

NEW PRODUCTION

# Manon Lescaut

Music by **Giacomo Puccini**

Libretto by **Marco Praga, Domenico Oliva, Ruggero Leoncavallo, Luigi Illica, Giuseppe Giacosa, and Giovanni Ricordi**

English Translation by **Keith and Emma Warner**

**Performances Friday, July 27 and Monday, July 30, 2012 at 7:30 p.m.**

Chautauqua Opera dedicates this production to the Chautauqua Opera Guild. The generosity of Guild's members comes to us in so many ways — the adopt-an-artist program, master classes, Operalogues, young artist scholarship awards and their incredible enthusiasm. The entire Company thanks you for your love and support.

## Opera in Three Acts and Four Scenes

Based on the novel of the same name by the Abbé Prévost, 1731

**Premiere Performance** Turin, Teatro Regio, February 1, 1893

**Chautauqua Opera Productions** 1983

## CAST

**Manon Lescaut**, *a young country girl*

Barbara Shirvis \*

**Chevalier des Grieux**, *an aristocrat*

Robert Breault

**Sergeant Lescaut**, *Manon's brother*

Michael Chioldi

**Geronte de Ravoir**, *an elderly aristocrat*

Kevin Glavin \*

### In Act I:

**Edmondo**, *a student* Ben Gulley +

**The Innkeeper** Zack Rabin +

**The Courtesans** Sydney Robinson, Molly Vine

### In Act II:

**The Hairdresser** Justin Griffith Brown +

**His Assistant** Thomas Lehman +

**The Dance Master** Brad Raymond +

**The Madrigal Singers** Katherine McGookey (soloist) +,

Kaitlin Bertenshaw +, Dee Donasco +,

Courtney Miller +, Rachel Sliker +

**The Young Priests** Rachel Arky +, Caitlyn Glennon +,

Beth Lytwynec +, Ellen PutneyMoore +

**The Aristocratic Guests** Adam Bonanni +,

Jesse Darden +, Hunter Enoch +, David Leigh +,

Kevin Newell +, Brad Walker +

**The Officer** Ricardo Rivera +

### In Act III:

**The Lamplighter** Christopher Hutchinson +

**The Sergeant-at-Arms** Ricardo Rivera +

**The Ship's Captain** Zack Rabin +

**The Courtesans** Annika Borg-Sundstrom, Kathy

Chambery, Georgianna Eberhard, Gretchen

Golibersuch, Jennie Goodell, Maddy McFarland,

Martha Reitman, Sydney Robinson, Alyssa Sheaffer,

Jillian Swanson, Molly Vine

### Townsmen and Women, Students

Chautauqua Opera Young Artists and

Dominick Maimone ‡, Shawn Romero ‡,

James Wright, Jr. ‡

### Waiters, Soldiers, Valet, Coachman

Graham Rogers, Shawn Sprankle, John Teresi,

Trevor Twist, James Wright, Jr.

\* Chautauqua Opera Debut

+ Chautauqua Opera Young Artist

‡ Voice Majors — SUNY Fredonia School of Music

## CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION

**Conductor** James Meena

**Conceived/Directed by** Jay Lesenger

**Chorus Master** Carol Rausch

**Set Designer** Peter Dean Beck

**Lighting Designer** Michael Baumgarten

**Costumer** B.G. FitzGerald

**Wig/Makeup**

**Designer** Georgianna Eberhard

**Coach/Accompanists** Dorothy Randall,

Miriam Charney

**Diction Coach/Supertitles** Allison Voth

**Technical Director** Erin Waters Ryan

**Properties Master** Tricia L. Thelen

**Production Stage Manager** Teri Jo Fuson

**Assistant Stage Director** Joel Atella

**Assistant Stage Managers** Liz McGavock,

Becca Rothman,

Kerry Concannon

**Concertmaster** Vahn Armstrong

## CREDITS

Orchestral reduction by Anton Coppola

Orchestral materials provided by Dicapo Opera Theatre

Sets constructed by the New Orleans Opera Association

for New Orleans Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, and Chautauqua Opera

Costumes provided by Malabar Ltd. Toronto

and the Chautauqua Opera costume shop

Wigs provided by Philip Plowman

Lighting provided by Advanced Production Group

English translation created for English National Opera, 2000

Wig/Makeup Assistant Designer Phillip Plowman

Wig/Makeup Interns Larissa McConnell and Sydney Robinson



James Meena



Barbara Shirvis



Robert Breault



Michael Chioldi



Kevin Glavin

# SYNOPSIS

**Time:** 1720's

**Place:** France, and later Louisiana

## ACT 1

Amiens — an inn and coach stop — evening

Edmondo and fellow students drink, gamble, and flirt with the young girls of the village. They welcome the Chevalier des Grieux who entertains them with an amusing serenade. The coach from Arras arrives, leaving its passengers to spend the night at the inn. They include Geronte de Revoir, an aristocrat and treasurer-general, as well as Sergeant Lescaut and his sister, Manon. He has been ordered to escort his young sister to a nearby convent before she can get herself into trouble. While Lescaut is inspecting their rooms, Des Grieux introduces himself to the beautiful young woman. Des Grieux is smitten. Geronte bribes the Innkeeper to help arrange a carriage so that he can abduct Manon and take her with him to Paris. Edmondo overhears the plan and warns Des Grieux who in turn convinces Manon to escape with him and avoid both the convent and the elderly gallant. When he discovers the deception, Geronte is assured by Lescaut to be patient. He knows his sister well. She will not enjoy the life of penury that Des Grieux, a poor student, will offer her and she will be easily lured away. The students are delighted by the whole spectacle.

## ACT 2

Paris — Manon's boudoir in Geronte's mansion — several months later, morning

When Des Grieux's money runs out, Manon leaves him to become Geronte's mistress. Waited on hand and foot, Manon tells her brother that she has become bored living with Geronte and longs for Des Grieux. Geronte arranges musicians to sing his new composition for Manon's morning levée. Young priests and old beaux pay her a visit while she practices her dancing and singing, again to one of Geronte's vocal creations. When she is finally alone, Lescaut brings Des Grieux to see her. He reproaches her for being so faithless to him, but succumbs to her entreaties just as Geronte returns. Manon mocks the old man and he leaves in fury. Lescaut warns them that Geronte has summoned the authorities. As Manon tries to escape with Geronte's gifts and jewelry, she is arrested as a thief.

## ACT 3

### Scene 1

Le Havre — The Harbor — several weeks later, just before dawn

Manon has been sentenced to deportation to the French territories in the New World as an undesirable. Lescaut and Des Grieux hope to rescue her before that happens. The lovers are reunited through the bars of the prison. A gunshot reveals that their plans have been discovered. The townspeople gather to revel in the spectacle of the roll call of the fallen women who are being placed on board the ship leaving for Louisiana. Lescaut tries to gain the crowd's sympathy for his sister. In desperation, Des Grieux begs the ship's captain to allow him to accompany Manon.

————— **A SHORT PAUSE** —————

## Act 3

### Scene 2

The territory outside of New Orleans — some months later, dusk

## INTERLUDE

The Voyage to the New World

*After arriving in New Orleans, the Governor's nephew tries to lure Manon away from Des Grieux who challenges him to a duel. Though he only wounds him, Des Grieux believes he has killed the young man. He and Manon flee New Orleans, escaping into the unsettled wastelands outside the ramparts of the town, hoping to find refuge in an English colony.*

Lost in the wilderness outside of the city, Des Grieux tries to restore the weary and ailing Manon. Delirious, she succumbs to thirst and exposure.

— Jay Lesenger, Stage Director

————— **INTERMISSION** —————

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Manon Lescaut is a marvel in her varied forms. As a character, she continues to fascinate: beautiful, spoiled, capricious, passionate yet ingenuous, she leads all who meet her down her tragic path.

As a novella, *Manon Lescaut* scandalized and titillated the Court of Louis XIV. The shocking semi-autobiographical novella by the Abbé Provost was in fact repressed from publication for several years.

In Jules Massenet's opera, the heroine is the product of a mature composer at the height of his talents. Massenet created arguably his richest, most rounded character with his version of Manon.

But Puccini was yet unproven when he was seduced by her. His first opera, the one-act *Le Villi*, was a product of his student days and showed his great promise. *Edgar*, his next effort, failed to capture the public's or the critics' imagination. When he announced *Manon Lescaut* as his next project, he was criticized for even attempting a new stage version of the story so shortly after Massenet's opera had succeeded. He dismissed his critics by asking: "Why shouldn't a beautiful woman have more than one lover?"

As was to become the pattern in Puccini's works, he struggled with his libretto and his librettists. He gave them an almost insurmountable challenge when he insisted that none of the scenes and situations in Massenet's opera should be replicated. Some seven writers worked on the libretto; none of them took credit.

If there are any inconsistencies in the text and dramaturgy of Puccini's third opera, he overcame them with an outpouring of melody and youthful intensity. How can one not fall in love with the opera and its heroine when she is given music of such interest and beauty? His intoxication with his heroine is evident in every joyful and mournful moment of the score. I know I fell in love with her years ago and that passion remains unabated. What a joy to stage this marvelous creation!

As the world would learn later in the 18th century, the style and extravagance of the French aristocracy was a façade that hid many realities – a crumbling power structure, a repressed peasant class as well as social and religious hypocrisy. Our sets, designed by the wonderful Peter Dean Beck, reflect that world. We are never far from the theatrical artificiality that propped up the world of the French aristocracy. The seams and mechanics are always on view.

— Jay Lesenger, Stage Director

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## CHAUTAUQUA OPERA ORCHESTRA

### Violin I

Vahn Armstrong  
Erica Robinson  
Lenelle Morse  
Marian Tanau  
Ming Gao  
Amanda Armstrong

### Violin II

Diane Bruce  
Barbara Berg  
Marcia Steel  
Margaret Cooper

### Viola

Thomas Dumm  
Connie Lorber  
Cynthia Frank  
Eva Stern

### Cello

Jeffrey Szabo  
Daryl Goldberg  
Gena Taylor

### Bass

Owen Lee  
David Rosi

### Flute

Emma Moon  
Kathryn Levy

### Oboe

Jan Eberle

### Clarinet

Jerome Simas  
George Klaas

### Bassoon

Laura Koepke

### Horn

William Bernatis  
Charles Waddell

### Trumpet

Peter Lindblom  
Roderick Macdonald

### Trombone

Vern Kagarice  
Eric Lindblom

### Timpani

Brian Kushmaul

### Percussion

Thomas Blanchard  
Ronald Barnett

### Harp

Beth Robinson

### CSO Music Library Staff

**Head Librarian** Daryl Goldberg

**Assistant Librarians** Cynthia Frank, Lara Sipols, Dent Williamson



Lucia di Lammermoor, 2012 – Act II, Scene 2 – The Mad Scene  
Jay Lesenger, Stage Director

Photo by Roger Coda

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