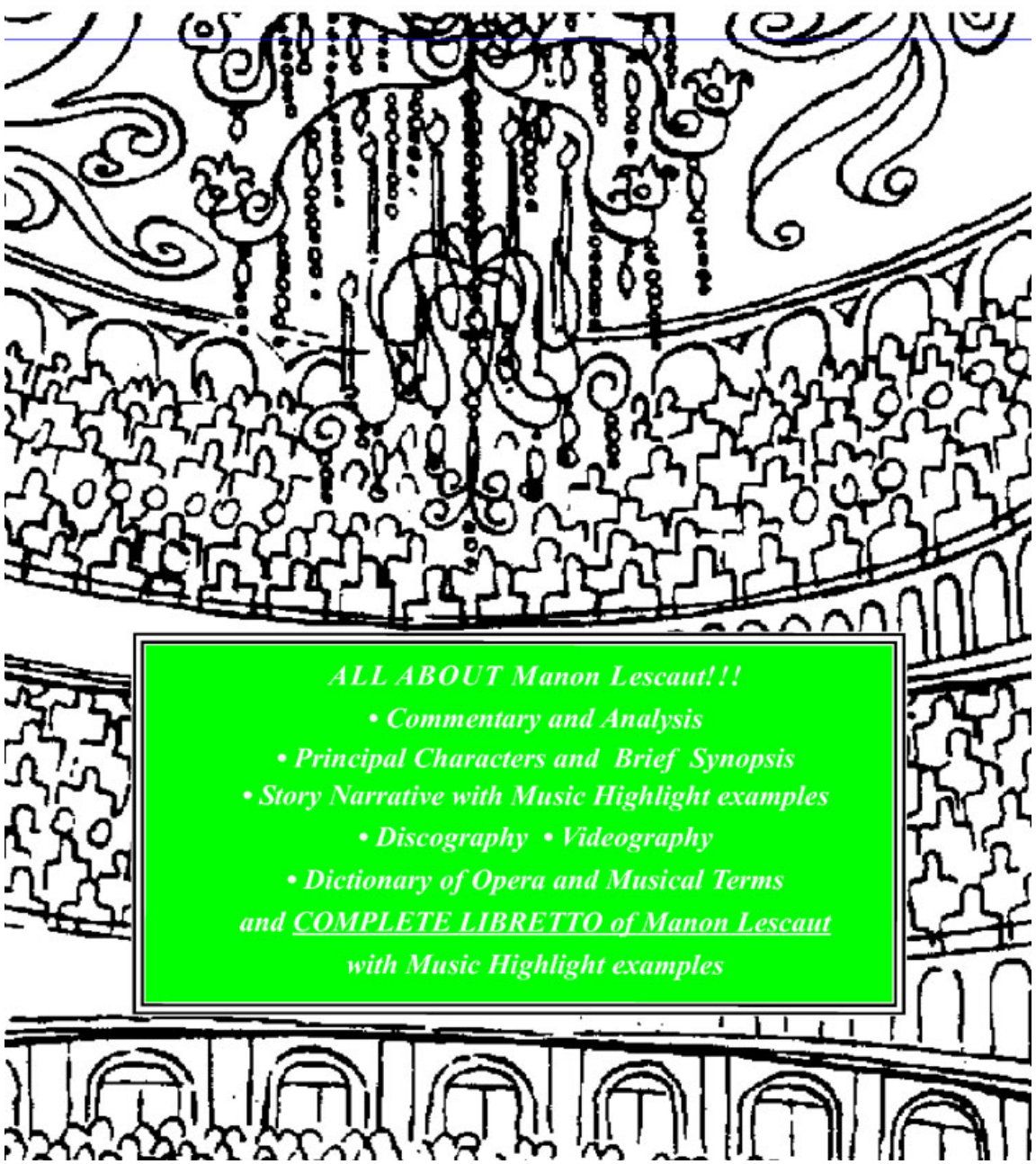


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Puccini's
Manon Lescaut

OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY™ SERIES

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Opera Journeys™ Publishing / Miami, Florida

Contents

a Prelude....	Page 9
<i>Manon Lescaut</i>: Provenance	Page 11
Commentary and Analysis	Page 13
Principal Characters in <i>Manon Lescaut</i>	Page 27
Brief Story Synopsis	Page 27
Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples	Page 29
Libretto with Music Highlight Examples	Page 39
Act I	Page 41
Act II	Page 54
Intermezzo	Page 71
Act III	Page 72
Act IV	Page 80
Discography	Page 85
Videography	Page 89
Dictionary of Opera and Musical Terms	Page 93

a prelude...
to **OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY's**
Manon Lescaut

Manon Lescaut was Puccini's first great success, an explosion of youthful passion and vitality that prompted George Bernard Shaw to comment: "Puccini looks to me more like the heir of Verdi than any of his rivals."

OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY explores Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, and features an in depth *Commentary and Analysis* that includes an overview of the opera's background and original literary source, the genesis of Puccini's opera, and insightful drama and character analysis. Also featured are the *Principal Characters in Manon Lescaut*, a *Brief Story Synopsis*, and *Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples*.

The *Libretto* for *Manon Lescaut* has been newly translated by the Opera Journeys staff with specific emphasis on retaining a literal translation, but also with the objective to provide a faithful translation in modern and contemporary English; in this way, the substance of the opera becomes more intelligible. To enhance educational and study objectives, the *Libretto* contains music highlight examples interspersed within the opera's exposition.

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The opera art form is the sum of many artistic expressions: theatrical drama, music, scenery, poetry, dance, acting and gesture. In opera, it is the composer who is the dramatist, using the emotive power of his music to express intense, human conflicts. Words evoke thought, but music evokes feelings; opera's sublime fusion of words, music, and all the theatrical arts provides powerful theater, an impact on one's sensibilities that can reach into the very depths of the human soul.

Manon Lescaut is a magnificent operatic invention, a towering tribute to the art form as well as to the budding genius of Giacomo Puccini.

Burton D. Fisher

Editor

OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY

Manon Lescaut

Opera in Italian in four acts

**Music
by
Giacomo Puccini**

**Libretto by Ruggero Leoncavallo, Domenico Oliva,
Marco Praga, Giuseppe Giacosa, Luigi Illica,
and Giulio Ricordi, after
L'histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut (1731),
a novel by Abbé Prévost.**

**Premiere: Teatro Regio, Turin, Italy
February, 1893**

Commentary and Analysis

The icon of Italian opera during the latter part of the nineteenth century was Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), composer of 28 operas: his crown passed to Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924), whose operatic pen continued the great Italian opera tradition, in which lyricism and melody dominated the art form.

Puccini was born into a family of musicians, preceded by generations of prominent church organists and composers from his native Lucca, Italy, a part of the Tuscany region. His operatic epiphany occurred at the age of eighteen when he heard a performance of Verdi's *Aida*, an experience that served to inspire and convince the young Puccini to become an opera composer. With aid from Queen Margherita of Italy, and supplementary funds from a great uncle, Puccini progressed to the Milan Conservatory.

Puccini eventually studied under the renowned musician and teacher, Amilcare Ponchielli, the composer of *La Gioconda* (1876). Ponchielli became Puccini's mentor, astutely recognizing his young student's extraordinary orchestral and symphonic imagination, and his harmonic and melodic inventiveness, resources that would become the musical trademarks and prime characteristics of Puccini's mature compositional style.

Puccini was also fortunate to have been exposed to a wide range of dramatic plays that were presented in his hometown by distinguished touring companies: works by the Italian playwrights Vittorio Alfieri and Carlo Goldoni, the French writers Alexandre Dumas, father and son, and the extremely popular plays of the late nineteenth-century realist, Victorien Sardou. Those early theatrical experiences instilled and nurtured Puccini's acute sense of drama, a talent that he eventually expressed in his operatic works with brilliance.

In July 1883, Puccini received his diploma in composition from the Milan Conservatory; he was awarded a bronze medal for his thesis composition, *Capriccio Sinfonico*, an instrumental piece that was performed by a student orchestra conducted by the celebrated Maestro, Franco Faccio. The *Capriccio Sinfonico* was a genuine success, receiving praise from Filippo Filippi, a severe and respected critic of *La Perseveranza*, who specifically noted the young composer's "definite and rare musical temperature, especially symphonic," and his "unity of style, personality, character." *La Gazetta Musicale*, published by the House of Ricordi, recommended the piece to the attention of discriminate musicians.

In that same year, the Sonzogno publishing firm organized a one-act opera competition. The judges on the committee were renowned teachers and composers, among them, Puccini's own teacher and advocate, Amilcare Ponchielli, who urged Puccini to write an opera for the Sonzogno competition; he assisted him in securing the talents of the versifier, Ferdinando Fontana, who actually had a libretto on hand, *Le Villi*, ("The Witches"), a phantasmagoric romantic tale about abandoned young women who die of lovesickness.

Fontana's libretto for *Le Villi* was strongly influenced by the German legends of Lorelei and Undine, as well as *Über Deutschland II: Elementargeister und Dämonen* (1834), an essay about phantasmagoric spirits by the renowned lyric poet, Heinrich Heine. In 1841, Adam converted Heine's story into the celebrated ballet, *Giselle ou Les Willis*.

Puccini composed *Le Villi*, a one-act opera, and submitted it to the Sonzogno competition; its plot was severely compressed, and certain dramatic episodes of the Heine story were excised. Nevertheless, Puccini explained those elements in musical terms: a narrated Intermezzo underscored with music explained Anna's abandonment; the courtesan's seduction of Roberto in Mainz, Roberto's subsequent betrayal of Anna, Anna's vigil in waiting for Roberto's return, and Anna's death from lovesickness; "L'Abbandono" ("The

Abandonment” or “The Desertion”). And in Part II of the Intermezzo, “La Tregenda” (“The Witches’ Sabbath” or “The Specter”), the narrator explained the legend of the Willis of the Black Forest, and how they found faithless lovers and punished them by luring them into a frenzied dance of doom, the legend again underscored by Puccini’s Intermezzo music.

Le Villi was a youthful work that was musically and dramatically far removed from the poignant sentimentalism that would later become the composer’s trademark; it did not even receive honorable mention by the Sonzogno committee. Nevertheless, *Le Villi* made a profound impression on two of the most influential musical powers in Italy of the time: the music publisher Giulio Ricordi, who recognized the young Puccini’s talent to write music drama; and Arrigo Boito, the influential musician and composer (*Mefistofele*-1868), who would later achieve even greater fame as the librettist for Verdi’s *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893). Ricordi and Boito recognized Puccini’s melodic inventiveness, and certainly in hindsight, their instincts did not fail them.

Ricordi and Boito championed *Le Villi* by raising a fund to finance its production. Ricordi bought the rights to the opera, luring the young composer from his publishing rival, Sonzogno. The original one-act version of *Le Villi* was first staged on May 31, 1884 at the Teatro Dal Verme, a small theater in Milan. The opera received enthusiastic acclaim by both press and public, and even earned the admiration of Verdi himself. But like Verdi’s *Nabucco*, *Le Villi* was viewed as a musically eclectic and stylistically conventional creation of a young composer; nevertheless, it was an acceptable work that suggested a promising blueprint for a future composer.

In *Le Villi*, Puccini had not as yet established his unique musical signature, and many of its musical elements suggested the styles of Verdi, Bizet, and Wagner. Nevertheless, in *Le Villi* Puccini significantly demonstrated his ability to characterize and create emotional intensity in musico-dramatic terms; in hindsight, the score is an interesting study of the immature inventiveness of a musical dramatist en route to maturity. There are many moments in the score in which Puccini demonstrated his unique talent to invent poignant melody: a lyricism and melodiousness that is personal, flexible, intensely singable and enchanting to the ear, and always carefully polished and delicately harmonized. His dramatic style effectively combined a gentle melancholy with violent outbursts in the verismo style. Yet, *Le Villi* was indeed the output of a young Puccini, his acute sense of drama in its infancy.

Ricordi lured Puccini with a commission for a new opera, and offered him an allowance of 300 lire per month for a year; but the publisher also insisted that Puccini lengthen *Le Villi* to two acts. The two-act revised *Le Villi* was produced at the Teatro Reggio in Turin on December 1884, and at La Scala in January 1885, some seven months after its virtual denunciation by the judges in the Sonzogno contest.

The theme of *Le Villi* is the betrayal of love: ultimately the death of love became the emotional core and Puccini’s muse for the poignant lyricism he would create in his eleven succeeding operas. It could be hypothesized that subconsciously Puccini was seeking the meaning of love: his first 6 operas deal with love destroyed by cruel deterministic forces; *Le Villi*, *Manon Lescaut*, *La Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*. In somewhat of a transition from portraying the agonizing deaths of his frail heroines, after *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini composed *La Fanciulla del West*, a story in which love triumphs because of a woman’s sacrifice. Interestingly, an underlying theme of each of the three one-act operas of *Il Trittico* involves the love of children: *Il Tabarro*, *Suor Angelica*, and *Gianni Schicchi*. Nevertheless, Puccini completed his life’s oeuvre with doubt about the fulfillment of love: *Turandot* suggests conflicting elements of love; Calaf’s courage, but Liù’s sacrifice.

The success of *Le Villi* (1884) established Puccini as a promising young composer on the Italian opera horizon; with Ricordi's commission for a new opera in hand, he immediately embarked on a search of a new subject to dramatize musically. Ferdinand Fontana, the librettist of *Le Villi*, proposed Alfred de Musset's, "La Coupe et les Lèvres," ("Between Cup and Lips") (1832); Puccini's opera would be called *Edgar*; the name of its principal character.

Musset (1810-1857) was a French Romantic poet and playwright whose oeuvre shows strong influences of Shakespeare and Schiller; he wrote the first modern dramas in the French language. However, much of Musset's legacy stems from his intense love affair with George Sand between the years 1833 and 1835, the inspiration for "La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle" (1835), a fictionalized account of the affair that reflects the "mal du siècle," the moral disillusionment during the period of strife between republicans and monarchists: the essential underlying story that Puccini would later musically dramatize in *Tosca* (1900).

Musset's "La Coupe et les Lèvres" was more effectively a literary drama rather than a stage work; it was a vehicle for the writer to vent his dark meditations on life and love. The hero of the Musset drama, Frank (Edgar in the opera), expresses the poet's romantic agonies; he possesses many characteristics of Goethe's Faust, a confounded and self-questioning man, seeking the essence of his soul, the meaning of life, and spiritual fulfillment.

Edgar is essentially a melodrama involving a rivalry between two men for a seductive Moorish woman that erupts into powerful passions of betrayal and revenge, and ultimately reconciliation and redemption. In his quest for truth, Frank (Edgar) embarks on an adventurous military career, but he quickly becomes involved with a mysterious courtesan, Monna Belcolore. He soon tires of her charms and becomes disgusted with his wasteful life. In his search for the purification of his soul he returns to his native village in the Tyrol, where he falls in love with the innocent Déidamia, a sweetheart from his early youth. But just before their wedding, the bride is stabbed to death by the avenging courtesan, Monna Belcolore: thus the play's title, "Between Cup and Lips."

Librettist Ferdinando Fontana performed extensive surgery in transforming Musset's original five-act verse drama into a libretto that would be adaptable for musico-dramatic purposes. The original play contained an intensive mixture of extensive introspection and melodrama; there were interminable monologues, exalted lyrical poetry and rhetorical bombast, and a haphazard succession of scenes. In excising much of Musset's introspective scenes, the opera's characters became basic and uncomplicated, deprived of the aura of mysticism in Musset's original play. In Puccini's opera, the two heroines, Déidamia and Monna Belcolore are re-christened with names indicating their character and temperaments: Fidelia and Tigrana.

Primarily, Fontana concentrated on retaining the melodramatic elements of Musset's play: the spectacular scenes in which Edgar (Frank) sets fire to his home; the mock funeral and its subsequent coup de théâtre; and the stabbing of Fidelia (Déidamia). Ultimately, the libretto became pure melodrama and spectacle, a work in the tradition of Meyerbeer, that Wagner would later deem effects without causes.

Fontana's ultimate dramatic concoction was far more dramatic and larger in scope than his previous *Le Villi*, a reason perhaps that Puccini was initially reluctant to tackle the subject. Nevertheless, the plot was saturated with violent contrasts of character and situations, and to do justice to the plot, Puccini faced the challenge of extending the range of his creative capabilities.

In July of 1884, after *Le Villi*'s premiere, Puccini's mother died, and her death affected him very deeply; their bond was remarkably close and affectionate, and the young composer was devastated. He placed the laurel wreath that he had received the night of the triumph of *Le Villi* on her grave, and then buried himself in his work. Five years elapsed between the premieres of *Le Villi* and *Edgar*, a period of severe tribulations in both Puccini's private and professional life.

Soon thereafter, Puccini eloped with Elvira Gemignani, the wife of a former school friend, but a woman he knew before her marriage to Narciso Gemignani, a wholesale grocer. Puccini had been giving Elvira singing and piano lessons. Very soon, teacher and pupil fell madly in love. Elvira left her husband and eloped with Puccini to Milan, bringing her young daughter with her: Puccini was 26 years old, and Elvira was 24 years old.

Elvira is reputed to have been a woman of impressive and striking beauty: she was tall, full figured with a dignified posture, a face of classical proportions, dark shining eyes, and rich, dark-blond hair. Yet Elvira's spirit and physical beauty were not commensurate: as the years passed, she grew morose, bitter, and experienced extreme mood swings, most of them gloomy and despairing.

Puccini was a tall and handsome man, his eyes bearing a certain dreamy, melancholy aura. As his wealth and success grew, he dressed elegantly: his manner was dignified and aristocratic, prompting Ricordi to nickname him the "Doge." Many women found this handsome and world-famous man irresistible: his conquests were easy and numerous, and Elvira began to develop and impassioned jealousy of her husband's relationships and escapades.

In Puccini's provincial hometown of Lucca his "living in sin" with Elvira was considered scandalous. Certain relatives became inflamed and accused him of bringing shame and disgrace to the honorable Puccini name; a great uncle immediately demanded repayment and interest of the monies lent him to study at the Milan Conservatoire; and the family demanded that money be sent to his brother Michele, who had emigrated to South America and was virtually destitute while eking out a living as a singing teacher.

Puccini had difficulty coping with his family's criticism: he was extremely sensitive and emotionally fragile, and he reacted by becoming fiercely despondent. His family's animosity affected him emotionally and impeded his progress on *Edgar*, an endeavor that began in the summer of 1884 and lasted until the autumn of 1888: a snail's pace by any standard. And Puccini also had difficulties with his egotistical librettist: Fontana was convinced of the excellence of his libretto and obstinately refused to accept Puccini's various suggestions.

Elvira was insensitive to the composer's difficulties in completing the opera: she constantly nagged him with the reminder that Verdi had composed *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata* in just a few years. And Puccini was also surrounded by young children, an environment that was not conducive to creative invention: Elvira's daughter, and a son born to them.

Nevertheless, in 1884, Puccini had the full libretto of *Edgar* in his hands.

Edgar's premiere in 1889 at La Scala was a disappointment; it received only two more performances. The critics recognized Puccini's technical advances since *Le Villi*, particularly his effective orchestration, harmonic advancements, and some of its melodies: Edgar's impassioned aria, "O soave vision," the Requiem music, and Fidelia's arias. But essentially, the critics considered the opera mediocre.

The failure of *Edgar* lies in its libretto, not Puccini's music. After the premiere failure Fontana refused to consider changes; he was abandoned, but not *Edgar*. Ricordi, the architect

of Puccini's career, was determined to rescue the opera. At the publisher's instigation, Puccini revised the opera in the summer of 1889. The revised *Edgar* was first given at Ferrara on February 28, 1892, and despite excellent artists, *Edgar* failed to make an impression; its condensation from four acts to three could not redeem or improve its fortunes.

Edgar is defective dramatically. It is a melodrama involving the conflict of a man torn between two loves, one good, and the other evil. But its libretto is too melodramatic and lacks in depth character development.

The love-triangle plot of *Edgar* echoes Bizet's *Carmen* as well as Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. In the *Carmen* analogy, the Moorish enchantress Tigrana corresponds to the gypsy Carmen; Fidelia to Micaëla; Edgar to Don José; and Frank associated loosely with the Toreador. But Tigrana does not possess the allure and cunning of Carmen, and the love triangle in *Edgar* does not develop the avenging passion of Don José.

There are perhaps more resemblances in *Edgar* to Wagner's *Tannhäuser*: Edgar, like Tannhäuser, is incapable of resisting the pleasures of carnal love offered by Tigrana (Venus in *Tannhäuser*), but like Wagner's hero, he eventually tires of his lustful life. But Tigrana does not exude the sensual allure of *Tannhäuser*'s Venus, nor does Edgar confront the intense inner struggles of the hero Tannhäuser. Although Edgar ultimately finds redemption, the love of Fidelia does not possess the spiritual power of Elisabeth.

Although Puccini was certainly not at a loss for musical ideas in *Edgar*, so much of the score is reminiscent of the style of other composers: in the music of *Edgar* one can hear echoes of Verdi's Manrico (*Il Trovatore*), Don Alvaro (*La Forza del Destino*), and even Puccini's later Des Grieux (*Manon Lescaut*) and Luigi (*Il Tabarro*). And in many of the choral episodes, likewise echoes of Verdi and Ponchielli (Puccini's teacher) can be heard: the concluding ensemble of Act I, "La voce d'un vecchio," the martial conclusion of Act II, and the Friar's revelation of Edgar's crimes are more reminiscent of the Verdi of *La Forza del Destino* than vintage Puccini.

In later years Puccini violently disowned *Edgar*. At one time he presented his friend Sybil Seligman with a vocal score of *Edgar* with the inscription: "E Dio ti guardi da quest'opera!" ("And may God preserve you from this opera!")

Edgar was a failure, but its composer proved not to be failure. The opera has interest as a study of the growth and evolution of Puccini's dramatic style; it is not a testimony to his inventive powers, but rather, a work that represented a hope for the future.

After the failure of *Edgar*, Puccini became disconsolate and despairing; he was desperate to compose a successful opera, and his personal life was in turmoil; in 1890, he learned that his younger brother Michele, who had immigrated to South America, died of yellow fever, and he and Elvira were constantly being driven apart, because they feared Gemignani's retribution.

On the contemporary opera horizon, Verdi had recently achieved overwhelming acclaim with *Otello* (1887), Mascagni with *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890), and Leoncavallo with *I Pagliacci* (1892).

Ricordi's faith in his young protégé remained undaunted, and it would be triumphantly vindicated by the immediate success of Puccini's next and third opera: *Manon Lescaut*. The publisher exerted his powerful influence and assembled Italy's best poets and dramatists for his protégé's forthcoming operas. Nevertheless, the creation of the *Manon Lescaut* libretto became a melodrama of operatic proportions, a continuous struggle confounded by feuds and disagreements between Puccini and the considerable group of five librettists assembled: the poet and composer Ruggiero Leoncavallo, who Puccini eventually fired; Giuseppe Giacosa,

the distinguished poet, scenarist, dramatist and man of letters; the critic and playwright Domenico Oliva, who eventually quit; the dramatist Marco Praga, who also resigned; the renowned poet, playwright and librettist, Luigi Illica, who was perhaps the major force in saving the opera; and even Giulio Ricordi and Puccini himself made contributions to the libretto.

But despite enormous conflicts among Puccini and his librettists, *Manon Lescaut* finally premiered at Turin, Italy, on February 1, 1893: at the time, Milan's La Scala was preparing for the premiere of Verdi's *Falstaff*. *Manon Lescaut* was a raging success, the critics and public unanimous in their praise of its youthful vitality and its inventive passion and ardor. In London, the eminent critic, George Bernard Shaw, noted that "Puccini looks to me more like the heir of Verdi than any of his rivals." With *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini was catapulted to recognition and respect in the opera world.

Manon Lescaut is based on the Abbé Prévost's (1697-1763) eighteenth-century novel, *L'histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* ("The Story of Cavalier des Grieux and Manon Lescaut.") *Manon Lescaut* became the first of many amoral femmes fatales, women of easy virtue who destroy decent men, transforming them into criminals. Among her descendants are Mérimée's *Carmen*, Wedekind's *Lulu*, Hugo's *Marion Delorme*, and Dumas's *Marguerite*.

Prévost's novel had achieved classical status, and its underlying story held profound relevance for its audiences in the next century. During the fin de siècle, the end of the nineteenth century, the zeitgeist of the era had become a profound sense of spiritual disarray, the result of transforming social and economic upheavals emanating from dramatic ideological and scientific discoveries: those revelations of Marx, Darwin, and Freud. Contemporary European civilization began to become aware of its cultural and spiritual decadence, provoking an assault by intellectuals and thinkers that was intended to raise consciousness. Nietzsche, the quintessential cultural pessimist of the late nineteenth century, identified the era as "the transvaluation of values," in effect, his recognition that society had lost its moral and ethical foundations.

The French Revolution's promise of democracy and economic and social progress had failed; and social, political, and ideological perplexities had evolved from colonialism, industrialization, and materialism. Society's utopian dreams had failed; they became transformed into anxieties. Nietzsche condemned his contemporary civilization's values and virtues, and then metaphorically proclaimed the death of God, a caution to his present-day society that its degeneration and loss of spiritual and human values required renewal and rebirth.

Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut* story addressed the crisis of human morality; it retained its popularity during the late nineteenth century, because it was profoundly relevant to the fundamental anxieties of its bourgeois audience: it served to provoke, tease, and raise its audience's awareness of the era's moral conflicts. The tragedy within the Prévost story focused on flawed human character: in a certain sense, it was a plea to contemporary society to raise its moral sensibilities and values: a symbolic mirror for its readers to peer into their inner souls, identify their foibles and frailties, and resurrect their spiritual values.

Prévost was a priest who had been excommunicated from the Benedictine order for blasphemy; he spent most of his picaresque life as a renegade in exile. In 1731, he wrote his singular masterpiece, the novel entitled *L'histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* ("The Story of Cavalier des Grieux and Manon Lescaut"), an entirely autobiographical recollection of the experiences of his turbulent youth that he presented in a series of episodes occurring around 1715, the time of the notoriously corrupt Paris of the Regency of Louis XIV.

Prévost's primary theme portrayed the classic conflict of the sacred versus the profane, the tension between reason and passion, and virtue versus vice. The story's focus was the fatal fascination of a young nobleman (des Grieux) for a seductive and perfidious woman (Manon Lescaut). In the end, it was a tragedy about human character flaws and frailties, but with the customary dignity and moral purpose usually inherent in French classical drama.

Prévost's novel maintained strong popular appeal for upwards of two centuries, eventually becoming the underlying literary source for many operas: Auber's *Manon Lescaut* with Scribe as the librettist (1856); Massenet's *Manon* (1884); Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (1893); and more recently, Henze's *Boulevard Solitude* (1951).

The novel read almost like a play, its action swift, direct, simple, and with few superfluities. In style, it was a narration within a narration, a very similar structure to that of Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen*, the literary basis for Bizet's opera: like Don José of *Carmen*, des Grieux meets the narrator, and then recounts the story of his love and adventures with Manon Lescaut. In the Prévost novel, the central character is des Grieux, initially a fine, upright young man, who gradually becomes destroyed by his obsession for the seductive and tantalizingly beautiful, but thoroughly unscrupulous, Manon Lescaut.

Des Grieux is caught in a struggle between his sense of right and his overpowering instincts; his inability to act with reason leads to his psychological and moral degeneration. However, in the moralistic sense, Prévost describes the eventual downfall of both lovers as the logical outcome of their inability to rectify — or control — their character flaws. Nevertheless, Prévost evokes a deep sympathy for des Grieux — the author himself — because his weakness is that of universal human nature. In that sense, man is capable of acting unwittingly when he is overcome by love: des Grieux's tragic flaw is that he is driven by pure emotion and passion to possess Manon; like Carmen's power over José, Manon becomes des Grieux's femme fatale.

The entire tragedy in the story — for both Manon and des Grieux — involves their surrender and capitulation to instinct. In the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment ennobled reason as the path to universal truth: Romanticism later rejected Enlightenment ideology and stressed freedom and feeling. But during the late nineteenth century, when society was reeling from the ideological shocks and transformations attributed to the revelations of Darwin and Freud, man was ultimately judged as a creature of pure instinct. So the Manon Lescaut story, although written in the eighteenth century, had profound appeal for its nineteenth century audiences: it cautioned against the moral excesses of Romanticism, and castigated and even admonished its audiences against the human consequences and potential fatal destruction that can occur when passions and emotions overcome reason.

Before meeting Manon Lescaut, the young des Grieux, the scion of a fine family, had enrolled in the order of the Knights of Malta, taking his vows of celibacy at the age of seventeen. Initially, the young man was naïve, seemingly giving little thought to the difference between the sexes. But after he met the seductive and perfidious Manon Lescaut, he was overcome by an obsessive fascination and fatal attraction to her, and the entire subsequent story revolves around des Grieux's surrender to temptation: his classic inability to control his compelling passion for Manon. Like Don José in *Carmen*, des Grieux progresses through a deep psychological and moral degeneration, experiencing a continuous inner struggle and conflict between his instincts and reason.

Des Grieux's weakness for Manon causes him to relinquish his promising ecclesiastical career, and ultimately, his life degenerates into corruption and criminality: he becomes a cheating gambler, a thief, a gigolo, and a scoundrel who survives on the money and jewelry the courtesan Manon extracts from her various lovers. And des Grieux plunges ever more deeply into moral corruption, ultimately crowning his newfound criminal career by murdering a prison guard while escaping from jail.

The pathos for des Grieux, a creature of instinct rather than of reason, springs from the fact that while he recognizes Manon's character flaws and faults, he is dominated by uncontrollable subconscious passions that compel him to become enslaved to Manon to the very last moment of her pathetic demise.

Manon is a fascinating illustration of feminine power, as well as frailty. In certain respects, she is like her coarser Spanish cousin, Carmen, a beautiful woman whose seductiveness exerts a terrifying exploitive and manipulative power over men. As such, Manon is an archetypal example of the wicked and evil conquering the weak, and in that sense she shares her personality with many other insidious females in opera: Mélisande, Lulu, and Salome. The renowned writer, Guy de Maupassant, commented that Manon was a woman of "instinctive perfidy.....sincere in her deception and frank in her infamy," certainly the classical and archetypal example of womanhood plunged into the most reprehensible depths of evil: a woman beyond redemption. In Puccini's opera, Manon is eighteen years old.

In her first appearance at the inn at Amiens, she projects naïveté, an innocence that the composer captures in her simple, musically chromatic introduction to des Grieux: "Manon Lescaut mi chiamo" ("My name is Manon Lescaut.")

After meeting des Grieux, Manon becomes confused by stirrings of emotion. She is an unhappy young woman, a victim of her father's will to protect her from the world's evils by sending her to a convent school. The beginning of her tragic destiny occurs when she becomes overcome by fear after learning that the libertine Geronte intends to abduct her: that fear becomes her motivation to escape with the impassioned young des Grieux, a man she has just met and hardly knows.

Manon's brother Lescaut is insidious, despicable, and unconscionable. In Act I, Lescaut betrays his sister's true character when he consoles Geronte after her escape from the inn with des Grieux: "Manon già non si perde. Ma borsa di studente presto rimane al verde. Manon non vuol miserie!" ("Manon is not yet lost. A student's purse will soon be empty, and Manon does not want poverty!") And then Lescaut blatantly manipulates the old Geronte for self-aggrandizement, relishing the benefits he will acquire if he succeeds as his sister's solicitor; he promises Geronte that he will deliver Manon to him as his new mistress; at the same time he congratulates himself for the financial rewards Geronte will pay him for arranging this new relationship.

Similarly, in Act II, Lescaut expresses unabashed pride in having succeeded in arranging a life of splendor for Manon. Nevertheless, des Grieux has now become Lescaut's friend. He has admitted his obsession to win back Manon, and Lescaut has convinced him that he can succeed with wealth; Lescaut has introduced des Grieux to the means to acquire that wealth: gambling — and cheating at cards.

In Act II, Manon expresses the soul of her conflicted character, the underlying theme and tragedy driving the entire story: her ambivalent desire for love as well as material possessions: "In quelle trine morbide" ("In these soft silken drapes and gilded alcove") which expresses her boredom and discontent as old Geronte's mistress that she translates into a yearning for the impassioned love she formerly shared with the young student des Grieux. But just before Manon's dancing lesson, Lescaut astutely recognizes Manon's inner angst — as well as a potential loss to his own financial interests. He philosophically comments, "Una donnina che s'annoia è cosa da far paura!" ("A young woman bored with pleasure flirts with danger!"). It is a prophetic announcement that an unhappy woman is a danger to herself as well as to others. Lescaut, thinking only about protecting his financial interests in his sister's new

courtesan life, immediately rushes off to find des Grieux; he must pacify his sister's anxiety as well as protect his financial interests.

The second part of Act II brings the opera to its peak of conflict and tension; it is here that the young Puccini's musico-dramatic talents explode with music that is saturated with resilient and ardent passions. Prompted by Lescaut, des Grieux suddenly intrudes into Geronte's apartments; he unites with Manon and immediately condemns her for heartlessly abandoning him: much of Puccini's music for des Grieux is declamatory, again echoing the Italian verismo school.

Des Grieux quickly surrenders to the temptation of Manon's charms, thoroughly intoxicated again by the woman who exercises a fatal power over him. It is at this moment that Puccini introduces the "destiny" music, the principal theme of the opera that underscores des Grieux's words "Nell'occhio il tuo profondo io leggo mio destin" ("In your profound eyes I read my destiny."), a musical leitmotif that represents des Grieux's capitulation and the lover's reconciliation; but it is also the music that forecasts the lovers' doom. The theme reappears often: it concludes the Intermezzo played between Acts II and III, underscoring des Grieux's tragic inability to escape from Manon's power and his futile attempts to rescue and save Manon from exportation; and it explodes in the full orchestra at the conclusion of Act III after des Grieux persuades the captain to allow him to board the ship and work as a cabin boy, a moment when the "destiny" theme resonates boldly and triumphantly, seemingly conveying the triumph of love. But it is a moment of tragic irony: Puccini, both the narrator and dramatist of the story, is realizing the powerful underlying text of this story through his equally potent music; he is preparing his audience for the lovers' doom.

In Act III, Puccini brilliantly proved his skills and craftsmanship in ensemble, or concerted scenes: the "Roll-Call of the Prostitutes" is underscored with poignant music that captures the anguish and agony of women whose immoral behavior was condemned; they were unacceptable to French society, but were nevertheless deemed worthy to populate the French colony of Louisiana.

In Act IV, Manon and des Grieux roam a desolate plain outside of New Orleans. Prévost relates that after Manon and des Grieux arrived in New Orleans, the Governor of Louisiana sought the beautiful Manon as a wife for his son. Des Grieux fought a duel with the Governor's son and thought that he had killed him. Fearful, both Manon and des Grieux escaped from New Orleans, which explains their final act appearance as fugitives seeking food and water on a desolate plain.

Manon was trapped by her ambivalent conflicts: love versus her obsession for material possessions, a character flaw that is brilliantly portrayed at the conclusion of Act II when Manon flaunts anger to collect her jewels before escaping from the police. In the end, Manon became a victim of her own desires, a pathetic prisoner of fate; she was ultimately condemned as a thief. Des Grieux degenerated as he followed the perfidious Manon down the road of immorality and amorality: both became victims of instincts and uncontrollable passions.

But Abbé Prévost was a man trained in the morality of religion, and quite logically, his novel dealt with cautionary morality: his characters were surrounded by an aura of sin, and in the religious context, the wages of sin must result in death and damnation.

The material attractions of Paris destroyed Manon, as well as des Grieux. For a while, Manon succeeded in her hedonistic ambitions, but in the end, Prévost condemned her as a sinner who must seek absolution for her transgressions; just before Manon's pathetic demise in the final scene, she repents for her sins and prays for forgiveness. But *Manon Lescaut* is an

opera composed by a young and impassioned Italian; quite appropriately, Manon's repentance is secondary to immortalizing her profound love for des Grieux:

"Le mie colpe, travolgerà l'oblio, ma l'amor mio, non muore."
("My faults will be forgotten, but my love will never die.")

Manon's ambivalence — her yearning for love that conflicted with her desire for material possessions — represents a human conflict that is timeless and universal. Those underlying conflicts of the *Manon Lescaut* story bore a particular fascination for nineteenth-century courtesans and the Parisian demimonde, women who sacrificed love for material possessions; to some of those courtesans, Prévost's novel became sacred scripture.

Verdi's *La Traviata* was based on Alexandre Dumas fil's autobiographical story of his brief affair with Marie Duplessis, one of the most notorious courtesans of nineteenth-century Paris. In his novel, Dumas poured out his spurned soul, but at the same time, he idealized Marie, the woman who had caused him so much suffering. Ultimately, Dumas ennobled himself: a victim of his own sentimentality.

In Act III of Verdi's opera, Alfredo (Dumas's Armand) returns to discover a letter from Violetta (Dumas's Marie); it informs him that she is abandoning him and returning to her former life as a courtesan. If Verdi's stage directions are followed, an open book rests on the table next to Violetta's farewell letter: the book is the Abbé Prévost's *L'histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, and the page of the Abbé's novel that is open, summarizes the essence of the entire *Manon Lescaut* story: a story about a beautiful, amoral young courtesan, who is genuinely in love with a man who is unable to provide her the luxury she cannot live without; she selfishly abandons her lover, surrendering to her obsession for material possessions.

"...but can't you see, poor dear soul, that in the condition to which we are reduced, fidelity would be a foolish virtue? Do you think it possible to be loving on an empty stomach? Hunger would cause me some fatal mishap, and one day I would utter my last breath thinking it was a sigh of love..."

Puccini and the French composer, Jules Massenet, were contemporaries, and both attacked the powerful message in Abbé Prévost's novel. Massenet's *Manon* (1884) was composed nine years before Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (1893). The Puccini and Massenet operas are warhorses in the standard opera repertory, and both tell an almost identical story, yet both are inherently different in their musico-dramatic style.

French and Italian opera derive from similar Latin roots and origins, and both usually deal with those same great primal conflicts of the spirit and the flesh: love, lust, greed, betrayal, jealousy, hate, revenge, and murder. But French and Italian opera each possesses its own unique style to express those same basic emotions and passions.

In opera, words become realized through the underlying music; the composer, through his music, is THE dramatist of the story. Italian opera can be extremely direct, and at times excessively declamatory: it tends to be naked in its passions, and most of the time, intensely torrid as it absorbs its audience into its conflicts and tensions. But French opera can generally be more oblique, more subtle, and even at times, excessively refined and sophisticated. Nevertheless, notwithstanding styles and traditions, both musico-dramatic styles express profound emotions and passions, an intensity of expression that enables the audience to think and feel simultaneously: the magnificence of the opera art form.

Massenet has often been called the "French Puccini." Both composers were champions of the Romantic tradition, but each composer expressed his feeling for the *Manon Lescaut* story

with his own unique musical signature. Massenet's music contains a deep poetic feeling, together with graceful, tender, and flowery melodies, an elegance of harmony and orchestration that has at times been described as a "discreet and semi-religious eroticism." And like Puccini, Massenet was an indisputable theatrical craftsman as well as a master of musical characterization.

When Puccini was confronted with the fact that Massenet had already composed an opera based on the Manon Lescaut story, he commented: "Why shouldn't there be two operas about Manon? After all, a woman like Manon could certainly have more than one lover." But musically, the operas are very different: Puccini was a young and hot-blooded Italian of thirty-five years, determined to musically dramatize the story with extroverted passion. Puccini said himself: "Massenet feels the story as a Frenchman, with the powder and the minuets. I shall feel it as an Italian, with desperate passion."

So in the end, Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, unlike the perhaps more sophisticated and refined French version of Massenet, is the antithesis of abstract emotion. Puccini's opera rages with lustful Italian ardor, and he made no attempt to present anything other than an Italian opera in which powerful emotions and passions explode unabashedly.

In Massenet's *Manon*, it is Manon herself who dominates the drama, and her characterization remains true to French traditions and style: her confrontations are subtle and delicate, and any associations with sexuality are discreet and reserved, if not innocent. Puccini's Manon is openly brazen and determined: in her Act II reunion with des Grieux, she uses every weapon in her arsenal of enchantments to seduce and conquer the vengeful des Grieux, and in the finale of Act II, the danger to her life is secondary to her resolve and obsession to collect her jewels.

Puccini portrays des Grieux as an impulsive youth, unrestrained and even hysterical in the expression of his passions, the reason perhaps that much of his music is declamatory rather than lyrical. Massenet's music makes no attempt to overwhelm its audience with extroverted passions: he left that to Puccini.

In *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini discovered his tragic muse: despair in the search for love. In *Manon Lescaut*, overpowering emotions conquer reason, and love becomes doomed by deterministic powers. Like its two predecessors, *Le Villi* and *Edgar*, as well as the succeeding three operas of *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon Lescaut* is an opera about the death of love: that is why these Puccini operas resonate with a profound sense of melancholy and despair; des Grieux laments, "Ansia eterna crudel" ("Eternal, cruel anxiety.") and Cavaradossi similarly laments in *Tosca*, "Muioio disperato" ("I die in despair").

And in *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini found the true inspiration for his magical lyricism: it was the beginning of Puccini's love affair with his tragic heroines, but it was also the moment when a new star became affixed to the opera landscape: a composer who brilliantly portrayed the soul of humanity through incredibly poignant musical inventions of unrivalled beauty.

Principal Characters in *Manon Lescaut*

Brief Story Synopsis

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

Principal Characters in Manon Lescaut

Manon Lescaut, a young woman eighteen years-old	Soprano
Renato des Grieux, a seminary student	Tenor
Lescaut, Manon's brother, Sergeant in the King's Guards	Baritone
Geronte di Ravoit, Treasurer General to the King	Bass
Edmondo, a student and friend of des Grieux	Tenor

Innkeeper, dancing master, lamplighter, Sergeant of the Royal Archers,
a naval captain and sailors, townsfolk, students, courtesans.

TIME: Second half of the 18th century

PLACE: France and America

Brief Story Synopsis

Manon Lescaut is en route to a convent school, escorted by her brother, Lescaut. They arrive by coach at an Inn in Amiens for an overnight stopover. Manon meets the young student, Renato des Grieux, and they fall in love immediately. They learn that Geronte di Ravoit, a lecherous old government official, plans to kidnap the beautiful 18-year old Manon. The newfound lovers steal Geronte's coach and flee to Paris.

Lescaut leads Manon into temptation: the allure of a life of wealth and luxury. Manon quickly abandons des Grieux to become Geronte's mistress. Nevertheless, she is unable to suppress her profound love for des Grieux. Likewise, des Grieux yearns to win back Manon, learning the wiles of gambling to earn his fortune.

Des Grieux steals into Geronte's apartments to meet with Manon. The lovers reunite, vowing eternal love to each other. Geronte unexpectedly arrives and finds them embraced; outraged by Manon's betrayal, he swears vengeance against both Manon and des Grieux. Lescaut arrives to inform them that Geronte has called the police. In a frenzy of fear, Manon delays their escape in order to gather her jewels. Geronte and the police arrive. Manon's jewels, hidden in her cloak, accidentally fall to the floor. Manon is arrested as a thief; des Grieux and Lescaut escape.

Manon is convicted of thievery and sentenced to be deported to the French colony of Louisiana. At the port of Le Havre, Lescaut is unsuccessful in arranging her escape from prison. As Manon is about to board the ship to New Orleans, des Grieux pleads with the ship's captain to allow him to work on the ship; the captain grants des Grieux permission to board the ship.

On a deserted plain near New Orleans, the lovers struggle to survive, lacking food or water. Manon dies of exhaustion and starvation. Overwhelmed by grief, des Grieux collapses on Manon's corpse.

Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples

Act I: A square in the city of Amiens

Soldiers, students, and townsfolk, in a spirit of carefree abandon, pass away a summer evening in a square before an inn at Amiens.

Allegro Brillante



Edmondo, a student, recites a madrigal he has written: an anthem to youth and love.

“Giovanezza è il nostro nome”

Leziosamente
EDMONDO



Gio - va - nez - za è il nostro nome, la speran - za è nostra Iddi - a,
Youth is our name, hope is our goddess,

A fellow student, Renato des Grieux, appears. Des Grieux is pensive, prompting the students to tease him; they suggest that he is sad because he seeks an unattainable love. Des Grieux flirts with the young ladies, trying to learn which one might become his ideal love.

“Tra voi, belle, brune e bionde”

Con grazia
DES GRIEUX



Tra voi, bel - le, brune e bion - de si nasconde giovinetta vaga e vezzo - sa, dal labbro
Among you dark and fair beauties, is there a pretty and charming lady waiting for me?



ro - sa che m'asp-et - ta? Sei tu bionda stel - la? Dil - lo a me!
Is it you, fair star? Tell me!

There is excitement as the coach from Arras arrives. Elegantly dressed passengers disembark: Manon Lescaut, her brother Lescaut, and Geronte di Ravoire, the wealthy old Treasurer General to the King. Geronte has taken a lecherous interest in the beautiful, 18-year old Manon.

Des Grieux becomes enchanted by Manon's beauty: "Dio quanto è bella!" ("God, how beautiful she is!")

Des Grieux's infatuation with Manon: Love theme.

Andante Lento Espressivo



While Lescaut makes arrangements for quarters for the night, Manon waits outside. Des Grieux approaches her to ask her name, and she replies with bashful innocence.

"Manon Lescaut mi chiamo"

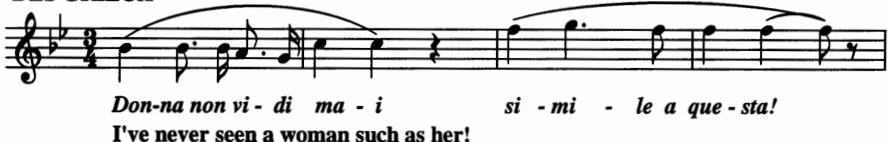


Des Grieux reveals that at first sight he was conquered by a mysterious fascination for her. Manon informs him that she is en route to a convent school, an unhappy fate, but her father's wish in order to protect her from the evils of the world. Des Grieux becomes incredulous, suggesting that they must somehow find a way to avoid her horrible fate. After Lescaut calls for his sister, Des Grieux persuades Manon to return later, when it is dark. Manon agrees.

Manon hurries to Lescaut, who awaits her on the balcony of the inn. Des Grieux follows Manon's movements, becoming aroused and intoxicated with passion for the young woman he has just met. Rapturously, he praises the young woman who has just awakened new inspirations in his soul.

"Donna non vidi mai simile a questa!"

**Andante Lento
DES GRIEUX**



Lescaut becomes dazzled by Geronte's wealth. He reveals that his sister Manon is extremely unhappy, a victim of unfulfilled youthful hopes and dreams. He proposes that Manon become Geronte's mistress; in return Lescaut would receive substantial compensation. Both agree to dine together later that evening to discuss arrangements.

Lescaut, a master at gambling, joins a card game with some students, self-assured that they will be an easy conquest. Meanwhile, Geronte makes secret plans to abduct Manon; he orders a coach and horses from the innkeeper, and learns of another exit from the inn from which he can depart with his prey unnoticed. Geronte is unaware that Edmondo overheard his nefarious plan to kidnap Manon. He immediately informs his friend des Grieux of the imminent danger to Manon.

Manon keeps her promise and meets the awaiting des Grieux. She nostalgically recalls her youthful life of gaiety and happiness, while des Grieux urges her to surrender to the enchantments of love, the eternal bliss that now speaks in their souls. Manon and des Grieux fall in love, and both dream rapturously of a happy future together.

"Ah! Date all'onde del nuovo incanto"

Andante Amoroso
DES GRIEUX



Ah! Date all'onde del nuovo incanto il dolce labbro e il cor. V'amo! V'amo!
Surrender your sweet lips and heart to a new enchantment. I love you!

While Lescaut plays cards with students, he raps on the table, seeking more refreshment. At the sound of his voice, Manon indicates that she must return to the inn. Des Grieux restrains her, advising her of imminent danger: that the old libertine Geronte plans to abduct her this very evening.

Edmondo arrives hurriedly to announce that a coach is ready (Geronte's coach). Manon is confounded and in fear, but agrees to flee with des Grieux, a young man she has just met and hardly knows. Edmondo gives des Grieux his cloak as a disguise, and all run behind the inn where Manon and des Grieux board the coach and escape to Paris.

Just as Geronte is about to initiate his plan to abduct Manon, Edmondo shocks him with the news that she has run away with a student. Lescaut becomes confounded when he learns of Manon's escape, but he assures Geronte that Manon's obsession with luxury will soon cause her to abandon her poor student lover; then, by the grace of Geronte's wealth, the three of them will complete a happy family, all living together in luxury.

To celebrate their imminent success, Lescaut and Geronte go off arm-in-arm to dine together. Geronte, exulting in his forthcoming victory, is oblivious to the cynical taunting and laughter that the students direct at him.

Act II: Paris. A sumptuous room in the home of Geronte di Ravoir.

As Lescaut predicted to Geronte, Manon quickly tired of her humble life with des Grieux. She was easy prey for Lescaut, vulnerable to her brother's offer to become Geronte's mistress. Manon abandoned des Grieux and now lives in luxurious splendor in Geronte's apartments.

Manon is seated at a dressing table, attended by a hairdresser who pampers her and indulges her every whim to enhance her beauty. Lescaut arrives, dismayed to find his sister in an apparently gloomy mood. Intuitively, he senses that her thoughts have turned to des Grieux, the man she truly loves, but abandoned for the luxurious life he arranged for her with the wealthy Geronte. Lescaut boasts proudly that he rescued Manon, replacing a life of squalor with boundless wealth and luxury.

“Una casetta angusta era la tua dimora”

Andantino Mosso

LESCAUT



U - na caset - ta an - gu - sta e - ra la tua dim - o - ra,
You lived in a modest little cottage,

Manon inquires about des Grieux, her guilt feelings quite evident; she just abandoned him without a goodbye, and without even a kiss. Manon has become bored with Geronte and the superficial world of luxuries and wealth that surround her. Manon's ambivalence has caused her inner conflict: she sighs nostalgically, longing for her past happiness and the true love she shared with des Grieux; but she also possesses equal passion for the wealth and luxury that Geronte has provided her.

“In quelle trine morbide nell’alcova dorata”

Moderato con moto

MANON



In quelle trine morbide nell'al - co - va do - ra - ta
In those soft silken drapes, and gilded alcove,

Lescaut informs Manon that he has taught des Grieux gambling: the means to earn a fortune and win back her love. Manon cannot suppress her impassioned love for des Grieux; she expresses her hope that he will succeed at gambling and that they will soon be reunited.

Singers enter Manon's apartment; they bow before Manon and then sing a madrigal written by Geronte: it is the story of Chloris (Manon) and Philenius (Geronte), an allegory that expresses Geronte's yearning to conquer Manon's heart.

Manon is melancholy; she comments that madrigals, dancing, and music are seemingly lovely diversions, but they bore her. Lescaut senses that Manon's anxiety threatens his grandiose plans for their life of wealth and luxury: a young woman who is bored with pleasure flirts with danger. But Lescaut understands the stirrings of emotion in his sister's heart. To protect his interests, he rushes off to seek des Grieux and bring him to Manon.

Geronte arrives, followed by musicians, friends, the Abbé, and the dancing master. All observe the dancing master instructing Manon in the Minuet. The guests shower her with flattery, praise, and admiration, particularly Geronte, who reveals that he cannot control his impassioned love for Manon. As Geronte and Manon dance the Minuet, she cynically taunts him: that she is like the mythological Tirsi, a shepherdess who sighs and yearns for his love.

Geronte announces that it is late and that they must depart for their stroll along the promenade with the fashionable people of Paris. Manon excuses herself, promising to join them shortly. Geronte arranges for his coach to await her, and urges her to join them as soon as possible.

Alone, Manon stands before a mirror, satisfied with her ravishing beauty. She hears noises, which she believes are those of a servant announcing that her coach is ready. But it is des Grieux. Manon rushes to him and greets him breathlessly with uneasy agitation.

"Tu, tu, amore? Tu?"

Allegro Moderato con Agitazione

MANON



Tu, tu, a - mor - re? Tu? Ah! Mio immenso amo - re?
You, my love? You? You? My supreme love?

Des Grieux is enraged and Manon becomes fearful; he seethes with vengeance because she so callously abandoned him. Manon admits her failing, and that she deserves his punishment, but at the same time, she reminds him that their love is eternal: flames of love that can never be extinguished.

Des Grieux expresses the pain, torment, and despair he felt after she broke his heart by abandoning him.

"Taci, taci tu, il cor mi frangi!"

Con amarezza

DES GRIEUX

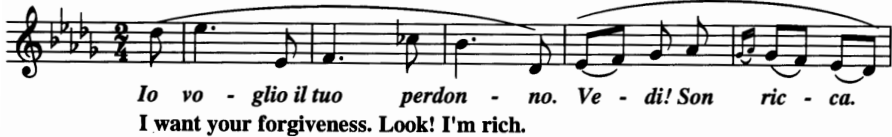


Ta - ci, ta-ci tu, il cor mi frangi, tu il cor mi fran - gi!
Be silent, you broke my heart!

Manon begs des Grieux's forgiveness. But she defends her betrayal as her act of love: after all, she now has wealth for both of them to share.

"Io voglio il tuo perdono"

MANON



Des Grieux surrenders to temptation, conquered by the seductive Manon who has again woven her magic spell, which he is powerless to resist.

"O tentatrice!"

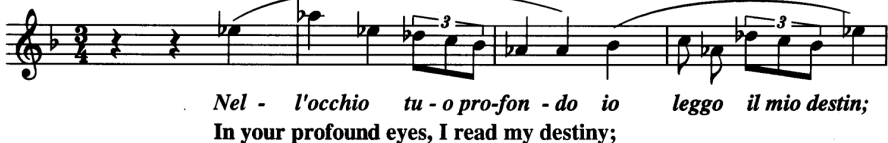
Moderato
DES GRIEUX



Manon and des Grieux embrace, both intoxicated by the ecstasy of their reunion and their love. Des Grieux expresses his total surrender to Manon: his destiny.

"Nell'occhio tuo profondo io leggo il mio destin"

Con tutta la passione
DES GRIEUX



Geronte suddenly appears at the door, outraged to find Manon in the arms of another man. Sarcastically, he tells them that he now understands why Manon had not arrived at the boulevard; he also reminds des Grieux that he is guilty of trespassing in his home.

Geronte reproaches Manon for betraying the true affections he so lavishly showered upon her. Manon responds by chiding and insulting him; she calls him an old fool, and then holds a mirror to his face to remind him of his age. Geronte leaves, pretending to conceal his anger with ironic indifference. But he then threatens Manon, his revenge for her outrageous perfidy.

After Geronte's departure, Manon expresses a false sense of freedom. But des Grieux senses that they are in jeopardy and tries to persuade Manon that they must escape immediately. Characteristically, Manon hesitates, unsure if she truly wants to relinquish so much wealth and splendor. Des Grieux reproaches her ambivalence; her betrayal of true love with her obsession for material possession.

"Ah! Manon, mi tradisce il tuo folle pensier"

Moderatamente
DES GRIEUX



Ah!Ma-non, mi tra-disce il tuo folle pensier: sempre la stessa, sempre la stessa!
Ah! Manon, you betray me with your foolish thoughts. It's always the same!

Des Grieux has degenerated into immorality, a victim of his uncontrollable passions for the seductive and perfidious Manon. He condemns himself for disgracing his life, but once again, Manon exploits his weakness, promising that if he forgives her she will be faithful and good.

Lescaut arrives, breathless and anxious. He has learned from a friend at the barracks that Geronte called for the police to arrest Manon and des Grieux. The police are en route and they must escape immediately. But Manon's obsession with material luxuries become her undoing; she causes a fatal delay in their escape by gathering up her jewels, which she hides in her cloak.

The door bursts open, and a sergeant appears with guards and soldiers. Geronte stands at the threshold, laughing sarcastically. Manon becomes panic stricken and inadvertently lets her cloak slip open, the jewels falling to the floor. Geronte accuses Manon of theft and orders her arrest. Des Grieux draws his sword, but Lescaut prudently disarms him.

Geronte laughs sarcastically as Manon is led away by the police. Des Grieux and Lescaut escape.

Intermezzo:

An Intermezzo suggests des Grieux's powerlessness in his efforts to save Manon from deportation to Louisiana.

Act III: Near dawn. A square at the harbor of Le Havre.

Manon was convicted of theft. She has been banished from France and waits in a prison in Le Havre with prostitutes and undesirables for deportation to the French colony of Louisiana.

Lescaut and des Grieux wait outside the prison, hoping that the guard Lescaut bribed will arrange Manon's escape. Manon appears behind the barred prison window, des Grieux below; he assures her that he will never forsake her, no matter what dangers confront him.

A lamplighter interrupts their vows of eternal love. He extinguishes the harbor lights, his song ironically a story of a beautiful young woman who sold her soul for wealth and luxury.

Des Grieux approaches the jail window, again vowing his resolve to rescue Manon. Suddenly, a gunshot is heard in the distance, accompanied by shouts of "To arms!" Lescaut arrives to inform des Grieux that their plan for Manon's escape failed.

Citizens and villagers fill the square, curious about the gunfire they heard. Drums signal the arrival of a sergeant and soldiers. The sergeant orders the crowd to stand back so that the prisoners can exit the jail and board the ship.

One by one, the sergeant calls out the names of the deportees: each comes forward, becomes the victim of disparaging comments from the onlookers, stands before the ship captain, and then boards the ship.

Roll Call of the Prostitutes:

Manon's name is called, and she emerges from the jail. Des Grieux cautiously approaches her, trying to conceal himself from the guards. Manon urges des Grieux to forget her and build a new life after she is gone. But des Grieux is inconsolable; he cannot live without Manon.

The sergeant roughly seizes Manon, and des Grieux wrenches her from the sergeant's grip, threatening any one who nears them. Then des Grieux falls to the ground, a man in agonizing desperation; he addresses the captain, pleading insanity and begging for pity.

"Guardate, pazzo son"

Largo sostenuto
DES GRIEUX

Guarda - te, paz - zo son, guarda - te, com'io piango e implo - ro
Look, I'm crazy, look how I weep and implore you, how I ask for pity!

Des Grieux succeeds in persuading the captain to employ him as a cabin boy, and the captain orders him to board the ship bound for Louisiana.

Act IV: A vast, desolate plain near New Orleans. Nightfall approaches.

Manon and des Grieux have fled New Orleans. As night falls, they are seen roaming the desolate plain, disheveled, fatigued, and wandering vainly in search of food and shelter. Manon is so weak that she must lean on des Grieux for support.

Manon is tormented by the futility of trying to survive in the desolation of the vast, uninhabited plain. Des Grieux reassures her of his love, his tears her inspiration to survive and live.

“Vedi, vedi, son io che piango”

Andante Espressivo con Moto



Ve - di, ve - di, son io che piango, io che implo - ro,
Look, it is I who weeps and implores you,

Des Grieux scans the horizon, agonizing that the land is barren and that there is no trace of water. Manon urges him to search the desert for food and water. Des Grieux hesitates to leave Manon, but then departs after he finds a place for Manon to rest.

As the sky darkens, Manon expresses the torment of her despair and her fear of dying.

“Sola, perduta, abbandonata”

**Con la massima espressione
 e con angoscia
 MANON**



So - la per-du - ta, abbando - na - ta.
Alone, lost, forsaken in this desolate land.

Manon becomes delirious, haunted by vivid recollections of her past: a life stained with sin. But Manon also becomes contrite, expressing her desire to live so that she can love des Grieux.

As soon as des Grieux returns, Manon falls into his arms. She no longer has the will to live: weak and sensing imminent death. Des Grieux bursts into tears, unable to control his agony and anguish. Manon reproaches him; her approaching death is a moment for kisses, not tears.

Manon ennobles their love in her final words: “Le mie colpe, travolgerà l’oblio, ma l’amor mio, non muore.” (“My faults will be forgotten, but my love will never die.”)

Manon dies in des Grieux’s arms. Tortured by grief and despair, des Grieux falls on Manon’s corpse.

Libretto

Act I	Page 41
Act II	Page 54
Intermezzo	Page 71
Act III	Page 72
Act IV	Page 80

Act I

An inn near the Paris gate at Amiens. Students, citizens, villagers, women, girls and soldiers fill the square; some are standing and talking, while others are seated at tables, drinking and playing cards.

Allegro Brillante**Edmondo:**

Ave, sera gentile, che discendi
col tuo corteo di zefferi e di stelle.
Ave, cara ai poeti ed agli amanti.

Edmondo: *(singing his madrigal)*

Praise the gentle evening that falls
with its procession of breezes and stars.
Hail to you, beloved of poets and lovers.

Studenti:

E ai ladri ed ai briachi!
Noi t'abbiamo spezzato il madrigale!

Students: *(poking fun at Edmondo)*

And also to thieves and drunkards!
We've interrupted your madrigal!

Edmondo:

E vi ringrazio.
Pel vial giulive vengono a frotte a frotte,
fresche, ridenti e belle, le nostre artigianelle.

Edmondo:

And I thank you for it.
Our fair young working girls are swarming
down the avenue towards us; they are fresh,
laughing, and beautiful.

Studenti:

Or s'anima il viale.

Students:

The avenue has sprung to life.

Edmondo:

Preparo un madrigale furbesco, ardito e gaio.
E sia la musa mia tutta galanteria.

Edmondo:

I'll prepare a gay and daring madrigal for
them. And may my muse be chivalrous.

Leziosamente**EDMONDO**

Gio - va - nez - za è il nostro nome, la speran - za è nostra Iddi - a,

Edmondo e Studenti:

Giovanezza è il nostro nome,
la speranza è nostra Iddia,
ci trascina per le chiome indomabile virtù.
Santa ebbrezza!
Or voi, ridenti, amorose adolescenti, date i
cor.

Edmondo and Students:

Our name is youth,
hope is our goddess.
Invincible courage propels us to you.
A holy intoxication!
And you, loving and smiling youth,
give us your hearts.

Fanciulle:

Vaga per l'aura un'onda di profumi,
van le rondini a vol e muore il sol.
È questa l'ora delle fantasie
che fra le spemi lottano e le malinconie.

Studenti:

Date il labbro, date il core alla balda gioventù!
Ecco des Grieux!

Edmondo:

A noi t'unisci, amico, e ridi
e ti vinca la cura di balzana avventura.
Non rispondi? Perché?
Forse di dama inaccessibile acuto amor ti
morse?

Des Grieux:

L'amor! Questa tragedia, ovver commedia,
io non conosco!

Alcuni studenti:

Baie! Misteriose vittorie cauto celi e felice!

Des Grieux:

Amici, troppo onor mi fate.

Edmondo e Studenti:

Per bacco, indoviniam, amico.
Ti crucci d'uno scacco!

Des Grieux:

No, non ancora. Ma se vi talenta,
vo' compiacervi, e tosto!

Girls:

A wave of perfume drifts through the air:
swallows fly away, and the sun is setting.
It is the hour of fantasy, when hope
struggles against melancholy.

Students:

Give your lips and hearts to bold youth!
Here comes des Grieux!

Edmondo: (*greeting des Grieux*)

Join us, laugh and surrender to the excitement of carefree adventure.
Why don't you answer? Why?
Perhaps you've been smitten by a powerful love for an inaccessible lady?

Des Grieux:

Love! I know nothing of that farce, or rather, that sad tragedy!

Some students:

Nonsense! You're concealing your conquests!

Des Grieux:

My friends, you flatter me.

Edmondo and Students:

So friend, we guessed it.
You've been betrayed by love!

Des Grieux:

No, not yet. But if it pleases you,
I'll satisfy your curiosity!

Con grazia
DES GRIEUX

Among you dark and fair beauties, is there a pretty and charming lady waiting for me?

Is it you, fair star? Tell me!

et - ta? Sei tu bionda stel - la? Dil - lo a me!

Tra voi, belle, brune e bionde,
si nasconde giovinetta vaga e vezzosa,
dal labbro rosa che m'aspetta?

Among you fair beauties, blondes and
brunettes, is there a pretty and charming
lady with rosy lips waiting for me?

Sei tu, bionda stella? Dillo a me!
 Palesatemi il destino e il divino viso ardente
 che m'innamori, ch'io vegga e odori
 eternamente.
 Sei tu, bruna stella? Dillo a me!

Studenti:

Ma bravo!

Edmondo:

Guardate, compagni, di lui più nessuno si
 lagni.

Tutti:

Festeggiam la serata, com'è nostro costume.
 Suoni musica grata nei brindisi il bicchier,
 e noi rapisca il fascino ardente del piacer!
 Danze, brindisi, follie, il corteo di voluttà
 or s'avanza per le vie e la notte regnerà.
 È splendente, ed irruente, è una poema di
 fulgor.
 Tutto avvinca la sua luce e il suo furor.
 Giunge il cocchio d'Arras!
 Discendono. Vediam!
 Viaggiator eleganti, galanti!

Studenti:

Chi non darebbe a quella donnina bella
 il gentile saluto del benvenuto?

Lescaut:

Ehi, l'oste!

Cavalier, siete un modello di squisitezza!
 Ehi, l'oste!

L'Oste:

Eccomi qua!

Des Grieux:

Dio, quanto è bella!

Is it you, blonde star? Tell me!
 Reveal my destiny, and that divine
 impassioned face that I will love and adore
 eternally.
 Is it you, dark haired beauty? Tell me!

Students:

That's splendid!

Edmondo:

Look, friends, no one can complain about
 him any more.

All:

Let's celebrate the evening,
 as we always do, with songs and toasts,
 and capture the enchantment of pleasure!
 May dances, toasts, madness, and pleasure
 come and rule the night.
 It's splendid and impetuous. It is a radiant
 poem.
 May it charm and dazzle everyone.
 Here comes the coach from Arras!
 They're getting off. Let's see!
 What elegant and graceful travelers!

Students: (admiring Manon)

Who wouldn't give that lovely girl a gracious
 welcome?

Lescaut:

Hey, innkeeper!
 (to Geronte)

Sir, you're a model of refinement!
 Hey, innkeeper!

The Innkeeper:

Here I am!

Des Grieux: (gazing at Manon)

God, how lovely she is!

Andante Lento Espressivo

Des Grieux:

Or parlar non possiamo.
Ritornate fra poco e, cospiranti contro i
fato, vinceremo.

Manon:

Tanta pietà traspare dalle vostre parole!
Vo' ricordarvi! Il nome vostro?

Des Grieux:

Sono Renato des Grieux.

Lescaut:

Manon!

Manon:

Lasciarvi debbo. Vengo!
Mio fratello m'ha chiamata.

Des Grieux:

Qui tornate!

Manon:

No, non posso. Mi lasciate!

Des Grieux:

O gentile, vi sconsiglio!

Manon:

Mi vincete!
Quando oscuro l'aere intorno a noi sarà.

Des Grieux:

We can't talk now.
Come back soon, and we'll conspire how to
triumph over your fate.

Manon:

You speak with such compassion!
I want to remember you! What's your name?

Des Grieux:

I am Renato des Grieux.

Lescaut: (*calling from the inn*)

Manon!

Manon:

I have to leave now. I'm coming!
My brother has called me.

Des Grieux:

Please come back!

Manon:

No, I can't. Let me go!

Des Grieux:

I implore you, lovely lady!

Manon:

You've persuaded me!
I'll come back when it is dark

Manon hurries to Lescaut, who awaits her on the balcony of the inn.

Des Grieux, following her movements, becomes impassioned.

Andante Lento**DES GRIEUX****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 spirito, e ascose fibre vanno a carezzare.
O sussurro gentil, deh, non cessare!

Des Grieux:

I've never before seen such a woman!
To say to her, "I love you," awakens a new
inspiration in my soul.
"My name is Manon Lescaut."
How those fragrant words wander in my
spirit, and every part of me wants to caress her.
May the gentle whispers never cease!

Studenti e Edmondo:

La tua ventura ci rassicura.
O di Cupido degno fedel, bella e divina
la cherubina per tua delizia scese dal ciel!
Fugge: è dunque innamorato.

Studenti:

Venite, o fanciulle! Augurio ci siate di
buona fortuna.

Fanciulle:

È bionda od è bruna la diva che guida la
vostra tenzon?

Studenti:

È calva la diva: ma morbida chioma voi fa
desiār.
Chi perde e chi vince, voi brama,
o fanciulle, chi piange e chi ride.
Noi prostra ed irride la mala ventura.
Ma lieta prorompe d'amore la folle, l'eterna
canzon.

Fanciulle:

Amiche fedeli di un'ora, volete il bacio?
Volete il sospir? Orniam la vittoria,
e il core del vinto al tiepido effluvio
di molle carezza riposa obliando,
e l'onta e il martir.

Edmondo:

Addio, mia stella. Addio, mio fior,
vaga sorella del Dio d'amor.
A te d'intorno va il mio sospir,
e per un giorno non mi tradir.

Geronte:

Dunque vostra sorella il velo cingerà?

Lescaut:

Malo consiglio della gente mia.

Geronte:

Diversa idea mi pare la vostra?

Lescaut:

Certo, certo, ho più sana la testa di quel
che sembri, benchè triste fama mie gesta
circondi.

Students and Edmondo:

Your good luck reassures us. You are in
Cupid's favor. A lovely angel has descended
from heaven to delight you!
Go to her and be inspired by love.

Students:

Come, girls! There is good fortune in your
future.

Girls:

Is it a blonde or brunette goddess who
inspires your poetry?

Students:

The goddess is bald, but it is your fair hair
that we desire.
Whoever wins or loses, yearns for you.
Whoever cries and laughs,
is defeated by poor luck.
But love bursts; it is the eternal song.

Girls:

Faithful friends, do you want a kiss?
Do you want to sigh? We crown the victor,
but the heart of the loser enters the warm
oblivion of soft, forgotten kisses,
and of shame and dishonor.

Edmondo:

Farewell, my star. Farewell, my flower,
wandering sister of Venus.
My sigh surrounds you,
and for one day do not betray me.

Geronte: (walking with Lescaut)

So your sister is taking the veil?

Lescaut:

Bad advice from my family.

Geronte:

I suppose you have different ideas?

Lescaut:

Certainly. I've more sense than it seems,
although my bad reputation seems to be
haunting me.

Ma la vita conosco, forse troppo.
Parigi è scuola grande assai.
Di mia sorella guida, mormorando,
adempio al mio dovere, come un vero soldato!
Solo dico che ingrato evento al mondo
non ci coglie senza qualche compenso.
E voi conobbi, Signor?

Geronte:

Geronte di Ravoir.

Lescaut:

Diporto vi conduce in viaggio?

Geronte:

No, dovere.
L'affitto delle imposte a me fidato
dalla bontà del Re, dalla mia borsa.

Lescaut:

(Che sacco d'oro!)

Geronte:

E non mi sembra lieta neppur vostra
sorella.

Lescaut:

Pensate! Ha diciott'anni!
Quanti sogni e speranze!

Geronte:

Comprendo. Poverina!
È d'uopo consolarla.
Questa sera meco verrete a cena?

Lescaut:

Quale onor! E intanto permettete...

Geronte:

Scusate, m'attendete per breve istante:
qualche ordine io debbo all'ostier impartir.

I know life, perhaps too well.
Paris is a large enough school.
As my sister's guardian, I reluctantly fulfill
my duty, like a true soldier!
But for every misfortune in this world, there
is some compensation.
And have we met, sir?

Geronte:

Geronte di Ravoir.

Lescaut:

Are you travelling for pleasure?

Geronte:

No, for business.
Thanks to the King's grace, which I have to
pay for, I collect taxes.

Lescaut:

(What a gold mine!)

Geronte:

Your sister seems very unhappy to me.

Lescaut:

Imagine! She's eighteen!
Full of so many hopes and dreams!

Geronte:

I understand. Poor girl!
We should console her.
Will you dine with me tonight?

Lescaut:

What an honor! Meanwhile, permit me...
(*Lescaut gestures to offer Geronte a drink*)

Geronte:

Excuse me a moment while I give some
orders to the innkeeper.

*Geronte departs. As evening approaches, Lescaut observes some students
who are intently engrossed in their card game.*

Gli Studenti:

Un asso! Un fante! Un tre!
Che gioco maledetto!

Students:

An ace! A jack! A three!
What awful cards!

Lescaut:

(Giocano! Oh, se potessi tentare anch'io qualche colpo perfetto!)

Studenti:

Puntate! Carte! Un asso!

Lescaut:

Un asso? Mio signore, un fante!
Errore, errore!

Studenti

È vero, un fante. Siete un maestro!

Lescaut:

Celiate! Un dilettante.

Studenti:

A noi, v'invito, banco!

Lescaut:

Carte!

Geronte:

Amico, io pago prima e poche ciarle!
Una carrozza e cavalli che volino sì come il vento. Fra un'ora!

L'Oste:

Signore!

Geronte:

Dietro l'albergo fra un'ora, capite?
Verrano un uomo e una fanciulla.
E via sì come il vento, via verso Parigi!
E ricordate che il silenzio è d'or!

L'Oste:

L'oro adoro.

Geronte:

Bene, bene! Adoratelo e ubbidite.
Or mi dite, questa uscita ha l'osteria solamente?

L'Oste:

Ve n'ha un'altra.

Lescaut: *(with feverish interest)*

(They're gambling! Perhaps I could join them and have a stroke of good luck!)

Students:

Ante up! Cards! An ace!

Lescaut: *(watching them play)*

An ace? My dear sir, play a jack!
You've made a mistake!

Students:

That's right, a jack. You're a master!

Lescaut: *(with exaggerated modesty)*

You're joking! I'm just a beginner.

Students:

Come, I invite you to play! I'm banker!

Lescaut: *(Lescaut joins the game)*

Cards!

Geronte: *(to the innkeeper)*

I'll pay in advance, and keep your mouth shut!
I want a coach and horses that fly like the wind. An hour from now!

Innkeeper:

As you wish, sir!

Geronte: *(unaware Edmondo observes him)*

Behind the inn, an hour from how, understand?
There'll be a man and a young girl.
Then away, off like the wind, to Paris!
Remember, silence is golden!

Innkeeper:

I adore gold.

Geronte: *(giving him a purse)*

Good! Adore it and obey me.
Now tell me. Is this the only way out of the inn?

Innkeeper:

There's another way.

Geronte:
Indicatemi la via.

Geronte:
Show it to me.

Geronte and the innkeeper leave.

Edmondo:
Vecchietto amabile, incipriato Pluton sei tu!
La tua Proserpina di resisterti forse avrà virtù?

Edmondo: *(after overhearing Geronte)*
You poor old codger. You're a Pluto with a powdered wig!
Perhaps your Prosperina will be strong enough to resist you?

Des Grieux is approached by Edmondo.

Cavaliere, te la fanno!

Chevalier, they're outwitting you!

Des Grieux:
Che vuoi dir?

Des Grieux:
What do you mean?

Edmondo:
Quel fior dolcissimo che olezzava poco fa, dal suo stel divolto, povero fior, fra poco appassirà!
La tua fanciulla, la tua colomba or vola, or vola: del postiglione suona la tromba.
Via, ti consola: un vecchio la rapisce!

Edmondo: *(ironically)*
That gentle flower, so sweetly fragrant a little while ago, is having her stem uprooted and will soon wither!
Your girlfriend, your white dove, will fly away at the sound of the post-boy's horn.
But don't lose heart; an old man abducts her!

Des Grieux:
Davvero?

Des Grieux:
Is that true?

Edmondo:
Impallidisci? Per Dio, la cosa è seria!

Edmondo:
You're pale? By God, it's a serious matter!

Des Grieux:
Qui l'attendo, capisci?

Des Grieux:
I'm waiting for her here, understand?

Edmondo:
Siamo a buon punto!

Edmondo:
Our timing is good!

Des Grieux:
Salvami!

Des Grieux:
Help me!

Edmondo:
Salvarti? La partenza impedire?
Tentiamo! Senti! Forse ti salvo.
Del gioco morse all'amo il soldato laggiù.

Edmondo:
Help you? Prevent her departure?
Let's try! Listen! Perhaps I can help you.
The soldier is hooked by the gambling.

Des Grieux:
E il vecchio?

Des Grieux:
And the old man?

Edmondo:

Il vecchio?

Oh, il vecchio l'avrà da far con me!

Edmondo:

The old man?

He'll have to deal with me!

*Edmondo disappears among the students. Manon appears at the staircase.
She looks around anxiously, sees des Grieux, and then descends.*

Manon:

Vedete? Io son fedele alla parola mia.
Voi mi chiedeste, con fervida preghiera,
che voi tornassi un'altra volta.
Meglio non rivedervi, io credo
e al vostro prego benignamente opporre il
mio rifiuto.

Manon:

You see? I'm true to my word.
You asked me to return with such ardor,
that I decided that I would indeed return.
But I think it would have been wise
not to see you again, and I should have
politely refused.

Des Grieux:

Oh, come gravi le vostre parole!
Sì ragionar non suole l'età gentile
che v'infiora il viso:
mal s'addice al sorriso che dall'occhio
traluce questo disdegno melanconico!

Des Grieux:

How serious your words are!
The youth that flowers in your face
is in conflict;
with your smile and radiant eyes,
they scorn sadness!

Manon:

Eppur lieta, assai lieta un tempo io fui!
La quietta casetta risonava di mie folli risate,
e colle amiche giocando ne andava a danza!
Ma di gaiezza il bel tempo fuggì!

Manon:

I was once so happy!
Our quiet little house used to resound with
my childish laughter when I used to dance,
but those beautiful days of gaiety are gone!

Des Grieux:

Nelle pupille fulgide profonde sfavilla
il desiderio dell'amore.
Amor ora vi parla!

Des Grieux:

The desire for love sparkles in the depths of
your radiant eyes.
Love now speaks to you!

Andante Amoroso**DES GRIEUX**

Ah! Date all'onde del nuovo incanto il dolce labbro e il cor. V'amo! V'amo!

Date all'onde del nuovo incanto il dolce
labbro e il core.
V'amo! Quest'attimo di giorno rendete
eterno ed infinito!

Surrender your sweet lips and heart to a new
enchantment.
I love you! Make this blissful moment of the
day eternal and infinite!

Manon:

Una fanciulla povera son io, non ho sul
volto luce di beltà, regna tristezza sul
destino mio.

Manon:

I am a modest girl, and I don't have a
beautiful ray of light shining on my face:
only sadness reigns over my destiny.

Des Grieux:

Vinta tristezza dall'amor sarà!
La bellezza vi dona il più vago avvenir.
O soave persona, mio infinito sospiro!

Manon:

No, non è vero!
Ah, sogno gentil, mio sospiro infinito!

Des Grieux:

Love will conquer your sadness!
Your beauty assures you an enchanting future.
Oh gentle lady, my infinite hope!

Manon:

No, it isn't real!
Gentle dream, my infinite hope!

Lescaut, playing cards with the students, raps on the table.

Lescaut:

Non c'è più vino? E che? Vuota è la botte?

Lescaut:

No more wine? What? An empty barrel?

*Manon becomes dismayed at the sound of Lescaut's voice.
She tries to return to the inn, but des Grieux prevents her.*

Des Grieux:

Deh, m'ascoltate: vi minaccia un vile
oltraggio, un rapimento!
Un libertino audace, quel vecchio che con
voi giunse, una trama a vostro danno ordì.

Des Grieux:

Listen to me: you are in danger of a
horrible outrage; an abduction!
That audacious libertine, that old man who
arrived with you, has plotted it.

Manon:

Che dite?

Manon: *(stunned)*

What are you saying?

Des Grieux:

Il vero!

Des Grieux:

The truth!

Edmondo:

Il colpo è fatto, la carrozza è pronta.
Che burla colossale! Presto! Partite!

Edmondo: *(hurriedly to Des Grieux)*

The deed is done. The carriage is ready.
What a colossal joke! Hurry! Leave quickly!

Manon:

Fuggir?

Manon: *(surprised)*

Run away?

Des Grieux:

Fuggiamo! Che il vostro rapitor un altro sia!

Des Grieux:

Let's flee! I'll be your kidnapper, no other!

Manon:

Voi mi rapite?

Manon:

You will kidnap me?

Des Grieux:

No, vi rapisce amore!

Des Grieux:

No, love kidnaps you!

Manon:

Ah, no!

Manon:

Oh, no!

Des Grieux:

V'imploro!

Edmondo:

Presto, via ragazzi!

Des Grieux:

Manon, v'imploro: Fuggiamo!

Manon:

Andiam!

Edmondo

Oh, che bei pazzi!

Des Grieux:

I implore you!

Edmondo:

Hurry, go!

Des Grieux:

Manon, I implore you. Let's flee!

Manon: *(resolutely)*

Let's go!

Edmondo:

What beautiful craziness!

*Edmondo give his cloak to des Grieux as a disguise, and all run behind the inn.
Geronte appears. He seems pleased as he notices Lescaut intently playing in the card game,
and then cautiously seeks the innkeeper.*

Geronte:

Di sedur la sorellina è il momento!

Via, ardimento!

Il sergente è al gioco intento!

Vi rimanga. Ehi dico: pronta è la cena?

Geronte: *(to himself)*

Now is the time to seduce the little sister!

Come, be brave!

The sergeant is absorbed in the game!

Let him stay here! Is dinner ready?

L'Oste:

Sì, Eccellenza!

Innkeeper:

Yes, your Excellency!

Geronte:

L'annunziate a quella signorina che...

Geronte:

Then announce to the young lady that...

Edmondo:

Quella signorina?

Eccellenza, guardatela!

Essa parte in compagnia d'uno studente.

Edmondo: *(interrupting Geronte)*

That young lady?

Excellency, look!

She's leaving with a student.

Geronte:

L'hanno rapita!

Geronte: *(in great agitation)*

They've abducted her!

Lescaut:

Chi?

Lescaut: *(continuing to gamble)*

Who?

Geronte:

Vostra sorella!

Geronte:

Your sister!

Lescaut:

Che! Mille e mille bombe!

Lescaut: *(rising in agitation)*

What! Thousands of bombshells explode!

Geronte:

L'inseguiamo! È uno studente!

Lescaut:

È inutile! Riflettiamo.
Cavalli pronti avete? Il colpo è fatto!
Dispersarsi è da matto!
Vedo. Manon con sue grazie leggiadre
ha suscitato in voi un affetto di padre.

Geronte:

Non altrimenti!

Lescaut:

E a chi lo dite! Ed io, da figlio rispettoso,
vi do un ottimo consiglio.
Parigi! È là Manon!
Manon già non si perde.
Ma borsa di studente presto rimane al
verde. Manon non vuol miserie!
Manon riconoscente accetterà un palazzo
per piantar lo studente!
Voi farete da padre ad un'ottima figlia ed io
completerò, Signore, la famiglia.
Che diamine! Ci vuole calma, filosofia.
Ecco il vostro tricorno!
E, domattina, in via!
Dunque, dicevo...
A cena e il braccio a me!
Degli eventi all'altezza esser convien!
Perché...

Edmondo e Studenti:

Venticelli, ricciutelli che spirate fra
vermigli, fiori e gigli,
avventura strana e dura, deh, narrate per
mia fe'!

Assetato labbro aveva coppa piena.
Ber voleva, e avidamente già suggeriva.
Ah, ah, ah!
A volpe invecchiata l'uva fresca e
vellutata
sempre acerba rimarrà.

Geronte:

Let's follow them! It's a student!

Lescaut:

It's useless! Let's think about this.
Do you have horses ready? The deed is done!
It's foolish to despair!
I see that Manon's charming graces have
aroused your fatherly affection.

Geronte:

Nothing less!

Lescaut:

I'm certain of that! Like a respectful son,
I'll give you some excellent advice.
Paris! Manon is off to Paris!
But Manon is not yet lost.
A student's purse will soon be empty,
and Manon does not want poverty!
Manon will gratefully accept a palace and
forsake her student!
You'll play a father to a wonderful daughter,
and I, Sir, will complete the family.
What the devil! One must be calm and
philosophical. Here is your hat!
And tomorrow morning, we'll be on our way!
Therefore, as I was saying...
Let's dine now! Give me your arm!
One must rise to the occasion accordingly!
Because...

Edmondo and Students:

Fragrant breezes, lightly twisting amid the
vermilion, flowers and lilies,
tell us the story of the strange and cruel
adventure!

Thirsty lips drew near a full cup.
To drink brought bliss and pleasure.
Ah, ah, ah!
To an old fox, the young velvet grape will
seem fresh,
but will always remain sour.

The students burst into laughter, and then run off.

End of Act I

Act II

*Paris. A sumptuous room in the home of Geronte di Ravoir.
Manon is seated at a dressing table, attended by a hairdresser.*

Manon:

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

Lescaut:

Buon giorno, sorellina!

Manon:

Il minio e la pomata!

Lescaut:

Questa mattina mi sembri un po' imbronciata.

Manon:

Imbronciata? Perché?

Lescaut:

No? Tanto meglio!
Geronte ov'è?
Così presto ha lasciato il gineceo?

Manon:

Ed ora, un neo!

Lescaut:

Lo sfrontato! Il birichino!
No? Il Galante!

Manon:

Non saprei.
Ebben, due nei!
All'occhio l'assassino!
e al labbro il voluttuoso!

Manon: *(to the hairdresser)*

This curl is unruly!
The curling iron, quickly!
Now the powder!
Make the eyebrows a little darker!
The base!
My look quivers like an arrow!
Put the jonquil perfume here!

Lescaut: *(upon entering)*

Good morning, little sister!

Manon: *(to the hairdresser)*

The rouge and the pomade!

Lescaut:

This morning you seem a little upset.

Manon:

Gloomy? Why?

Lescaut:

You're not? So much the better!
Where is Geronte?
How come he left your nest so early?

Manon:

And now, a beauty mark!

Lescaut:

The "audacious" one! The "roguish" one!
No? The "flirtatious" one!

Manon:

I'm not sure.
Then, give me two beauty marks!
The "assassin" beside the eye,
and the "voluptuous" one near the lips!

The hairdresser finishes; he calls his assistants, and bows to Manon as he leaves.

Lescaut:

Ah! Che insiem delizioso!
Sei splendida e lucente!
M'esalto! E n'ho il perchè!
È mia la gloria se sei salva dall'amor
d'uno studente.
Allor che sei fuggita, là, ad Amiens,
mai la speranza il cor m'abbandonò!

Là, la tua sorte vidi!
Là il magico fulgor di queste sale balenò.
T'ho ritrovata!

Lescaut: (*admiringly to Manon*)

What an attractive package you are!
You look resplendent and radiant!
I've good reason to be proud of you!
I have the glory of saving you from the love
of a student.
And when you eloped from Amiens, I never
abandoned hope in my heart!

I saw your destiny!
I imagined the magic splendor of these rooms.
I found you again!

Andantino Mosso**LESCAUT**

U - na caset - ta angu - sta e - ra la tua dim - o - ra,

Una casetta angusta era la tua dimora;
possedevi baci, e niente scudi!
È un bravo giovinotto quel Des Grieux!
Ma, ahimè, non è cassiere generale!
È dunque naturale che tu abbia
abbandonato per un palazzo aurato
quell'umile dimora.

You lived in a modest little cottage, with
many kisses but no money!
That Des Grieux is a fine young man!
But it's too bad he's not a rich cashier at a bank!
So it was right and proper for you to
abandon that humble dwelling for this
golden palace.

Manon:

E dimmi.

Manon:

And tell me.

Lescaut:

Che vuoi dire?

Lescaut:

What do you want to know?

Manon:

Nulla!

Manon:

Nothing!

Lescaut:

Nulla? Davver?

Lescaut:

Nothing? Really?

Manon:

Volevo dimandar...

Manon:

I wanted to ask...

Lescaut:

Risponderò!

Lescaut:

I'll answer you!

Manon:
Risponderai?

Lescaut:
Ho inteso!
Nei tuoi occhi io leggo un desiderio.
Se Geronte lo sospettasse!

Manon:
È ver! Hai colto!

Lescaut:
Brami nuove di lui?

Manon:
È ver! L'ho abbandonato
senza un saluto, un bacio!

Manon:
Will you answer?

Lescaut: (*mischievously*)
That's my intension!
I read a desire in your eyes.
If Geronte should suspect it!

Manon:
It's true! You've guessed it!

Lescaut:
You long for news about him?

Manon:
It's true! I left him without a word of good-
bye, without even a kiss!

Moderato con moto
MANON



In quelle trine morbide nell'alcova dorata
v'è un silenzio gelido, mortal, v'è un
silenzio, un freddo che m'agghiaccia!

Ed io che m'ero avvezza a una carezza
voluttuosa, di labbra ardenti e d'infiocate
braccia, o ho tutt'altra cosa!

O mia dimora umile, tu mi ritorni innanzi
gaia, isolata, bianca come un sogno gentile
di pace e d'amor!

Lescaut:
Poiché tu vuoi saper.
Des Grieux, qual già Geronte, è un grande
amico mio.
Ei mi tortura sempre: "Ov'è Manon?
Ove fuggì? Con chi?
A Nord? Ad Est? A Sud?"
Io rispondo: non so!
Ma alfin l'ho persuaso!

In these soft silken drapes and gilded alcove,
there's a cold and deadly silence,
a coldness that freezes me!

Then I had fervent caresses and sensuous
kisses from ardent lips, but now I have
something totally different!

I again think about my humble dwelling,
happy, secluded, and white:
like a gentle dream of peace and of love!

Lescaut:
Since you want to know.
Des Grieux, like Geronte, is a great friend of
mine.
He keeps pestering me: "Where is Manon?
Where has she gone? With whom?
To the North? To the East? To the South?"
I answer that I don't know!
But at last I've persuaded him!

Manon:

Ei m'ha scordata?

Lescaut:

No! No! Ma che vincendo può coll'oro
forse scoprir la via che mena a te!
Or, correggendo la fortuna sta!
L'ho lanciato al giuoco!
Vincerà!

Manon:

Per me tu lotti, per me, vile, che ti lasci!
che tanto duol ti costai!
Ah! Vieni! Il passato mi rendi,
l'ore fugaci le tue carezze ardenti!
Ah! Rendimi i baci, i baci tuoi cocenti,
quell'ebbrezza che un dì mi beò!
Ah! Vieni! Son bella?
Ah! Vien, resister più non so!

Lescaut:

È il vecchio tavolier per noi tal quale
la cassa del danaro universale!
Da me lanciato e istruito pelerà tutti e tutto!
Ma nel martirio delle lunghe lotte
intanto il dì e la notte vive incosciente della
sua follia, e chiede al giuoco ove tu sia!
Ei vincerà!

Pensively, Manon look into the mirror, while her hands unconsciously arrange the folds of her dress. Suddenly, she is overcome with a sense of triumph and addresses Lescaut.

Manon:

Davver che a maraviglia questa veste mi
sta?

Lescaut:

Ti sta a pennello!

Manon:

E il tupé?

Lescaut:

Portentoso!

Manon:

E il busto?

Manon: *(surprised)*

Has he forgotten me?

Lescaut:

No! No! But if he wins lots of money,
perhaps he'll find his way back to you!
Now, he's improving his fortune!
I've launched him into gambling!
He will win!

Manon:

You struggle for my love, the worthless
woman who left you! What pain I cost you!
Come! Restore the past, with your
impassioned kisses!
Give me back those burning kisses, the
intoxication that once made me happy!
Come! Am I still beautiful?
Come! I can no longer resist you!

Lescaut:

It's the old game for us: like the strong box
of the world bank!
I taught him how to swindle: to fleece!
But in his suffering struggle, he's unaware
of his folly, and lives day and night asking
where you might be!
He will win!

Manon:

Do you think this gown fits me to
perfection?

Lescaut:

It suits you to perfection!

Manon:

And my wig?

Lescaut:

Marvellous!

Manon:

And the bosom?

Lescaut:
Bello!

Lescaut:
Beautiful!

Singers enter with music in their hands. They bow and stand before Manon.

Che ceffi son costor?
Ciarlatani o speziali?

Who are those ugly people?
Charlatans or chemists?

Manon:
Son musicì! È Geronte che fa dei madrigali!

Manon:
They're singers! Geronte composes madrigals!

Coro:
Sulla vetta tu del monte
erri, o Clori: hai per labbra due fiori,
e l'occhio è un fonte.

Chorus:
Chloris, you wander over the peak of your
mountain: your lips are like flowers, and
your eyes are a fountain.

Ohimè! Ohimè! Filen spira ai tuoi piè!
Di tue chiome sciogli al vento il portento,
ed è un giglio il tuo petto bianco, ignudetto.

Alas! Phileneus expires at your feet!
Loosen your wondrous hair in the wind,
and your naked lily-white breast.

Clori sei tu, Manon, ed in Filen,
Geronte si mutò!
Filen suonando sta; la sua zampogna
va sussurrando: pietà!
Il eco sospira: pietà!
Piange Filen: "Cuor non hai Clori in sen?
Ve', già, Filen. Vien, men!"
No! Clori a zampogna che soave implorò
non disse mai no!

Manon, you are Chloris, and Geronte has
become Phileneus!
Phileneus plays his pipes
and whispers: have pity!
But there is only a sighing echo: have pity!
Phileneus weeps: "Chloris, have you no heart?"
See, Phileneus is swooning!
No! Chloris has never refused to come to the
gentle sound of those plaintive pipes!

Manon:
Paga costor!

Manon: *(expressing her boredom)*
Pay these people!

Lescaut:
Oibò! Offender l'arte?
Io v'accomiato in nome della Gloria!

Lescaut:
What! And offend art?
I dismiss you in the name of 'Glory'!

*As the singers depart, Geronte arrives, followed by musicians,
friends, Abbés, and the dancing master.*

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

Manon:
Madrigals, dancing, and then the music!
They're all such beautiful things!
But, they bore me!

*The musicians tune their instruments
while Geronte arranges a Minuet lesson for Manon with the dancing master.*

Lescaut:

Una donnina che s'annoia è cosa
da far paura!
(Andiam da Des Grieux!
È da maestro preparar gli eventi!)

Lescaut: (*philosophically*)

A young woman bored with pleasure flirts
with danger!
(I'm going to find Des Grieux!
I'll arrange events like a master!)

*The dancing master advances toward Manon, and takes her hand
in preparation for the Minuet lesson.*

Maestro di ballo:

Vi prego, signorina, un po' elevato il busto
indi. Ma brava, così mi piace!
Tutta la vostra personcina, or s'avanzi!
Così! Io vi scongiuro, a tempo!

Dancing Master: (*to Manon*)

I beg you, young lady, raise your bust a little.
Very good, that's how I like it!
Now place your lovely little body forward!
Like this! I beg you, keep the tempo!

Geronte:

Oh vaga danzatrice!

Geronte:

Such a lovely dancer!

Manon:

Un po' inesperta.

Manon:

A bit inexperienced.

Maestro di ballo:

Vi prego, non badate a lodi sussurate.
È cosa seria il ballo!

Dancing Master: (*impatiently*)

I beg you, pay no attention to their whispered
praise. Dancing is a serious matter!

Coro:

Tacete! Vi frenate, come si fa da noi;
ammirate in silenzio, in silenzio adorate.
È cosa seria.

Chorus:

Be quiet! Restrain yourselves; admire and
adore her in silence.
It is a serious matter.

Maestro di ballo:

A manca! Brava!
A destra! Un saluto!
Attenta! L'occhialeto!

Dancing Master: (*to Manon*)

To the left! Well done!
To the right! A curtsy!
Attention! The lorgnette!

Geronte:

Minuetto perfetto.

Geronte:

A perfect minuet.

Coro:

Che languore nello sguardo!
Che dolcezza! Che carezza!
Tropo è bella!
Pare stella!
Che candori! Che tesori!
Quella bocca baci scocca!
Se sorride stella pare!

Chorus:

What languor in her looks!
What charm! What caress!
She's too beautiful!
She's like a star!
What purity! What treasures!
Her mouth bursts with kisses!
Here smile is like a shining star!

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!

Coro:

La deità siete del giorno!
Della notte ell'è regina!

Geronte:

She's too lovely! I both sing and praise her,
but my words fail me!

Manon:

A chorus of golden praise vibrates around me;
stop flattering and praising me!

Geronte:

You make me mad with desire!

Chorus:

You are the goddess of dawn!
You are the queen of the night!

The dancing master becomes impatient.

Manon:

Il buon maestro non vuol parole. Se m'adulate non diverrò la diva danzatrice ch'ora già si figura la vostra fantasia troppo felice.

Maestro di ballo:

Un cavalier!

Geronte:

Son qua!

Coro:

Bravi! Che coppia!
Evviva i fortunati innamorati!
Ve' Mercurio e Ciprigna!
Con amore e dovizia.
Oh! Qui letizia con amore e dovizia
leggiadramente alligna!

Manon:

“L'ora, o Tirsi, è vaga e bella.
Ride il giorno, ride intorno la fida pastorella.
Te sospira, per te spira.
Ma tu giungi e in un baleno viva e lieta,
è dessa allor!
Ah! Vedi il ciel com'è sereno
sul miracolo d'amor!”

Coro:

Voi siete il miracolo, siete l'amore!
Siete il miracolo d'amor!

Manon:

The good dancing master dislikes this chatter. If you keep flattering me, I'll never become the good dancer you expect.

Dancing Master:

A partner!

Geronte:

I'm here!

Chorus:

Well done! What wonderful partners!
Long live the fortunate lovers!
They're like Mercury and Venus!
They're blessed with love and riches.
What a joy it is that they are united with love and riches!

Manon: (sarcastically to Geronte)

“Oh, Tirsi, the beautiful moment has arrived.
Your faithful shepherdess awaits you.
She longs for you, and would die for you.
But you arrive and like a flash of lightning,
she is alive and happy!
Look at the sky; it is so serene from the miracle of love!”

Chorus:

You are the miracle; you are love!
You are the miracle of love!

Geronte:

Galanteria sta bene; ma obliate che è tardi. Allegra folla ondeggia pei baluardi.

Coro:

Qui il tempo vola!

Geronte:

È cosa ch'io so per prova.
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.

Coro:

Grave è sempre l'attesa.

Geronte:

Dell'anima sospesa non sian lunghe le
pene.
Ordino la lettiga
Addio, bell'idol mio.

Geronte:

Gallantry is all very well; but it's late, and a
gay crowd strolls along the promenades.

Chorus:

How times flies by!

Geronte:

It is something I know from experience.
You, my radiant joy, promised to join us.
We'll go ahead and await you.

Manon:

I'll be along shortly; it will be enjoyable to
wait for me among fashionable society.

Chorus:

Waiting is always tedious.

Geronte:

Don't prolong the punishment for those
waiting for you.
I'll order the coach.
Good-bye, my lovely idol.

*Geronte kisses Manon's hand, and leaves with the others.
Alone, Manon admires herself in the mirror.*

Manon:

Oh, sarò la più bella!

Manon:

I shall be the most beautiful!

Manon hears someone approaching and thinks it is a servant.

Dunque questa lettiga?

Has the coach arrived yet?

Des Grieux appears. Manon rushes toward him in great agitation.

Allegro Moderato con Agitazione**MANON**

Tu, tu, amore? Tu?

Ah! Mio immenso amore? Dio!

You, my love? You?

You? My dearly beloved? God!

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon!

Manon:

Tu non m'ami dunque più?

M'amavi tanto!

Oh, i lunghi baci!

Oh, il lungo incanto!

La dolce amica d'un tempo aspetta la tua vendetta.

Oh, non guardarmi così non era la tua pupilla tanto severa!

Des Grieux:

Sì, sciagurata, la mia vendetta.

Manon:

Ah! La mia colpa! È vero!

Des Grieux:

Ah! Sciagurata, la mia vendetta.

Manon:

Ah! È vero!

Non m'ami più.

Ah! È vero! Non m'ami dunque più?

M'amavi tanto; non m'ami più!

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon!

Manon:

Don't you love me anymore?

You loved me so much!

The long kisses!

The long enchantment!

Your sweetheart of a time past awaits your vengeance.

Don't look at me that way! Your eyes were never so severe!

Des Grieux:

Yes, wretched woman, my vengeance.

Manon:

It's true! It was all my fault!

Des Grieux:

Ah! Wretched woman, my vengeance.

Manon:

It's true!

You don't love me anymore.

It's true! Don't you love me anymore?

You loved me so much; you no longer love me!

Con amarezza**DES GRIEUX****Des Grieux:**

Taci, taci tu! Il cor mi frangi!

Tu non sai le giornate che buie, desolate

son piombate su me!

Des Grieux:

Be quiet! You're breaking my heart!

You don't know of the dark, desolate days
that fell upon me.**MANON****Manon:**

Io voglio il tuo perdono.

Vedi! Son ricca.

Manon:

I want your forgiveness.

Look! I'm rich.

Des Grieux:

Taci!

Manon:

Questa non ti sembra una festa d'ori
e di colori?

Tutto è per te.

Des Grieux:

Deh! Taci!

Manon:

Pensavo a un avvenir di luce;
amor qui ti conduce.

T'ho tradito, è ver!

Ai tuoi piedi son!

T'ho tradito!

Sciagurata dimmi, ai tuoi piedi son!

Ah! Voglio il tuo perdono.

Non lo negar!

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

Des Grieux:

Be quiet!

Manon: (*showing des Grieux jewels*)

Doesn't this seem like a feast of gold and
bright colors?

It's all yours.

Des Grieux:

Be quiet!

Manon:

I thought about a radiant future;
and love guided you here.

It's true, I betrayed you!

I kneel at your feet!

I betrayed you!

Call me wretched; I kneel before you!

I want your forgiveness.

Don't reject me!

Is it because Manon is less charming and
less beautiful than she used to be?

Moderato**DES GRIEUX**

O tenta - tri - ce! O tenta-tri - ce! È questo l'antico fascino che m'accieca!

Des Grieux:

O tentatrice!

È questo l'antico fascino che m'accieca!

Des Grieux:

You temptress!

This is your old magic that blinds me again!

Manon:

È fascino d'amor; cedi, son tua!

Manon:

It's the magic of love; yield to it, I'm yours!

Des Grieux:

Più non posso lottar!

Son vinto!

Des Grieux:

I can no longer resist!

I'm conquered!

Manon:

Cedi, son tua.

Ah! Vieni! Colle tue braccia stringi Manon
che t'ama.

Manon: (*seductively*)

Give in, I'm yours.

Come! Embrace Manon in your arms;
Manon who loves you.

Des Grieux:

Non posso lottar, o tentatrice!

Des Grieux:

Temptress, I can no longer resist!

Manon:

Stretta al tuo sen m'allaccia!
Manon te solo brama!

Des Grieux:

Più non posso lottar!

Manon:

Cedi, son tua!

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!

Manon:

Hold me close to your breast!
Manon yearns only for you!

Des Grieux:

I can no longer resist!

Manon:

Give in, I am yours!

Des Grieux:

I am conquered: I love you!
I can no longer resist!

Manon:

Come!
Manon yearns only for you!
Come, embrace Manon in your arms;
Manon who loves you!

Con tutta la passione**DES GRIEUX****Des Grieux:**

Nell'occhio tuo profondo io leggo il mio
destin; tutti i tesori del mondo ha il tuo
labbro divin!

Des Grieux:

In your profound eyes I read my destiny;
all the treasures of the world are in your
divine lips!

Manon:

Ah! Manon te solo brama,
stretta al tuo sen m'allaccia!
Alle mie brame torna deh! Torna ancor!
I baci miei son questi!
Questo è il mio amor!
Vivi e t'inebria sovra il mio cor!
Deh, torna ancor!
Ah! Vivi e t'inebria sovra il mio cor.
La bocca mia è un altare dove il bacio è Dio!

Manon:

Manon yearns only for you,
so hold me close to your breast!
My yearning for you has returned!
These are my kisses!
This is my love!
Live and intoxicate yourself over my heart!
You have returned!
Live and intoxicate yourself on my heart!
My mouth is an altar where my kiss is God!

Des Grieux:

I baci tuoi son questi!
Questo è il tuo amor!
M'arde il tuo bacio, dolce tesoro!
In te m'inebrio ancor, dolce tesoro!
Nelle tue braccia care v'è l'ebbrezza, l'oblio!

Des Grieux:

These are your kisses!
This is your love!
Your kisses set me on fire, my sweet treasure!
You still intoxicate me, sweet treasure!
There is rapture and oblivion in your arms!

Manon:
Labbra adorato e care!

Des Grieux:
Manon, mi fai morire!

Manon:
Labbra dolci a baciare!

Manon, Des Grieux:
Dolcissimo soffrir!

Manon:
Adored and dear lips!

Des Grieux:
Manon, you make want to die!

Manon:
Sweet lips to kiss!

Manon, Des Grieux:
Sweetest suffering!

Geronte suddenly appears at the door. Des Grieux moves toward Geronte, but Manon places herself between them.

Manon:
Ah!

Manon:
Ah!

Geronte:
Affè, madamigella, or comprendo il perchè
di nostr' attesa!
Giungo in mal punto.
Errore involontario!
Chi non erra quaggiù?
Anche voi, credo, ad esempio, obliaste
d'essere in casa mia.

Geronte: (ironically)
So, young lady, now I understand the reason
we have been waiting!
I've arrived at an inauspicious moment.
An unwitting mistake!
Who doesn't make mistakes!
And you, do not realize that you are
trespassing by being in my house.

Des Grieux:
Signore!

Des Grieux:
Sir!

Manon:
Taci!

Manon:
Be quiet!

Geronte:
Gratitudine, sia oggi il tuo dì di festa!

Geronte:
It's a holiday for gratitude!

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

(to Manon)
After rescuing you from squalor, this is how
you reward my true affection!

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

Manon: (holding a mirror to Geronte)
Love? Love?
My good Sir, here! Look at yourself!
If I am wrong, tell me honestly!
And then look at us!

Geronte:
Io son leale, mia bella donnina.
Conosco il mio dovere deggio partir di qui!
O gentil cavaliere, o vaga signorina,
arrivederci, e presto!

Geronte: (offended and sarcastic)
My pretty young lady, I'll be frank with you.
I know my duty, and I must leave here!
Gallant gentlemen, lovely maiden,
we'll meet again, and very soon!

Manon:

Ah! Ah! Liberi!
Liberi come l'aria!
Che gioia, cavaliere, amor mio bello!

Manon: (*happily*)

Ah! Ah! Liberated!
Free as the air!
What joy, my handsome love!

Des Grieux:

Senti, di qui partiamo: un solo istante,
questo tetto del vecchio maledetto
non t'abbia più!

Des Grieux: (*pensive and sad*)

Listen, we must leave here. You must not
stay another moment under this accursed old
man's roof!

Manon:

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

Manon:

What a pity! Surrender all these treasures!
Alas, we must leave!

Moderatamente
DES GRIEUX



Ah!Ma-non, mi tra-disce il tuo folle pensier: sempre la stessa, sempre la stessa!

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, abbacinata 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:

Manon, you betray me with your foolish
thoughts. You're always the same!
You tremble divinely, in your passionate
surrender.
Good and charming, like the loveliness of
your caress.
Always a new enchantment; then suddenly
you're dazzled by the glitter of the gilded life!
I? I am your slave, and your victim who
descends the ladder of shame.
I am the slime who wallows in slime, selling
my soul to the gambling dens.
The most vile shame draws me to you!
What will you do with me in the dark future?

Manon:

Un'altra volta, un'altra volta ancora,
deh, mi perdona!
Sarò fedele e buona, lo giuro, lo giuro.

Manon:

Once again, one more time, please forgive
me!
I'll be faithful and good. I swear it.

Lescaut enters, breathless and distraught.

Des Grieux:

Lescaut!

Des Grieux:

Lescaut!

Manon:

Tu qui?

Des Grieux:

Che avvenne?

Manon:

Che avvenne?

Des Grieux:

Di'!

Manon:

Di'!

Manon, Des Grieux:

O ciel!

Che è stato?

Ci fa tremar!

Lescaut:

Ch'io prenda flato.

Manon, Des Grieux:

Ci fa tremar!

Lescaut:

Onde, parlar.

Manon, Des Grieux:

O ciel! Che è stato?

Des Grieux:

Di'!

Manon:

Di'!

Lescaut:

V'ha denunziato!

Manon:

Chi?

Des Grieux:

Il vecchio?

Lescaut:

Sì!

Manon:

You here?

Des Grieux:

What happened?

Manon:

What happened?

Des Grieux:

Speak!

Manon:

Speak!

Manon, Des Grieux:

Oh Heavens!

What has happened?

You make us tremble!

Lescaut:

Let me catch my breath.

Manon, Des Grieux:

You make us tremble!

Lescaut:

I'll tell you all.

Manon, Des Grieux:

Heavens! What has happened?

Des Grieux:

Speak!

Manon:

Speak!

Lescaut:

He has denounced you!

Manon:

Who?

Des Grieux:

The old man?

Lescaut:

Yes!

Manon:

Ohimè!

Lescaut:

Già vengon qui e guardie e arcier!

Manon:

Ohimè!

Des Grieux:

O ciel!

Lescaut:

Su, cavalier, e per le scale, spiegate l'ale!

Manon:

Ohimè!

Lescaut:

Da un granatiere ch'era in quartiere tutto ho saputo.

Per le scale, cavalier, spiegate l'ale,
già vengon qui e guardie e arcier!
Via, l'ali ai piè!**Des Grieux:**

Maledetto il vecchio astuto!

Manon:

Ohimè, ohimè! M'affretto, ohimè!

Des Grieux:

Sì! Bada a te!

Lescaut:Ah, non sapete, voi la perdete, ah, non sapete,
l'attende crudele sorte spietata: l'esilio!**Manon:**

Ohimè! La morte!

Lescaut:Or v'affrettate! Non esitate!
Pochi minuti, siete perduti!
Già dal quartier uscian gli arcier!**Manon:**Ohimè! M'affretto!
Un istante! Questo smagliante smeraldo.**Manon:**

Oh no!

Lescaut:

Guards and archers are on the way here!

Manon:

Oh no!

Des Grieux:

Oh heavens!

Lescaut:

Get up, Chevalier, and fly down the stairs!

Manon:

Oh no!

Lescaut:All this information was told to me by an old
friend down at the barracks.
The stairs, and unfold your wings.
Soon archers and guards will be coming!
Go, put wings on your feet!**Des Grieux:**

Curse that crafty old scoundrel!

Manon:

I'm hurrying!

Des Grieux:

Yes! Watch out for yourself!

Lescaut:You don't understand, she'll be lost.
A cruel, pitiless fate awaits her: exile!**Manon:**

Alas! Death!

Lescaut:Hurry up! Don't hesitate!
In a few minutes you'll be lost!
The guards have already left their quarters!**Manon:** (*gathering jewels*)Alas! I'm hurrying!
One moment! This dazzling emerald.

Des Grieux:

Si, bada a te!
Vecchio vil!
Andiam, andiam!
Affrettiam! Orsù!

Manon:

Ma sì! Mio Dio!
Mi sbrigo!
E tu m'aiuta.

Des Grieux:

A far?

Manon:

Ad involtar...

Lescaut:

Il vecchio vile morrà di bile, se trova vuota
la gabbia e ignota gli sia l'altra dimora!
Manon! Suvvia, son già per vial.

Des Grieux:

Andiam, andiam!

Manon:

Ma sì! E tu m'aiuta ad involtar cotesti
oggetti! Vuota i cassetti!

Des Grieux:

Orsù affrettiam!
Andiam, Manon!

Lescaut:

Oh il bel forzier!
Peccato inver!
Nostro cammino sarà il giardino.
In un istante dell' alte piante sotto
l' ombria siam sulla via.
Buon chi ci piglia!

Manon:

E quest' incanto che adoro tanto dovrò
lasciare, abbandonare?

Des Grieux:

O mia diletta Manon, t'affretta!
D'uopo è partir, tosto fuggir!
Torturar mi vuoi ancor!

Des Grieux:

Yes, watch out!
That old man is vile!
Let's go!
Let's hurry! Come on!

Manon:

But yes! My God!
I'm hurrying!
But you help me!

Des Grieux:

To do what?

Manon:

To wrap up...

Lescaut:

The old monster will drop dead when he
finds empty cabinets, and can't find Manon!
Manon! Hurry, they're already on the way.

Des Grieux:

Let's go!

Manon:

All right! Help me wrap these things!
Empty the drawers!

Des Grieux:

Let's go! Hurry up!
Let's go, Manon!

Lescaut:

Oh the beautiful strongbox!
It's a shame to leave it here!
We'll take the path through the garden.
In a moment, we'll be hidden under the
shelter of those tall plants and on our way.
It'll be impossible for them to catch us!

Manon: (with sadness)

And this enchantment I adore so much.
Do I have to leave it here?

Des Grieux:

Oh my dearest Manon, hurry!
We must leave soon, and escape right away!
You're torturing me again!

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.

During all the confusion, Manon rushes about the room, packing jewels in her cloak.

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!

Lescaut:

Il vecchio ordina, sbraita, le guardie sfilano.

Manon:

Ohimè!

Des Grieux:

Fuggiam!

Lescaut:

Gli arcier s'appostano!
Entrano, salgono! Eccoli!

Des Grieux:

Dimmi, qui v'è un'uscita?

Manon:

Sì! Aggiù all'alcova!

Manon:

My darling, it would be unwise to leave this
gold!

Des Grieux:

Just bring your heart! I only want to save
your love.

Lescaut:

Curses!

Manon:

Ah!

Lescaut:

Here they are, surrounding the house!

Des Grieux:

Manon!

Manon:

Des Grieux! Through here! Through there!
Let's flee! Well then, through there!

Des Grieux:

Let's flee! No! No!
Through there! Hurry! Hurry!

Lescaut:

Geronte's ordering the guards to file through.

Manon:

Alas!

Des Grieux:

Let's flee!

Lescaut:

The guards are taking their places!
They're entering, coming up! Here they are!

Des Grieux:

Tell me, is there another exit?

Manon:

Yes! Behind the alcove!

Lescaut:
Eccoli, eccoli, salgono, salgono!

Lescaut:
Here they are, they're coming up!

Manon:
Ah! Ah!

Manon:
Ah! Ah!

*The door bursts open, and a sergeant appears with guards and soldiers.
Geronte stands at the doorway, smiling sardonically.*

Sergente:
Nessun si muova!

Sergeant:
No one move!

Geronte:
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Geronte:
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Des Grieux draws his sword, but Lescaut disarms him.

Lescaut:
Se v'arrestan, cavalier, chi potrà Manon
salvar?

Lescaut:
If they arrest you, who will be able to save
Manon?

Des Grieux:
O Manon! O mia Manon!

Des Grieux:
Oh Manon! Oh my Manon!

Manon is dragged off by the soldiers.

End of Act II

INTERMEZZO

The Imprisonment - the journey to Le Havre (from the novel by Abbé Prévost).

Des Grieux:
“Gli è che io l'amo!
La mia passione è così forte che io mi sento
la più sfortunata creatura che viva.
Quello che non ho io tentato a Parigi
per ottenere la sua libertà!
Ho implorato i potenti!
Ho picchiato e supplicato a tutte le porte!

Des Grieux:
“The fact is that I love her!
My passion is so strong that I feel like the
most unfortunate creature alive.
In Paris, I tried unsuccessfully to obtain her
freedom!
I begged the powerful!
I have beaten and supplicated at their doors!

Persino alla violenza ho ricorso!
Tutto fu inutile.
Una sol via mi rimaneva: seguirla!
Ed io la seguo!
Dovunque ella vada!
Fosse pure in capo al mondo!”

I even turned to violence as a recourse!
It was all futile.
Only one path remains open: to follow her!
And I will follow it!
Wherever she may go!
Even to the ends of the earth!”

The above speech is in the score, but rarely spoken in performance.

Act III

*At the harbor of Le Havre, just before dawn.
In the foreground, a barred window projecting from the prison.*

Des Grieux:

Ansia eterna, crudel.

Des Grieux:

Eternal, cruel anxiety.

Lescaut:

Pazienza ancora.

La guardia là fra poco monterà l'arcier che
ho compro.

Lescaut:

Have patience.

The guard I have bribed will soon be on
duty.

Des Grieux:

L'attesa m'accora!

La vita mia, l'anima tutta è là!

Des Grieux:

The waiting breaks my heart!

My life and soul, is there!

Lescaut:

Manon sa già, e attende il mio segnale e a
noi verrà.

Io intanto cogli amici il colpo tenterò.
Manon all'alba libera farò.

Lescaut:

Manon already knows, and she is waiting
for my signal.

Meanwhile, my friends and I will try to
rescue her. At dawn, I'll free Manon.

Des Grieux:

Dietro al destino mi traggo livido,
e notte e di cammino.

E un miraggio m'angoscia e m'esalta!
Vicino or m'è, poi fugge se l'avvinghio!
Parigi ed Havre, fiera, triste agonia!
Oh, lungo strazio della vita mia!

Des Grieux:

A dark destiny pursues me,
during day and night.
It is an illusion that torments and excites me!
It seems near, but then it vanishes!
Paris and Le Havre: a grim and sad agony!
My life has become prolonged anguish!

Lescaut:

Vengono.

Lescaut:

They're coming.

Des Grieux:

Alfin!

Des Grieux:

Finally!

A sergeant changes the sentinel.

Lescaut:

Ecco là l'uomo. È quello!
È l'Havre addormentata. L'ora è giunta.

Lescaut:

That's the man. It's that one!
Le Havre is asleep. The hour has come.

*Lescaut gestures to the sentinel, who then retires. As des Grieux watches anxiously,
Lescaut taps cautiously on the prison window bars.
Manon appears at the window. Des Grieux runs towards her.*

Des Grieux:
Manon!

Des Grieux:
Manon!

Manon:
Des Grieux!

Manon:
Des Grieux!

Lescaut:
Al diavolo l'America! Manon non partirà!

Lescaut:
To hell with America! Manon shall not leave!

Manon:
Tu, amore? Nell'onta non mi abbandoni?

Manon:
You, my love? You haven't forsaken me in my shame?

Des Grieux:
Abbandonarti? Mai!
Se t'ho seguita per la lunga via
fu perchè fede mi regnava in core.
Fra poco mia sarai.

Des Grieux:
Forsake you? Never!
I followed you on this long dangerous road
because my heart remained faithful.
Soon you'll be mine.

Manon:
Fra poco! Tua, fra poco!

Manon:
Soon! Yours, soon!

Des Grieux:
Taci!

Des Grieux:
Be quiet!

A lamplighter sings a tune as he extinguishes lamps in the square.

Il Lampionaio:
E Kate rispose al Re:
D'una zitella perchè tentare il cor?
Per un marito mi fe' bella il Signor.
Rise il Re, poi le die' gemme ed or
e un marito, e n'ebbe il cor.

The Lamplighter:
And Kate replied to the King:
"Why tempt a poor maid's heart?
The Lord made me beautiful for a husband."
The King laughed, and then he gave her
jewels and a husband; he won her heart.

As the lamplighter leaves, day dawns.

Des Grieux:
È l'alba! O mia Manon,
pronta alla porta del cortile sii tu!
V'è là Lescaut con uomini devoti.
Là vanne, e tu sei salva!

Des Grieux:
It's dawn! Oh my Manon, be ready at the
gates of the courtyard!
Lescaut will be there with loyal men.
They'll find you and you'll be rescued!

Manon:
Tremo per te! Tremo! Pavento!
Tremo e m'angoscio, nè so il perchè!
Ah, una minaccia funebre io sento!
Tremo a un periglio che ignoto m'è.

Manon:
I fear for you! I tremble! I fear!
I tremble and I'm anxious! I don't know why!
Ah, I sense a deadly menace!
I tremble at omens of unknown danger!

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon, disperato è il mio prego!
L'affanno la parola mi spezza.
Vuoi che m'uccida qui?
Ti scongiuro, Manon, ah vieni! Salviamoci!

Manon:

E sia! Chiedimi tutto!
Son tua, m'attendi, amore!.

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon, I plead to you in desperation!
My words are broken by grief.
Do you want me to kill myself here?
Manon, I beg you, come! Let's save ourselves!

Manon:

So be it! I'll do everything you ask.
I'm yours, wait for me, my love!

*The sound of a gunshot is heard, and shouts of "All'armi!" ("To arms!")
Lescaut comes running from the street, sword in hand.*

Lescaut:

Perduta è la partita!
Cavalier, salviam la vita!

Lescaut:

The game is lost!
Chevalier, let's run for our lives.

Des Grieux:

Che avvenne?

Des Grieux:

What happened?

Lescaut:

Udite come strillano!
Fallito è il colpo!

Lescaut:

Listen to them screaming!
Our plan has failed!

Des Grieux:

Venga la morte!
Fuggir? Giammai!

Des Grieux:

Then death is welcome!
Escape? Never!

Lescaut:

Ah, pazzo inver!

Lescaut:

You're indeed mad!

Manon:

Se m'ami, in nome di Dio, t'invola, amor mio!

Manon:

My love, if you love me, in the name of God, you must escape!

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon!

Des Grieux:

Ah, Manon!

Lescaut:

Cattivo affare!

Lescaut:

A bad turn of events!

Citizens and villagers arrive in the square, curious about the gunshot they heard.

Borghesi, Uomini e Donne:

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

Citizens and People:

You heard! What happened? Was it a rape?
A revolt? A woman escaped! More than one!
The dark night protected the kidnapper!

Drums signal the arrival of a Sergeant and soldiers. The Sergeant orders the crowd to stand back as his prisoners, mostly women in chains, are brought to the gate.

Il Sergente:

Il passo m'apprite!

Sergeant:

Make way for the prisoners!

The Captain of the ship appears with his crew of sailors.

Comandante:

È pronta la nave. L'appello affrettate!

Captain:

The ship is ready. Hurry up with the roll-call!

Borghesi, Uomini e Donne:

Silenzio! L'appello cominciano già.

Citizens, Men and Women:

Quiet! They're now beginning the roll-call.

Largo Sostenuto**Il Sergente:**

Rosetta!

Sergeant:

Rosetta!

Giovanotti:

Eh, che aria!

Young Men:

What an air!

Altri:

È un amore!

Others:

She's a charmer!

Il Sergente:

Madelón!

Sergeant:

Madelón!

Alcuni Borghesi:

Ah, qui sei ridotta!

Some Citizens:

Ah, here you are humiliated!

Alcune donne:

Che riso insolente!

Some women:

What insolent laughter!

Il Sergente:

Manon!

Sergeant:

Manon!

Alcuni vecchi:

Chissà? Una sedotta.

Some old men:

Who is she? A seduced woman.

Il Sergente:

Ninetta!

Sergeant:

Ninetta!

Donne:

Madonna è dolente!

Women:

The lady is downcast!

Il Sergente:

Caton!

Giovanotti:

Affè, che dolore!

Il Sergente:

Regina!

Altri:

Che incesso!

Il Sergente:

Claretta!

Altri:

È una dea!

Il Sergente:

Violetta!

Altri:

Ah questa vorrei!

Il Sergente:

Nerina!

Altri:

Che bionda!

Il Sergente:

Elisa!

Altri:

Che bruna!

Il Sergente:

Ninon!

Altri:

Che splendidi nèi!

Il Sergente:

Giorgetta!

Altri:

Di vaghe nessuna!

Che gaia assemblea!

Sergeant:

Caton!

Young men:

Indeed, how sorrowful!

Sergeant:

Regina!

Others:

What pride!

Sergeant:

Claretta!

Others:

She's a goddess!

Sergeant:

Violetta!

Others:

I would like this one!

Sergeant:

Nerina!

Others:

What a blonde!

Sergeant:

Elisa!

Others:

What a brunette!

Sergeant:

Ninon!

Others:

What splendid beauty marks!

Sergeant:

Giorgetta!

Others:

Her beauty's fading!

What a gay assemblage!

Borghesi:

È bella davvero!

Lescaut:

Costei? V'è un mistero!

Borghesi:

Sedotta? Tradita?

Lescaut:

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

Borghesi:

Che infamie, che orrore!

Altri:

Ah! Fa compassione.

Lescaut:

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

Borghesi:

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.

Borghesi:

Ah! Inver fa pietà!

Lescaut:

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

Townspeople: *(looking at Manon)*

She's quite beautiful!

Lescaut: *(answering the townspeople)*

This one? It's a mystery!

Townspeople:

Seduced? Betrayed?

Lescaut:

As a young woman she was abducted from
her handsome lover.

Townspeople:

What a disgrace! What a horror!

Others:

She deserves compassion.

Lescaut:

She was abducted from her wedding and
thrown to a lecherous old man!

Villagers:

That's always the case!

Lescaut:

An old libertine stole her for a day's pleasure.
Then satisfied, he discarded her!
Do you see that pale young man near her?
That unfortunate man is her husband.

Townspeople:

It truthfully deserves pity!

Lescaut:

This is how he finds and sees his ravished wife
again: in chains and degraded in the mud!

*Des Grieux approaches Manon, cautiously concealing himself behind her.
Manon sees him, tries to suppress her joy, and both clasp each other's hands.*

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!

Manon:

Des Grieux, soon I'll be far away.
It is my destiny.
And I will have lost you forever!
Farewell, my last treasure!
Return to your home!
One day you will love again!

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:

Ora a tuo padre dei far ritorn!
 Devi Manon scordar! Mio amor, addio!

Des Grieux:

Ah! M'ho nell'animo l'odio soltanto degli
 uomini di Dio!

You must forget Manon!
 Perhaps I didn't love you enough!
 This is my remorse!
 But you have forgiven me, my love!
 My immense love, farewell!

Des Grieux:

Look at me and see how I surrender to this
 bitter anguish!
 Every thought turns into tears!

Manon:

You must return to your father!
 You must forget Manon! Farewell, my love!

Des Grieux:

In my soul, I have hatred in the name of
 humanity and of God!

The Sergeant marshals the women into single file to board the ship.

Il Sergente:

Presto! In fila! Marciate!

Costui qui ancor? Finiamola!

Sergeant:

Quickly! March in file!
 (Seizing Manon, and seeing Des Grieux)
 You still here? Let's put an end to this!

*The Sergeant seizes Manon roughly by the arm. Des Grieux loses his control
 and wrenches Manon from the Sergeant's grasp.*

Des Grieux:

Indietro!

Il Sergente:

Via!

Borghesi:

Coraggio!

Des Grieux:

Ah, guai a chi la tocca!
 Manon, ti stringi a me!

Borghesi:

Così! Bravo!

Comandante:

Che avvien?

Des Grieux:

Stand back!

Sergeant:

Go away!

Villagers:

What courage!

Des Grieux:

Woe to anyone who dares to touch her!
 Manon, stay close to me!

Villagers:

What bravery!

Captain:

What's happening?

Des Grieux:

Ah, non vi avvicinate!
Che, vivo me, costei nessun strappar potrà!

Des Grieux:

Don't come closer!
So long as I live, nobody will tear her away
from me!

*Des Grieux is overcome with emotion. He loosens Manon from his grasp,
and then falls at the feet of the Captain.*

No! Pazzo son!

No! I'm insane!

Largo sostenuto**DES GRIEUX**

Guarda - te, paz - zo son, guarda - te, com'io piango e implo - ro

Guardate, pazzo son, come io piango e
imploro, com'io chiedo pietà!

Udite!

M'accettate qual mozzo od a più vile
mestiere ed io verrò felice!

Vi pigliate il mio sangue, la vita!

Ah, ingrato non sarò!

Look , I'm insane, look how I weep and
implore you, how I beg for pity!

Listen!

Take me with you as a cabin boy, or for any
menial work; I'll gladly come!

Take my blood, my life!

I won't be ungrateful!

Comandante:

Ah, popolar le Americhe, giovinotto, desiate?

Ebben, sia pure!

Via! Mozzo, v'affrettate!

Captain:

So you want to populate the Americas?

Well, let it be!

Go, cabin boy, and hurry up!

End of Act III

Act IV

*In America. A vast desert plain near New Orleans. The horizon is in the distance.
The sky is overcast. Night is falling.*

*Manon and des Grieux are dishevelled and fatigued.
Manon is weak and exhausted, and leans on des Grieux for support.*

Des Grieux:

Tutta su me ti posa, o mia stanca diletta.
La strada polverosa, la strada maledetta al
termine s'avanza.

Manon:

Innanzi ancor!
L'aria d'intorno or si fa scura.
Erra la brezza nella gran pianura e muore
il giorno.
Innanzi! No...

Des Grieux:

Lean on me, my tired beloved.
Soon, we'll leave this dusty and accursed
road behind us.

Manon:

Let's still move onward!
The air around us darkens.
The breeze wanders over the great plain,
and daylight is ending.
Let's move onward! No...

Manon falls to the ground, exhausted.

Des Grieux:

Manon!

Manon:

Son vinta! Mi perdona!
Tu sei forte, t'invidio.
Donna e debole, cedo.

Des Grieux: (in anguish)

Manon!

Manon: (her voice faint)

I'm finished! Forgive me!
You are strong, I envy you.
I'm a feeble woman. I'm fainting..

Des Grieux

Tu soffri?

Des Grieux:

Are you suffering?

Manon:

Orribilmente! No! Che dissi?
Una vana, una stolta parola.
Deh, ti consola!
Chieggo breve riposo, un solo istante.
Mio dolce amante, a me t'appressa, a me!

Manon:

Terribly! No! What did I say?
Vain, foolish words.
Take heart!
I beg you for a brief rest, just a moment.
My sweet lover, come near me!

Des Grieux:

Manon, senti, amor mio.
Non mi rispondi, amore?

Des Grieux:

Manon, my love, listen to me.
My love, you don't answer?

Andante Espressivo con Moto

Vedi, son io che piango, io che imploro,
io che carezza e bacio i tuoi capelli d'oro!

Look, it is I who weeps and implores you,
I who kisses and caresses your golden hair!

Ah, Manon! Rispondi a me! Tace!
Maledizione! Crudel febbre l'avvince!
Disperato mi vince un senso di sventura,
un senso di tenebre e di paura!
Rispondimi, amor mio! Tace!
Manon, non mi rispondi?

Ah, Manon! Answer me! She is silent!
Curses! A cruel fever grips her!
I'm despairing, overcome by misfortune,
and a sense of darkness and fear.
Answer me, my beloved! She's silent!
Manon, why don't you answer?

Manon

Sei tu, sei tu che piangi?
Sei tu, sei tu che implori?
I tuoi singulti ascolto e mi bagnano il
volto le tue lagrime ardenti.
La sete mi divora. O amore, aita!

Manon:

Is it you who is weeping?
Is it you who implores me?
I hear your sobs, and your impassioned
tears drench my face.
I'm being consumed by thirst. Darling, help me!

Des Grieux:

O amor, tutto il mio sangue per la tua vita!

Des Grieux:

Oh beloved, I'd give my blood for your life!

Des Grieux rises and scans the horizon.

E nulla! Arida landa, non un filo d'acqua.
O immoto cielo!
O Dio, a cui fanciullo anch'io levai la mia
preghiera, un soccorso!

There's nothing! Just barren land and not a
trace of water. Oh heartless Heaven!
God, to whom I prayed as a child, give us
your help!

Manon:

Sì, un soccorso! Tu puoi salvarmi.
Senti, qui poserò.
E tu scruta il mister dell'orizzonte,
e cerca monte o casolar.
Oltre ti spingi e con lieta favella!
Lieta novella poi vieni a recar.

Manon:

Yes, help! You can save me.
Listen, I'll rest here.
You explore the horizon, look for a hill or
a cabin.
Use your utmost strength, and afterwards
come back with good news and happy words.

Des Grieux hesitates to leave Manon. He finds a place for her to rest, remains a while undecided, and then goes out into the desert.

As the sky darkens, Manon pours out her distress and fear.

**Con la massima espressione
e con angoscia
MANON**



Sola, perduta, abbandonata in landa
desolata. Orrore!
Intorno a me s'oscura il ciel.
Ahimè, son sola!
E nel profondo deserto io cado, strazio
crudel,
ah sola, abbandonata, io, la deserta donna.
Ah, non voglio morire!
Tutto dunque è finito!

Terra di pace mi sembrava questa.
Ahi, mia beltà funesta, ire novelle
accende!
Strappar da lui mi si 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!

Alone, lost and forsaken in this desolate
land. What a horror!
The sky darkens around me.
Alas, I'm alone!
I die in the depths of the desert, a cruel
torture,
alone and forsaken. I, the deserted woman.
Ah, I don't want to die!
It is all over for me!

This seemed like a land of peace.
My fatal beauty aroused new anguish!
They wanted to tear me away from him,
and now my horrible past resurges and
comes to life.
Ah, it is stained with blood!
It is all over!
I beg for the grave, a peaceful asylum.
I don't want to die!

Des Grieux returns. Manon falls into his arms.

Amore, aita!
Fra le tue braccia, amore.
L'ultima volta! Apporti tu novella lieta?

Des Grieux:

Nulla rinvenni, l'orizzonte nulla mi rivelò,
lontano spinsi lo sguardo invano.

Manon:

Muoio, scendon le tenebre.
Su me la notte scende.

Des Grieux:

Un funesto delirio ti percuote, t'offende!
Posa qui dove palpito, in me ritorna ancor.

My love, help me!
In your arms, my love.
For the last time! Do you have good news?

Des Grieux:

I found nothing. The horizon revealed
nothing. I searched far and wide in vain.

Manon:

I'm dying. The shadows are closing in.
Night descends upon me.

Des Grieux:

You're delirious frenzy overcomes you!
Rest on my heart until you recover.

Manon:

Oh, t'amo tanto e muoio.
Già la parola manca al mio voler.
Ma posso dirti che t'amo tanto! Oh,
amore!
Ultimo incanto, ineffabile ebbrezza,
o mio estremo desir!

Manon:

I love you so much, and I'm dying.
Words have already failed me, and I have no
will.
But I can tell you that I love you so much!
My darling, my delight and treasure,
my ultimate desire!

Manon begins to faint. Des Grieux desperately tries to support her.

Des Grieux:

Gelo di morte! Dio, l'ultima speme
infrangi!

Des Grieux:

The chill of death! God, you have
shattered my last hope!

Manon:

Mio dolce amor, tu piangi.
Ora non è di lagrime, ora di baci è questa.
Il tempo vola, baciami!

Manon:

My sweet beloved, you're crying.
This is not the time for tears, but kisses.
Time is flying by. Kiss me!

Des Grieux:

E vivo ancor! Infamia!

Des Grieux:

And I still live! Disgraceful!

Manon:

Io vo' che sia una festa di divine carezze
di novissime ebbrezze per me la morte.

Manon:

For my death, I want you to shower me
with divine kisses and embraces.

Des Grieux:

O immensa delizia mia, tu fiamma
d'amore eterna.

Des Grieux:

Oh my supreme treasure, the flame of
eternal love.

Manon:

La fiamma si spegne. Parla, deh, parla,
ahimè, più non t'ascolto.
Qui, vicino a me, voglio il tuo volto.
Così, mi baci, ancor ti sento.

Manon:

The flame is dying. Speak to me my love,
alas, I can no longer hear you.
Here, near me, I want you face.
In this way, kiss me, and I feel you again.

Des Grieux:

Senza di te, perduto, ti seguirò.

Des Grieux:

I'm lost without you. I'll follow you.

Manon:

Non voglio! Addio, cupa è la notte, ho
freddo.
Era amorosa la tua Manon?
Rammenti? Dimmi, la luminosa mia
giovinezza?
Il sole più non vedrò.

Manon:

I forbid it! Farewell, the night is dark, and
I am cold.
Was your Manon loving?
Remember? Tell me, was it the splendor of
my youth?
I won't see the sun anymore.

Des Grieux:

Mio Dio!

Des Grieux:

My God!

Manon:

Le mie colpe, travolgerà l'oblio,
ma l'amor mio, non muore.

Manon:

My faults will be forgotten, but my love
will never die.

*Manon dies. Des Grieux, tortured by despair, breaks into tears,
and then falls on the corpse of Manon.*

End of Opera

Discography

- 1931 Zamboni (Manon); Merli (Des Grieux); Conati (Lescaut);
Bordonali (Geronte); Nessi (Edmondo);
La Scala Chorus and Orchestra;
Molajoli (Conductor)
- 1953 Petrella (Manon); Campagnano (Des Grieux); Meletti (Lescaut);
Latinucci (Geronte); Pane (Edmondo);
Italian RAI Chorus and Orchestra;
Del Cupolo (Conductor)
- 1954 Tebaldi (Manon); De Monaco (Des Grieux); Boriello (Lescaut);
Corena (Geronte); De Palmo (Edmondo);
Academy of Santa Cecilia Chorus and Orchestra;
Molinari-Pradelli (Conductor)
- 1954 Albanese (Manon); Bjoerling (Des Grieux); Merrill (Lescaut);
Calabrese (Edmondo); Carlin (Edmondo);
Rome Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Perlea (Conductor)
- 1957 Callas (Manon); De Stefano (Des Grieux); Fioravanti (Lescaut);
Calabrese (Geronte); Formichini (Edmondo);
La Scala Chorus and Orchestra;
Serafin (Conductor)
- 1970 Kabaivanska (Manon); Domingo (Des Grieux);
Arena di Verona Chorus and Orchestra;
Santi (Conductor)
- 1971 Caballé (Manon); Domingo (Des Grieux); Sardinero (Lescaut);
Mangin (Geronte); Tear (Edmondo);
Ambrosian Opera Chorus/New Philharmonia Orchestra;
Bartoletti (Conductor)
- 1983 Freni (Manon); Domingo (Des Grieux); Bruson (Lescaut);
Rydl (Geronte); Gambill (Edmondo);
Royal Opera House Chorus and Orchestra;
Sinopoli (Conductor)
- 1986 Kabaivanska (Manon); Giacomini (Des Grieux); Portella (Lescaut);
Lucciardi (Geronte); Dyakovski (Edmondo);
Bulgarian TV/Rado Chorus and Symphony Orchestra;
Campori (Conductor);
- 1987 Te Kanawa (Manon); Carreras (Des Grieux); Coni (Lescaut);
Tajo (Geronte); Matteuzzi (Edmondo);
Teatro Comunale of Bologna Chorus and Orchestra;
Chailly (Conductor)

- 1992 Gauci (Manon); Kaludov (Des Grieux); Sardiniero (Lescaut);
 Rosca (Geronte); George; Edmondo);
 Brussels Radio and Television Philharmonic Orchestra
 Rahbari (Conductor)
- 1993 Freni (Manon); Pavarotti (Des Grieux); Croft (Lescaut);
 Taddei (Geronte); Vargas (Edmondo);
 Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
 Levine (Conductor)
- 1997 (in English)
 Nitescu (Manon); Denniston (Des Grieux); De Candia (Lescaut);
 Montarsolo (Geronte); Palombi; Edmondo)
 Glyndebourne Orchestra;
 Gardiner (Conductor)
- 1998 Gulephina (Manon); Cura (Des Grieux); Gallo (Lescaut);
 Roni (Geronte); Berti (Edmondo);
 La Scala Chorus and Orchestra;
 Muti (Conductor)

Videography

Metropolitan Opera (1980)

Scotto (Manon); Domingo (Des Grieux); Creech (Lescaut);
Elvira (Geronte); Capecchi (Edmondo);
Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra
Levine (Conductor)

Warner VHS (1983)

Te Kanawa (Manon); Domingo (Des Grieux); Allen (Lescaut);
Robinson (Geronte);
Royal Opera House Chorus and Orchestra;
Sinopoli (Conductor);
Friedrich (Video Director)

ArtHaus Musik DVD (1991)

Gauci (Manon) Ordonex (Des Grieux); Danckaert (Lescaut);
Bastin (Geronte); Ryan (Edmondo);
Flemish Opera Symphony Orchestra;
Varviso (Conductor)

DICTIONARY OF OPERA AND MUSICAL TERMS

Accelerando - Play the music faster, but gradually.

Adagio - At a slow or gliding tempo, not as slow as largo, but not as fast as andante.

Agitato - Restless or agitated.

Allegro - At a brisk or lively tempo, faster than andante but not as fast as presto.

Andante - A moderately slow, easy-going tempo.

Appoggiatura - An extra or embellishing note preceding a main melodic note. Usually written as a note of smaller size, it shares the time value of the main note.

Arabesque - Flourishes or fancy patterns usually applying to vocal virtuosity.

Aria - A solo song usually structured in a formal pattern. Arias generally convey reflective and introspective thoughts rather than descriptive action.

Arietta - A shortened form of aria.

Arioso - A musical passage or composition having a mixture of free recitative and metrical song.

Arpeggio - Producing the tones of a chord in succession rather than simultaneously.

Atonal - Music that is not anchored in traditional musical tonality; it does not use the diatonic scale and has no keynote or tonal center.

Ballad opera - Eighteenth-century English opera consisting of spoken dialogue and music derived from popular ballad and folksong sources. The most famous is *The Beggar's Opera*, which is a satire of the Italian opera seria.

Bar - A vertical line across the stave that divides the music into measures.

Baritone - A male singing voice ranging between bass and tenor.

Baroque - A style of artistic expression prevalent in the 17th century that is marked by the use of complex forms, bold ornamentation, and florid decoration. The Baroque period extends from approximately 1600 to 1750 and includes the works of the original creators of modern opera, the Camerata, as well as the later works by Bach and Handel.

Bass - The lowest male voice, usually divided into categories such as:

Basso buffo - A bass voice that specializes in comic roles: Dr. Bartolo in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*.

Basso cantante - A bass voice that demonstrates melodic singing quality: King Philip in Verdi's *Don Carlos*.

Basso profondo - the deepest, most profound, or most dramatic of bass voices: Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Bel canto - Literally, "beautiful singing." It originated in Italian opera of the 17th and 18th centuries and stressed beautiful tones produced with ease, clarity, purity, and evenness, together with an agile vocal technique and virtuosity. Bel canto flourished in the first half of the 19th century in the works of Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti.

Cabaletta - A lively, concluding portion of an aria or duet. The term is derived from the Italian word "cavallo," or horse: it metaphorically describes a horse galloping to the finish line.

Cadenza - A flourish or brilliant part of an aria (or concerto) commonly inserted just before a finale. It is usually performed without accompaniment.

Camerata - A gathering of Florentine writers and musicians between 1590 and 1600 who attempted to recreate what they believed was the ancient Greek theatrical synthesis of drama, music, and stage spectacle; their experimentation led to the creation of the early structural forms of modern opera.

Cantabile - An indication that the singer should sing sweetly.

Cantata - A choral piece generally containing Scriptural narrative texts: the *St. Matthew Passion* of Bach.

Cantilena - Literally, "little song." A lyrical melody meant to be played or sung "cantabile," or with sweetness and expression.

Canzone - A short, lyrical operatic song usually containing no narrative association with the drama but rather simply reflecting the character's state of mind: Cherubino's "Voi che sapete" in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Castrato - A young male singer who was surgically castrated to retain his treble voice.

Cavatina - A short aria popular in 18th and 19th century opera that usually heralded the entrance of a principal singer.

Classical Period - A period roughly between the Baroque and Romantic periods, the late 18th through the early 19th centuries. Stylistically, the music of the period stresses clarity, precision, and rigid structural forms.

Coda - A trailer added on by the composer after the music's natural conclusion. The coda serves as a formal closing to the piece.

Coloratura - Literally, "colored": it refers to a soprano singing in the bel canto tradition. It is a singing technique that requires great agility, virtuosity, embellishments and ornamentation: The Queen of the Night's aria, "Zum Leiden bin ich auserkoren," from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Commedia dell'arte - A popular form of dramatic presentation originating in Renaissance Italy in which highly stylized characters were involved in comic plots involving mistaken identities and misunderstandings. Two of the standard characters were Harlequin and Colombine: The "play within a play" in Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*.

Comprimario - A singer who performs secondary character roles such as confidantes, servants, and messengers.

Continuo, Basso continuo - A bass part (as for a keyboard or stringed instrument) that was used especially in baroque ensemble music; it consists of an independent succession of bass notes that indicate the required chords and their appropriate harmonies. Also called *figured bass*, *thoroughbass*.

Contralto - The lowest female voice, derived from "contra" against, and "alto" voice; a voice between the tenor and mezzo-soprano.

Countertenor - A high male voice generally singing within the female high soprano ranges.

Counterpoint - The combination of two or more independent melodies into a single harmonic texture in which each retains its linear character. The most sophisticated form of counterpoint is the fugue form, in which from two to six melodies can be used; the voices are combined, each providing a variation on the basic theme but each retaining its relation to the whole.

Crescendo - A gradual increase in the volume of a musical passage.

Da capo - Literally, "from the top"; repeat. Early 17th-century da capo arias were in the form of A B A, with the second A section repeating the first, but with ornamentation.

Deus ex machina - Literally "god out of a machine." A dramatic technique in which a person or thing appears or is introduced suddenly and unexpectedly; it provides a contrived solution to an apparently insoluble dramatic difficulty.

Diatonic - A major or minor musical scale that comprises intervals of five whole steps and two half steps.

Diminuendo - Gradually becoming softer; the opposite of crescendo.

Dissonance - A mingling of discordant sounds that do not harmonize within the diatonic scale.

Diva - Literally, “goddess”; generally the term refers to a leading female opera star who either possesses, or pretends to possess, great rank.

Dominant - The fifth tone of the diatonic scale; in the key of C, the dominant is G.

Dramatic soprano or tenor - A voice that is powerful, possesses endurance, and is generally projected in a declamatory style.

Dramma giocoso - Literally, “amusing (or humorous) drama.” An opera whose story combines both serious and comic elements: Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*.

Falsetto - A lighter or “false” voice; an artificially-produced high singing voice that extends above the range of the full voice.

Fioritura - It., “flowering”; a flowering ornamentation or embellishment of the vocal line within an aria.

Forte, fortissimo - Forte (*f*) means loud; mezzo forte (*mf*) is fairly loud; fortissimo (*ff*) is even louder; additional *fff*’s indicate greater degrees of loudness.

Glissando - Literally, “gliding.” A rapid sliding up or down the scale.

Grand opera - An opera in which there is no spoken dialogue and the entire text is set to music, frequently treating serious and tragic subjects. Grand opera flourished in France in the 19th century (Meyerbeer); the genre is epic in scale and combines spectacle, large choruses, scenery, and huge orchestras.

Heldentenor - A tenor with a powerful dramatic voice who possesses brilliant top notes and vocal stamina. Heldentenors are well suited to heroic (Wagnerian) roles: Lauritz Melchior in Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*.

Imbroglia - Literally, “intrigue”; an operatic scene portraying chaos and confusion, with appropriate diverse melodies and rhythms.

Largo or larghetto - Largo indicates a very slow tempo, broad and with dignity. Larghetto is at a slightly faster tempo than largo.

Legato - Literally, “tied” or “bound”; successive tones that are connected smoothly. The opposite of legato is staccato (short and plucked tones.)

Leitmotif - Literally, “leading motive.” A musical fragment characterizing a person, thing, feeling, or idea that provides associations when it recurs.

Libretto - Literally, “little book”; the text of an opera.

Lied - A German song; the plural is “lieder.” Originally, a German art song of the late 18th century.

Lyric - A voice that is light and delicate.

Maestro - From the Italian “master”; a term of respect to conductors, composers, directors, and great musicians.

Melodrama - Words spoken over music. Melodrama appears in Beethoven’s *Fidelio* and flourished during the late 19th century in the operas of Massenet (*Manon* and *Werther*).

Mezza voce - Literally, “medium voice”; singing with medium or half volume. It is sometimes intended as a vocal means to intensify emotion.

Mezzo-soprano - A woman’s voice with a range between soprano and contralto.

Obbligato - An accompaniment to a solo or principal melody that is usually played by an important, single instrument.

Octave - A musical interval embracing eight diatonic degrees; from C to C is an octave.

Opera - Literally, “work”; a dramatic or comic play in which music is the primary vehicle that conveys its story.

Opera buffa - Italian comic opera that flourished during the bel canto era. Highlighting the opera buffa genre were buffo characters who were usually basses singing patter songs: Dr. Bartolo in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*; Dr. Dulcamara in Donizetti’s *The Elixir of Love*.

Opéra comique - A French opera characterized by spoken dialogue interspersed between the musical numbers, as opposed to grand opera in which there is no spoken dialogue. Opéra comique subjects can be either comic or tragic.

Operetta, or light opera - Operas that contain comic elements and generally a light romantic plot: Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus*, Offenbach’s *La Périchole*, and Lehar’s *The Merry Widow*. In operettas, there is usually much spoken dialogue, dancing, practical jokes, and mistaken identities.

Oratorio - A lengthy choral work, usually of a religious nature and consisting chiefly of recitatives, arias, and choruses, but performed without action or scenery: Handel's *Messiah*.

Ornamentation - Extra embellishing notes—appoggiaturas, trills, roulades, or cadenzas—that enhance a melodic line.

Overture - The orchestral introduction to a musical dramatic work that sometimes incorporates musical themes within the work. Overtures are instrumental pieces that are generally performed independently of their respective operas in concert.

Parlando - Literally, “speaking”; the imitation of speech while singing, or singing that is almost speaking over the music. Parlando sections are usually short and have minimal orchestral accompaniment.

Patter song - A song with words that are rapidly and quickly delivered. Figaro's “Largo al factotum” in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* is a patter song.

Pentatonic - A five-note scale. Pentatonic music is most prevalent in Far Eastern countries.

Piano - A performance indication for soft volume.

Pitch - The property of a musical tone that is determined by the frequency of the waves producing it.

Pizzicato - An indication that notes are to be played by plucking the strings instead of stroking the string with the bow.

Polyphony - Literally, “many voices.” A style of musical composition in which two or more independent melodies are juxtaposed; counterpoint.

Polytonal - Several tonal schemes used simultaneously.

Portamento - A continuous gliding movement from one tone to another through all the intervening pitches.

Prelude - An orchestral introduction to an act or a whole opera that precedes the opening scene.

Presto, prestissimo - Vigorous, and with the utmost speed.

Prima donna - Literally, “first lady.” The female star or principal singer in an opera cast or opera company.

Prologue - A piece sung before the curtain goes up on the opera proper: Tonio's Prologue in Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*.

Quaver - An eighth note.

Range - The span of tonal pitch of a particular voice: soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, and bass.

Recitative - A formal device used to advance the plot. It is usually sung in a rhythmically free vocal style that imitates the natural inflections of speech; it conveys the dialogue and narrative in operas and oratorios. *Secco*, or dry, recitative is accompanied by harpsichord and sometimes with other continuo instruments; *accompagnato* indicates that the recitative is accompanied by the orchestra.

Ritornello - A refrain, or short recurrent instrumental passage between elements of a vocal composition.

Romanza - A solo song that is usually sentimental; it is shorter and less complex than an aria and rarely deals with terror, rage, or anger.

Romantic Period - The Romantic period is usually considered to be between the early 19th and early 20th centuries. Romanticists found inspiration in nature and man. Von Weber's *Der Freischütz* and Beethoven's *Fidelio* (1805) are considered the first German Romantic operas; many of Verdi's operas as well as the early operas of Wagner are also considered Romantic operas.

Roulade - A florid, embellished melody sung to one syllable.

Rubato - An expressive technique, literally meaning "robbed"; it is a fluctuation of tempo within a musical phrase, often against a rhythmically steady accompaniment.

Secco - "Dry"; the type of accompaniment for recitative played by the harpsichord and sometimes continuo instruments.

Semitone - A half step, the smallest distance between two notes. In the key of C, the half steps are from E to F and from B to C.

Serial music - Music based on a series of tones in a chosen pattern without regard for traditional tonality.

Sforzando - Sudden loudness and force; it must stand out from the texture and be emphasized by an accent.

Singspiel - Literally, "song drama." Early German style of opera employing spoken dialogue between songs: Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Soprano - The highest range of the female voice ranging from lyric (light and graceful quality) to dramatic (fuller and heavier in tone).

Sotto voce - Literally, “below the voice”; sung softly between a whisper and a quiet conversational tone.

Soubrette - A soprano who sings supporting roles in comic opera: Adele in Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus*; Despina in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*.

Spinto - From the Italian “spingere” (to push); a singer with lyric vocal qualities who “pushes” the voice to achieve heavier dramatic qualities.

Sprechstimme - Literally, “speaking voice.” The singer half sings a note and half speaks; the declamation sounds like speaking but the duration of pitch makes it seem almost like singing.

Staccato - Short, clipped, detached, rapid articulation; the opposite of legato.

Stretto - Literally, “narrow.” A concluding passage performed in a quick tempo to create a musical climax.

Strophe - Strophe is a rhythmic system of repeating lines. A musical setting of a strophic text is characterized by the repetition of the same music for all strophes.

Syncopation - A shifting of the beat forward or back from its usual place in the bar; a temporary displacement of the regular metrical accent in music caused typically by stressing the weak beat.

Supernumerary - A “super”; a performer with a non-singing and non-speaking role: “Spear-carrier.”

Symphonic poem - A large orchestral work in one continuous movement, usually narrative or descriptive in character: Franz Liszt’s *Les Preludes*; Richard Strauss’s *Don Juan*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, and *Ein Heldenleben*.

Tempo - The speed at which music is performed.

Tenor - The highest natural male voice.

Tessitura - The usual range of a voice part.

Tonality - The organization of all the tones and harmonies of a piece of music in relation to a tonic (the first tone of its scale).

Tone poem - An orchestral piece with a program.

Tonic - The principal tone of the key in which a piece is written. C is the tonic of C major.

Trill - Two adjacent notes rapidly and repeatedly alternated.

Tutti - All together.

Twelve-tone - The twelve chromatic tones of the octave placed in a chosen fixed order and constituting, with some permitted permutations and derivations, the melodic and harmonic material of a serial musical piece. Each note of the chromatic scale is used as part of the melody before any other note is repeated.

Verismo - Literally “truth”; the artistic use of contemporary everyday material in preference to the heroic or legendary in opera. A movement particularly in Italian opera during the late 19th and early 20th centuries: Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana*.

Vibrato - A “vibration”; a slightly tremulous effect imparted to vocal or instrumental tone to enrich and intensify sound, and add warmth and expressiveness through slight and rapid variations in pitch.

