accompanied, voluntarily, by des Grieux). The selection here finds the lovers in the desert, thirsty, alone, and far from any help.

**Track 23:** Des Grieux has gone to find water. Manon sings her final aria. This selection begins mid-aria, with Manon reflecting upon her fate; it ends with des Grieux’s return and Manon’s plea for help. Notice her choice of language—“beltà funesta” (fatal beauty), a past stained “di sangue” (with blood). Does Manon simply feel sorry for herself? Do your students hear genuine regret? Do her sentiments align with their understanding of her failings? How else might Manon react to this punishment? What do her feelings tell us about the woman she has become?

**Step 4:** Now it’s time to step back for a critical perspective on Manon. One way to do this is to consider the character in light of modern-day experience: Might a woman in the 21st century feel the same way, or do the same things, as Manon?

Write the word “Today” in the bottom, left-hand cell of the chart. Then, act by act, have students consider Manon’s actions and hypothesize what she might have done—or have been able



Manon and des Grieux after their expulsion.

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**FUN FACT**

Puccini's comic scene about learning to dance the minuet is especially interesting in light of his comments on Jules Massenet's *Manon*. Massenet, Puccini reportedly said, approached Manon's story "as a Frenchman, with the powder and minuets. I shall feel it as an Italian, with desperate passion."

to do—had she found herself in similar circumstances nowadays. How has society changed? What aspects of Manon's life might have stayed the same? Is Manon responsible for her actions? Is society? To what extent?

**FOLLOW-UP:** As a follow-up activity, students may enjoy thinking about what might have happened to Manon if, in Act IV, des Grieux had returned with a big jug of fresh, cool water and something to eat. Imagine her life in the America of the early 18th century. Would she have found her way to the missions of California? To Virginia? New York City? Massachusetts? What might the life of a woman with her background be like in those late colonial times? Students might write a story, a play, or a comic strip about a new ending—or beginning—for Manon (and des Grieux) in America.



The lovers communicate through prison bars.



## *"I'm called Manon Lescaut"—the Motif* COMING ATTRACTION

About halfway into Act I, des Grieux meets a beautiful teenage girl and asks her name. Her reply, **Track 14**, is simple, sad, and soon to be iconic, as Puccini brings it back again and again, recalling Manon at her moment of innocence and possibility. In **Track 15**, with the same melancholy strain, she tells des Grieux the fate she believes to be hers.

**Track 24** is taken from “Donna non vidi mai,” the aria with which des Grieux expresses his deep, instant attraction to Manon. Not only does he twice sing Manon’s declaration, but the orchestra echoes the melody as well. These seven notes come to stand for everything pure, sweet, and lovely about Manon.

In **Track 25**, Manon is about to keep a pre-arranged second meeting with des Grieux. The orchestra heralds the rendezvous by repeating the central melody of “Donna non vidi mai.” But listen carefully: the last four notes before Manon appears are the first four of that introductory theme, four notes doing the work of seven.

**Track 26** comes from Act II. Left alone to finish dressing, Manon exclaims “I’ll be the most beautiful!” Puccini condenses her theme, originally seven notes long, then four, to only two notes, now in a minor key. He thereby efficiently reminds us how much Manon has changed, just as des Grieux shows up in her chambers and she calls him “mio immenso amore” (my great love).

The tragic Act IV begins with three ominous tones, repeated for chilling emphasis—**Track 27**. Pay attention to the second and third notes of the phrase. It’s that two-note condensation of Manon’s theme—now bleaker than ever. It’s as if the entire orchestra were crying, like des Grieux, “Oh, Manon!” And just in case a dry eye remains in the house at Manon’s death, the cry goes up again in **Track 28**, bringing the opera to a close with the shortest possible motif, dense with sadness and meaning.

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

Coming Attractions are brief opportunities to:

- help students make sense of opera
- whet their interest in upcoming Metropolitan Opera HD transmissions

Each focuses on music from the accompanying CD. They direct students’ attention toward highlights and details that can organize and illuminate their viewing of the transmission.

The descriptions below offer detailed listening pointers, but these “mini-lessons” will in practice take up no more than a few minutes of class time. They’re designed to help you bring opera into your classroom while minimizing interruption of your ongoing curricular sequence. Feel free to use as many as you like.



Des Grieux is powerless to revive Manon.

## Futile Understanding COMING ATTRACTION

Generally, discussion of *Manon Lescaut* revolves around the tragic life of Manon herself. But what of des Grieux? Smitten from the moment he meets Manon, he seems incapable of overcoming his doomed love for her. **Track 29** finds des Grieux late in Act II, trying to convince Manon that she must escape Geronte's mansion. She's just expressed her mixed feelings: she doesn't want to leave all this wealth behind. His response carries all the devotion, understanding and frustration of des Grieux's love, from its very first words, "Ah, Manon, mi tradisce"—you betray me.

Note the melody with which des Grieux sings "Ah, Manon." It recurs a few lines later, when he describes his beloved as "buona e gentile." With the slightest transposition, the melody returns as des Grieux declares "Io? Tuo schiavo"—what am I but your slave? Puccini thereby uses the underlying melody to connect three concepts—Manon, her fundamental goodness, and the mysterious attraction she holds for men.

As des Grieux sings of "climbing down the ladder of infamy," Puccini provides a musical analogy. The music descends haltingly from "la scala d'infamia" to "mi vendo"—I sell myself. After a brief orchestral comment, the "Ah, Manon"/"Tu schiavo" melody returns yet again, this time to project the "oscuro futuro"—the dark future—as des Grieux hits rock bottom. Once a man of action, he can no longer ask "what will I do," but only "che farai di me"—what will you do to me?

## Choruses and Commentary

### COMING ATTRACTION

In *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini uses choruses as far more than musical decor or scenic texture. Each chorus has its own personality and purpose. Take the chorus of students, friends of des Grieux, who congregate near the inn by the town gate of Amiens. As the opera opens, their purpose is to get things off in the proper spirit, light and breezy. They tease the principals, as in **Track 30**: Edmondo begins the opera with a stereotypical song of gentle breezes, poets and lovers, but the chorus interrupts to laugh and add “E ai ladri ed ai briachi!”—thieves and drunks too!

In **Track 31**, Puccini uses the same chorus to distract Manon’s brother, Lescaut, with gambling and drinking. The chorus keeps Lescaut busy and ignorant of both Geronte’s plot and des

Manon in the luxurious household of her aged companion.



Grioux’s “rescue” until after the fact. In the first part of this selection, we hear the chorus luring Lescaut to the game—and Lescaut taking the bait. But the last voice we hear is Geronte, safely out of Lescaut’s earshot, arranging to abduct Manon.

In Act II, the chorus of fawning attendants in Geronte’s house shows us just how smitten their master is with Manon. They also provide Manon the opportunity to demonstrate how little Geronte’s attentions affect her. Take **Track 32**: The chorus flatters Manon, Geronte takes their every word as truth, and Manon complains about the whole affair. All three parties sing at once—a technique Puccini uses to indicate contradictory viewpoints that ignore one another.

Puccini puts the chorus to especially dramatic use in Act III. A chorus of citizens of Le Havre, sometimes split internally into multiple quarreling voices, carries on a ribald running commentary on the women being exiled to America (despite having been ordered to be silent!). As in Track 32, the chorus—or choruses—sing in counterpoint here—while a sergeant calls the roll of prisoners, Lescaut tells the crowd a heavily edited version of Manon’s life story, and Manon and des Grioux sing a duet. The many voices in **Track 33** unite in a magnificent skein of song. At the same time, they represent an elaborate, ingenious method of simultaneously advancing and commenting on the plot and characters of the opera.



## *Fugue State* COMING ATTRACTION

The fugue is a musical form in which one or more relatively simple imitative parts enter (or begin to repeat) at different times to create a multilayered bloom of sound. It's easier to hear than to explain—and Puccini provides an excellent example in two selections from Act II, deploying a fugue to indicate swiftly rising tension.

**Track 34** comes as Geronte stumbles upon the secret meeting between Manon and des Grieux. Listen to the line of orchestral music before Geronte announces himself. (“Affè, madamigella”—So, young lady, now I understand why we’ve been waiting!) That melody simply rings of trouble, here in the person of Geronte.

**Track 35** is heard a few minutes later. Geronte has left to call the police. Des Grieux and Manon have been discussing their escape. As Lescaut bursts in to tell them the police are arriving, the selection begins—with the same line of melody that meant trouble at Geronte’s entrance. Now, however, the line enters again and again and again, its melody overlapping, rising, driving forward. We can’t help but hear how much more trouble the lovers are in. That’s the emotional power woven in sound by Puccini’s brief fugue.



Marcello Giordani as the Chevalier des Grieux.

## *In-between Music* COMING ATTRACTION

*Manon Lescaut* begins with only the briefest introductory orchestral music. And later, Puccini tells us little of the time between Manon's escape from Amiens at the end of Act I and her residence in Geronte's home at the start of Act II. Between Acts II and III, however, he describes Manon's voyage from Paris to the prison at Le Havre in a magnificent instrumental movement, the Intermezzo.

The Intermezzo borrows many themes from Acts I and II, some in harmonic variations, some with different instrumentation, some with rhythmic changes. A particularly clear example involves the opening bar of an Act II aria in which des Grieux affirms his unquenchable love for Manon, "Nell'occhio tuo profondo, io leggo il mio destin"—in the depths of your eyes, I read my destiny—**Track 36**.

**Track 37** begins toward the end of the Intermezzo. The musical voyage is approaching its end when, following a patch of rather stormy, unsettled melody, a fragile voicing of the "nell'occhio" love theme emerges from the flute section. The rest of the orchestra tries to pick it up, but the theme goes sour, crushed in the pounding of timpani against a wall of strings. Then, as if by miracle, the theme rises again, gentle but full and determined. With it, Puccini brings the Intermezzo to an almost hopeful resolution—just as we arrive in Le Havre to find Manon in chains.

## Supporting Students during the Metropolitan Opera: *Live in HD* Transmission

Thanks to print and audio recording, much about opera can be enjoyed long before a performance. But performance itself remains an incomparable embarrassment of riches—sound and color, pageantry and technology, drama, skill, and craft. “At the Met” activities are designed to help students tease apart different aspects of the experience, consider creative choices that have been made, and sharpen their own critical faculties.



Each activity incorporates a reproducible activity sheet. Students bring the activity sheet to the transmission for filling out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to characteristics of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed. Students can use the ratings matrices to express their critique.

The basic activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. Meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season, this sheet points students toward a consistent set of objects of observation. Its purposes are not only to help students articulate and express their opinions, but to support comparison and contrast, enriching understanding of the art form as a whole.

For *Manon Lescaut*, the other activity sheet directs students' attention to an interesting aspect of the libretto: the way the two main characters refer to each other. As students will discover, des Grieux calls his lover "Manon" literally dozens of times. Manon uses his name only once! The use of names and terms of endearment can be of great interest to adolescents. In this case, it can help maintain focused attention during a rather long performance in a foreign tongue.

Activity reproducibles can be found on the last two pages of this guide. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion after the transmission. On the next page, you'll find an additional activity created specifically for post-transmission follow-up.

## Manon Goes Modern

### HOME FROM THE OPERA

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? The discussion offers an opportunity to apply the notes on students' *My Highs & Lows* sheet, as well as their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production—in short, to see themselves as *Manon Lescaut* experts.

At some point in the discussion, if none of your students bring it up, introduce the topic of relationships between men and women in the opera. It might make sense to review several examples and ask which of these, if any, could happen today:

- Lescaut decides to dump his sister in a convent.
- He talks freely about this with Geronte.
- When Geronte expresses interest in Manon, Lescaut sees an opportunity for his own advancement.
- Geronte plans to kidnap Manon.
- Geronte expects that, if he kidnaps her, there will be no search party or punishment.
- The innkeeper freely helps Geronte.
- When des Grieux hears of the plot, he decides to fake a kidnapping of his own.
- Manon leaves des Grieux to move in with the wealthy Geronte.
- When Manon decides to leave Geronte and take the jewels he's given her, she's arrested and imprisoned.
- Her punishment is exile.

It's likely that your students will say at least some of these could never happen today. Why not? What might happen instead?

#### IN PREPARATION:

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at the Met *Live in HD* transmission of *Manon Lescaut*.

#### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies and Language Arts

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To review and consolidate students' experiences with *Manon Lescaut*
- To explore the social and cultural assumptions implicit in the opera
- To cultivate an imaginative perspective on works of fiction
- To apply considerations raised by this opera to our contemporary society



Which of Manon's actions would be considered socially acceptable today? Unacceptable? How would society behave toward her? What would their respective expectations be?

Puccini based this opera on a novel written 160 years earlier. It's interesting to consider that we're closer to the opera than he was to the novel: We're less than 120 years from the premiere of *Manon Lescaut*. With that in mind, your students may enjoy creating their own "Manon for the 21st Century."

- Where would she grow up?
- Where would she move to?
- What would be her initial predicament?
- Who would be the "des Grieux," "Geronte," and "Lescaut" in her life? How would a woman with Manon's strengths and weaknesses get by in our time, in our world?
- With what contemporary tragedy would her story end?

In other words, how could you retell Manon's story for, say, modern teenagers? Would you write a play? A story? A video script? A graphic novel or manga? An opera? Then do it!

As appropriate for your teaching situation, students can work either singly or in teams to create their "modern Manons," doing the project either in class or for homework. If it's practical in your classroom, students will probably enjoy sharing and comparing the stories they devise.

## *Student Resources*

On the next several pages, you'll find reproducibles of the texts and worksheets for each *Manon Lescaut* activity. Feel free to photocopy these and distribute them in your classroom.

Pages 42 and 43 are activity sheets to be used at the *Live in HD* transmission. Page 42 is designed to focus student attention during the transmission and to support your post-transmission classroom work. Page 43, *My Highs & Lows*, is a collectible prompting closer attention to specific aspects of the opera. You may want to provide copies of *My Highs & Lows* not only to students, but to friends, family and other members of the community attending the transmission.

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## THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: *LIVE IN HD* *MANON LESCAUT*

### Resource Page for Classroom Activity **Silly Love Songs**

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#### TRACK 1

**EDMONDO:** Forse di dama inaccessibile  
acuto amor ti morse?  
**DES GRIEUX:** L'amor! Questa tragedia  
ovver commedia, io non conosco!

**EDMONDO:** Perhaps you've been conquered by love  
for an inaccessible lady?  
**DES GRIEUX:** Love! Of that tragedy,  
or rather, comedy, I know nothing!

.....

#### TRACK 2

**DES GRIEUX:** Tra voi, belle,  
brune e bionde,  
si nasconde giovenetta  
vaga e vezzosa  
dal labbro rosa che m'aspetta?  
Sei tu, bionda stella? Dillo a me!  
Palesatemi il destino e il divino  
viso ardente che m'innamori,  
ch'io vegga e adori eternamente.  
Sei tu, bruna snella? Dillo a me!

**DES GRIEUX:** Among you beautiful women,  
blondes and brunettes,  
does a pretty and charming  
young lady with  
rosy lips wait for me?  
Is it you, blonde star? Tell me it is!  
Show me my destiny—and the divine,  
passionate face I'll fall in love with,  
that I'll adore forever.  
Is it you, slender brown-haired one? Tell me so!

.....

#### TRACK 3

**DES GRIEUX:** Donna non vidi mai simile a questa!  
A dire le "io t'amo" a nuova vita l'alma mia si desta.

**DES GRIEUX:** I've never before seen a woman like this!  
To tell her "I love you" brings my soul to life anew.

.....

#### TRACK 4

**DES GRIEUX:** Nelle pupille fulgide  
profonde sfavilla  
il desiderio dell'amore.  
Amor ora vi parla!  
Date all'onde del nuovo incanto  
e il dolce labbro e il core.  
V'amo! Quest'attimo di giorno  
rendete eterno ed infinito!

**DES GRIEUX:** Your deep, shining eyes  
shine with the desire  
for love.  
It's love that speaks to you now!  
Let your sweet lips and heart  
succumb to the waves of new enchantment.  
I love you! Make this moment last  
forever!

---

## TRACK 5

**MANON:** Una fanciulla povera son io,  
non ho sul volto luce di beltà,  
regna tristezza sul destino mio.  
**DES GRIEUX:** Vinta tristezza dall'amor sarà!  
La bellezza vi dona il più vago avvenir,  
O soave persona, mio sospiro infinito!

**MANON:** I'm a poor girl.  
There's no light of beauty on my face.  
Sadness governs my destiny.  
**DES GRIEUX:** Love will conquer your sadness.  
Beauty will give you a grand future,  
Oh gentle lady, my infinite hope!

---

## TRACK 6

**MANON:** Fuggir?  
**DES GRIEUX:** Fuggiamo! Che il vostro rapitor  
un altro sia!  
**MANON:** Voi mi rapite?  
**DES GRIEUX:** Non, vi rapisce amore!  
**MANON:** Ah, no!

**MANON:** Run away?  
**DES GRIEUX:** We'll run away! Let someone else be your  
kidnapper!  
**MANON:** You'll kidnap me?  
**DES GRIEUX:** No, love will kidnap you!  
**MANON:** Oh, no!

---

## TRACK 7

**DES GRIEUX:** O tentatrice!  
E questo l'antico fascino che m'accieca!  
**MANON:** È fascino d'amor; cedi, son tua!  
**DES GRIEUX:** Più non posso lottar!  
Son vinto!  
**MANON:** Cedi, son tua.  
Ah! Vieni! Colle tue braccia stringi Manon che l'ama.  
**DES GRIEUX:** Non posso lottar, o tentatrice!  
**MANON:** Stretta al tuo sen m'allaccia!  
Manon te solo brama!  
**DES GRIEUX:** Son vinto; io t'amo!  
Più non posso lottar!  
**MANON:** Ah vien!  
Manon te solo brama!  
Vieni, colle tue braccia stringi Manon che t'ama!

**DES GRIEUX:** Temptress!  
That old magic is blinding me!  
**MANON:** It's the magic of love. Give in—I'm yours!  
**DES GRIEUX:** I can't fight it any more!  
I'm conquered!  
**MANON:** Give in—I'm yours!  
Ah! Come! Wrap your arms around Manon, who loves you!  
**DES GRIEUX:** I can't fight, temptress!  
**MANON:** Hold me tight!  
Manon wants only you!  
**DES GRIEUX:** I'm conquered. I love you!  
I can't fight anymore!  
**MANON:** Ah, come!  
Manon wants only you!  
Come, wrap your arms around Manon, who loves you!

---

## TRACK 8

**GERONTE:** Donde vi trassi, le prove che v'ho date  
d'un vero amore, come rammentate!

**GERONTE:** When I rescued you, I demonstrated that  
I give you true love, and this is how you pay me back!

---

## TRACK 9

**MANON:** Amore? amore?  
Mio buon signore, ecco! Guardatevi!  
Se errai, leale ditelo!  
E poi guardate noi!

**MANON:** Love? Love?  
My good man—here! Look at yourself!  
If I'm wrong, tell me so!  
And then look at us!

---

## TRACK 10

**MANON:** Saria imprudenza lasciar quest'oro,  
o mio tesoro!

**DES GRIEUX:** Con te portar dei sol il cor! Ah!  
Io vo' salvar solo il tuo amor.

**LESCAUT:** Maledizion!

**MANON:** Ah!

**LESCAUT:** Eccoli, accerchian la casa!

**DES GRIEUX:** Manon!

**MANON:** Des Grieux! Di qua! Di là!  
Fuggiam! Ebben di là!

**DES GRIEUX:** Fuggiam! Fuggiam! No! No!  
Di là! Presto! Presto!

**MANON:** It wouldn't be prudent to leave this gold behind,  
my treasure!

**DES GRIEUX:** All you need to bring is your heart! Ah!  
I only want to save your love.

**LESCAUT:** Curses!

**MANON:** Ah!

**LESCAUT:** They're here, surrounding the house!

**DES GRIEUX:** Manon!

**MANON:** Des Grieux! Through here! Through there!  
Let's escape! Through there, then!

**DES GRIEUX:** Let's escape! Let's escape! No! No!  
Through there! Quick! Quick!

---

## TRACK 11

**MANON:** Tu, amore? Nell'onta non mi abbandoni?

**DES GRIEUX:** Abbandonarti? Mai!

Se t'ho seguita per la lunga via  
fu perchè fede mi regnava in core.

**MANON:** You, love? You haven't abandoned me in my shame?

**DES GRIEUX:** Abandon you? Never!

I followed you all this way because  
I've stayed faithful in my heart.

---

## TRACK 12

**MANON:** Oh, t'amo tanto e muoio.

Già la parola manca al mio voler.

Ma posso dirti che l'amo tanto! Oh, amore!

**MANON:** Oh—I love you so much and I'm dying.

Words already fail me, but I can tell you  
that I love you so much! Oh, love!

---

## TRACK 13

**MANON:** Ma l'amor mio, non muore

**MANON:** But my love will not die.



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**THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: LIVE IN HD**  
**MANON LESCAUT**

Resource Page for Classroom Activity

**The Education of Manon Lescaut**

.....

**TRACK 14**

**MANON:** Manon Lescaut mi chiamo

**MANON:** I'm called Manon Lescaut.

.....

**TRACK 15**

**MANON:** Domani all'alba io parto. Un chiostro m'attende.

**MANON:** I'm leaving tomorrow at dawn. A cloister awaits me.

.....

**TRACK 16**

**MANON:** Una fanciulla povera son io,  
non ho sul volto luce de beltà,  
regna tristezza sul destino mio.

**MANON:** I'm a poor girl.  
There's no light of beauty on my face.  
Sadness governs my destiny.

.....

**TRACK 17**

**MANON:** Dispettosetto questo riccio!  
Il calamistro, presto! Presto!  
Or, la volandola!  
Sever un po' le ciglia!  
La cerussa!  
Lo sguardo vibri a guisa di dardo!  
Qua la giunchiglia!

**MANON:** This curl is uncontrollable!  
The curling iron—quick! Quick!  
Now, powder!  
Make the eyebrows a little sharper!  
The base!  
My look vibrates like an dart!  
Here—the flower!

.....

**TRACK 18**

**MANON:** I madrigali! Il ballo! E poi la musica!  
Son tutte belle cose!  
Pur, m'annoio!

**MANON:** Madrigals! Dance! And then music!  
They're all lovely things!  
But they bore me!

.....

**TRACK 19**

**GERONTE:** Voi, mia fulgida letizia, esser compagna  
a noi prometteste: di poco vi recediamo  
**MANON:** Un breve istante sol vi chiedo;  
attendermi fia lieve fra il bel mondo dorato

**GERONTE:** You, my shining joy, promised to accompany us.  
We'll wait a bit for you.  
**MANON:** I only ask a minute. It will be delightful  
to wait for me amid that golden crowd.

---

## TRACK 20

MANON: Io voglio il tuo perdono.

Vedi! Son ricca.

DES GRIEUX: Taci!

MANON: Questa non ti sembra una festa d'ori e di colori?  
Tutto è per te.

DES GRIEUX: Deh! Taci!

MANON: I want your forgiveness!

Look! I'm rich!

DES GRIEUX: Quiet!

MANON: Doesn't this seem like feast of gold and colors?  
It's all for you.

DES GRIEUX: Quiet!

---

## TRACK 21

MANON: Son forse della Manon d'un giorno  
meno piacente e bella?

DES GRIEUX: O tentatrice!

È questo l'antico fascino che m'accieca!

MANON: È fascino d'amor; cedi, son tua!

MANON: Perhaps Manon is less pleasing and beautiful  
than she was before?

DES GRIEUX: O temptress!

That old magic is blinding me!

MANON: It's the magic of love. Give in—I'm yours!

---

## TRACK 22

MANON: Peccato! Tutti questi splendori!  
Tutti questi tesori! Ahimè! Dobbiam partir!

MANON: It's a shame! All these magnificent things!  
All these treasures! Alas, we have to leave!

---

## TRACK 23

MANON: Terra di pace mi sembrava questa.  
Ahi, mia beltà funesta, ire novelle accende!  
Strappar da lui mi se voleva,  
or tutto il mio passato orribile risorge  
e vivo innanzi al guardo mio si posa.  
Ah, di sangue ei s'è macchiato!  
Ah, tutto è finito!  
Asil di pace ora la tomba invoco.  
No, non voglio morire!  
Amore, aita!

MANON: This seemed like a land of peace to me.  
Alas, my fatal beauty sparked new troubles!  
They wanted to tear me away from him—  
now my entire horrible past surges back to  
life in front of me!  
Ah, it's stained with blood.  
Ah, everything's finished!  
I cry out for the peaceful asylum of the grave.  
No, I don't want to die!  
My love, help me!

.....

**THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: LIVE IN HD**  
**MANON LESCAUT**

Resource Page for Coming Attraction  
**"I'm called Manon Lescaut"—the Motif**

.....

**TRACK 14**

**MANON:** Manon Lescaut mi chiamo

**MANON:** I'm called Manon Lescaut.

.....

**TRACK 15**

**MANON:** Domani all'alba io parto. Un chiostro m'attende.

**MANON:** I'm leaving tomorrow at dawn. A cloister awaits me.

.....

**TRACK 24**

**DES GRIEUX:** Donna non vidi mai simile a questa!  
A dirle "io t'amo" a nuova vita l'alma mia si desta.  
"Manon Lescaut mi chiamo."  
Come queste parole profumate mi vagan  
nello spirto, e ascose fibre vanno a carezzare.  
O sussurro gentil, deh, non cessare!

**DES GRIEUX:** I've never before seen a woman like this!  
To tell her "I love you" brings my soul to life anew.  
"I'm called Manon Lescaut."  
How these fragrant words wander in my soul. Every fiber of  
my body wants to caress her.  
O gentle whisper! May it never cease!

.....

**TRACK 25**

**MANON:** Vedete? Io son fedele alla parola mia.

**MANON:** See? I'm true to my word.

.....

**TRACK 26**

**MANON:** Oh, sarò la più bella!  
Dunque questa lettiga?  
Tu, tu, amore? Tu?  
Tu? Ah! Mio immenso amore?

**MANON:** Oh, I'll be the most beautiful  
Is the coach here already?  
You, you, my love? You?  
You? Ah, my great love!

.....

**THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: LIVE IN HD**  
**MANON LESCAUT**

Resource Page for Coming Attraction

**Futile Understanding**

.....

**TRACK 29**

**DES GRIEUX:** Ah! Manon, mi tradisce il tuo folle pensier.  
Sempre la stessa!  
Trepida divinamente,  
nell'abbandono ardente.  
Buona e gentile come la vaghezza  
di quella tua carezza.  
Sempre novella ebbrezza;  
indi, d'un tratto, vinta, abbacianata  
dai raggi della vita dorata!  
Io? Tuo schiavo, e tua vittima  
discendo la scala dell'infamia.  
Fango nel fango io sono e turpe  
eroe da bisca m'insozzo, mi vendo.  
L'onta più vile m'avvicina a te!  
Nell'oscuro futuro di, che farai di me?

**DES GRIEUX:** Ah! Manon, your foolish thoughts betray me.  
You're always the same!  
You tremble divinely,  
in the heat of abandon.  
Good and lovely as the tenderness  
of your caress.  
Always some new enchantment;  
then at once, you're conquered,  
blinded by the fabulous golden life.  
And me? I'm your slave and your victim,  
climbing down the ladder of infamy.  
I'm filth deep in filth, selling myself  
to the filthiest gambler.  
I'm drawn to you by deep shame.  
In the dark future, what will you turn me into?

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## THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: *LIVE IN HD* *MANON LESCAUT*

### Resource Page for Coming Attraction **Choruses and Commentary**

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#### TRACK 30

**EDMONDO:** Ave, sera gentile, che discendi  
col tuo corteo di zefferi e di stelle.  
Ave, cara ai poeti ed agli amanti.  
**STUDENTS:** E ai ladri ed ai brïachi!  
Noi t'abbiamo spezzato il madrigale!  
**EDMONDO:** E vi ringrazio.

**EDMONDO:** Hail the lovely evening that descends  
accompanied by breezes and stars.  
Hail! Endearing to poets and lovers!  
**STUDENTS:** And to thieves and drunks!  
We've interrupted your madrigal!  
**EDMONDO:** And I thank you for that!

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#### TRACK 31

**STUDENTS:** Puntate! Carte! Un asso!  
**LESCAUT:** Un asso? Mio signore, un fante!  
Errore, errore!  
**STUDENTS:** È vero, un fante. Siete un maestro!  
**LESCAUT:** Celiante! Un dilettante.  
**STUDENTS:** A noi, v'invito, banco!  
**LESCAUT:** Carte!  
**GERONTE:** Amico, io pago prima e poche ciarle!  
Una carozza e cavalli che volino  
siccome il vento. Fra un'ora!

**STUDENTS:** Let's play! Cards! An ace!  
**LESCAUT:** An ace? Sir, a jack!  
That's a mistake, a mistake!  
**STUDENTS:** He's right! A jack! You're a pro!  
**LESCAUT:** You're kidding! An amateur.  
**STUDENTS:** Come join us! I'm the banker.  
**LESCAUT:** Cards!  
**GERONTE:** My friend. I'll pay you first—just don't say a word.  
I need a coach and horses that  
fly like the wind—in one hour!

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#### TRACK 32

**CHORUS:** Che languore nello sguardo!  
Che dolcezza! Che carezza!  
Troppo è bella!  
Pare stella!  
Che candori! Che tesori!  
Quella bocca baci scocca!  
Se sorride stella pare!  
**GERONTE:** Troppo è bella!  
Si ribella la parola e canta e vanta!  
**MANON:** Lodi aurate, mormorate or mi vibrano d'intorno;  
vostri cori adulatori, su, frenate! Ah!  
**GERONTE:** Voi mi fate spasimare, delirare!  
**CHORUS:** La deità siete del giorno!  
Della notte ell'è regina!

**CHORUS:** What languor in her look!  
What sweetness! What a caress!  
She's too beautiful!  
She's like a star!  
What purity! What treasures!  
This mouth explodes with kisses.  
She smiles as brightly as a star!  
**GERONTE:** She's too beautiful.  
I praise her in words and song and it's not enough!  
**MANON:** Golden praise surrounds me.  
Your voices flatter me—stop it!  
**GERONTE:** You make me delirious with desire!  
**CHORUS:** The goddess of day!  
The queen of the night!



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## TRACK 33—PART I

CHORUS OF CITIZENS: Udiste! Che avvenne? Fu un ratto?  
Rivolta? Fuggiva una donna! Più d'una!  
La folta tenebra protesse laggiù i rapitori!

SERGEANT: Il passo m'apprite!

COMMANDER: È pronta la nave. L'appello affrettate!

CITIZENS: Silenzio! L'appello cominciano già.

SERGEANT: Rosetta!

YOUNG MEN IN THE CHORUS: Eh, che aria!

OTHERS IN CHORUS: È un amore!

SERGEANT: Madelòn!

SOME OF THE CITIZENS: Ah, qui sei ridotta!

SOME OF THE WOMEN: Che riso insolente!

SERGEANT: Manon!

SOME OF THE OLD MEN: Chissà? Una sedotta.

\*\*[PART II BEGINS HERE]

SERGEANT: Ninetta!

\*\*\*[PART III BEGINS HERE]

WOMEN: Madonna è dolente!

SERGEANT: Caton!

YOUNG MEN: Affè che dolore!

SERGEANT: Regina!

OTHERS: Che incesso!

SERGEANT: Claretta!

OTHERS: È una dea!

SERGEANT: Violetta!

CHORUS OF CITIZENS: Did you hear what happened? Was it rape?  
A revolt? Did a woman escape? More than one?

The dark night protected the kidnappers!

SERGEANT: Here come the prisoners!

COMMANDER: The ship is ready. Get the roll-call going!

CITIZENS: Silence! The roll-call is starting!

SERGEANT: Rosetta!

YOUNG MEN IN THE CHORUS: Hey, what an attitude!

OTHERS IN CHORUS: She's a love!

SERGEANT: Madelòn!

SOME OF THE CITIZENS: Ah, you're cut down to size!

SOME OF THE WOMEN: What an insolent laugh!

SERGEANT: Manon!

SOME OF THE OLD MEN: Who's that? She was seduced!

SERGEANT: Ninetta!

WOMEN: A sorrowful madonna!

SERGEANT: Caton!

YOUNG MEN: For sure, so sad!

SERGEANT: Regina!

OTHERS: What pride!

SERGEANT: Claretta!

OTHERS: A goddess!

SERGEANT: Violetta!

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## TRACK 33—PART II

CITIZENS: È bella davvero!

LESCAUT: Costei? V'è un mistero!

CITIZENS: Sedotta? Tradita?

LESCAUT: Costei fu rapita fanciulla all'amore  
d'un vago garzone.

CITIZENS: Che infame, che orrore!

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CHORUS: Ah! Fa compassione.

LESCAUT: Rapita alle nozze e all'orgia  
ed a sozze carezze gittata!

CITIZENS: Ah! Sempre così!

LESCAUT: Pel gaudio d'un dì di vecchio signore.

Poi, sazio, cacciata!

Vedete quel pallido che presso le sta?

Lo sposo è quel misero.

CITIZENS: Ah! Inver fa pietà!

LESCAUT: Così, fra catene, nel fango avvilita,  
rivede e rinviene la sposa rapita!

CITIZENS: She's truly beautiful!

LESCAUT: Her? It's a mystery!

CITIZENS: Seduced? Betrayed?

LESCAUT: This is a girl who was stolen away  
from the love a boy.

CITIZENS: What infamy! What a horror!

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CHORUS: Ah! Have compassion!

LESCAUT: Stolen away from marriage and abandoned  
to an orgy of filthy caresses.

CITIZENS: Ah! It's always that way!

LESCAUT: For the brief thrills of an old man.

Then, sated, he tossed her out!

Do you see that pale fellow next to her?

That's her husband, that miserable guy.

CITIZENS: Ah! Truly pitiful!

LESCAUT: He comes and sees his wife like this again,  
in chains, in the mud, humiliated.

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### TRACK 33—PART III:

**MANON:** Des Grieux, fra poco lungi sarò.  
Questo è il destino mio.  
E te perduto per sempre avrò!  
Ultimo bene! Addio!  
Alla tua casa riedi!  
Un giorno potrai ancor amar!  
Devi Manon scordar!  
Forse abbastanza non fosti amato!  
Questo è il rimorso mio!  
Ma tu perdona, mio amor, ah!  
Amore immenso, addio!  
**DES GRIEUX:** Guardami e vedi  
com'io soggiaccio a questa angoscia amara, ah!  
Ogni pensiero si scioglie in pianto!

**MANON:** Des Grieux, I'll be far from here soon.  
This is my destiny.  
And I will have lost you forever.  
My ultimate good one! Farewell!  
Go home!  
One day, you'll be able to love again!  
You must forget Manon!  
Perhaps I didn't love you enough!  
This is my remorse.  
But you forgive me, my love—ah!  
My great love—farewell!  
**DES GRIEUX:** Look at me! See how  
I subject myself to this bitter anguish—ah!  
Every thought dissolves in tears!

### RESOURCE FOR COMING ATTRACTION

#### Fugue State

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### TRACK 34

**GERONTE:** Affè madamigella, or comprendo  
il perchè di nostr'attesa!

**GERONTE:** Aha, young lady! Now I understand  
why we've been waiting!

### RESOURCE FOR COMING ATTRACTION

#### In-Between Music

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### TRACK 36:

**DES GRIEUX:** Nell'occhio tuo profondo io leggo il mio destin.

**DES GRIEUX:** In the depths of your eyes I read my destiny.

# At the Met: The Name Game

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: *LIVE IN HD*  
MANON LESCAUT, FEBRUARY 16, 2008

NAME

CLASS

TEACHER

Consider this activity sheet a scorecard. Mark a line diagonally through one box on the left-hand grid every time you hear des Grieux call Manon Lescaut by her name. Mark a diagonal line in one box on the right-hand grid whenever you hear Manon call des Grieux by his name. After the opera, answer the questions at the bottom of the page.

Des Grieux says “Manon”


HOW MANY TIMES DID  
DES GRIEUX CALL MANON  
BY HER NAME? \_\_\_\_\_

Manon says “des Grieux”


HOW MANY TIMES DID  
MANON CALL DES GRIEUX  
BY HIS NAME? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think this is significant? \_\_\_\_\_ Does it tell us anything about these people? \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

# Manon Lescaut: My Highs & Lows

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: *LIVE IN HD*

FEBRUARY 16, 2008

CONDUCTED BY JAMES LEVINE

DIRECTED BY GINA LAPINSKI

REVIEWED BY

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THE STARS		
	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
KARITA MATTILA AS MANON LESCAUT	*****	
MARCELLO GIORDANI AS DES GRIEUX	*****	
DWAYNE CROFT AS LESCAUT	*****	
DALE TRAVIS AS GERONTE	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	SINGING	SET DESIGN/ STAGING
DES GRIEUX'S SONG TO THE VILLAGE GIRLS	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
THE ARRIVAL OF LESCAUT AND MANON	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
DES GRIEUX'S ARIA ABOUT MANON	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
GERONTE'S SCHEME	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
DES GRIEUX AND MANON'S ESCAPE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
MANON'S DRESSING SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
THE ATTEMPT TO LEAVE GERONTE'S HOUSE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
THE PRISONERS' ROLL CALL	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
MANON'S DEATH SCENE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			

