

A pretty, fun-loving teenage girl is sent by her family to live in a convent. At a country crossroads, fate intervenes, and she is swept off to true love, then to an existence of luxury and indulgence in upper-class Paris—only to end her life, ill and imprisoned for theft, back in the arms of her lover. Jules Massenet’s opera, based on the Abbé Prévost’s hugely influential 1731 novel *L’Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, is a work full of elegance and spirit, highly emotional yet never lapsing into melodrama, and firmly focused on its two protagonists.

*Manon* is the quintessential tale of a free woman navigating a world of powerful, avaricious men—men who grab whatever they want, whatever the consequences, with a stunning lack of self-awareness or empathy. The Met’s production by French director Laurent Pelly updates the opera’s setting from the 18th century to the period in which Massenet composed it, the Belle Époque (or “Beautiful Era”), and highlights the historical convergence of social repression and artistic liberty. Manon’s world is a stylized urban jungle, with smooth surfaces, top hats, coattails, and beautiful gowns—a place at once glamorous and visibly laden with risk.

This guide approaches *Manon* from multiple perspectives, including textual analysis, visual design, and historical reception. It will help students understand why the tale of Manon was so popular at the time of the opera’s composition, as well as why it endures to this day. In so doing, they will come to appreciate the brilliance of Massenet’s work, which captures the drama of his most memorable heroine with deft craftsmanship, expressive vocal and orchestral writing, and an almost unparalleled level of sensuality.

## THE WORK

An opera in five acts, sung in French

Music by Jules Massenet

Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Philippe Gille

Based on the novel *L’Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* by Abbé Antoine-François Prévost

First performed January 19, 1884, at the Opéra-Comique, Paris, France

## PRODUCTION

**Laurent Pelly** Production

**Chantal Thomas** Set Designer

**Laurent Pelly** Costume Designer

**Joël Adam** Lighting Designer

**Lionel Hoche** Choreographer

**Tilman Michael**

C. Graham Berwind, III Chorus Director

## PERFORMANCE

*The Met: Live in HD*

April 3, 2027

Encore April 7, 2027

**Nadine Sierra** Manon

**Matthew Polenzani**

Chevalier des Grieux

**Carlo Bosi** Guillot de Morfontaine

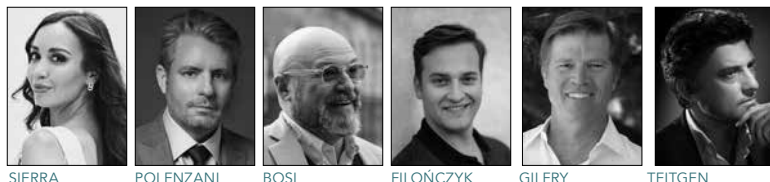
**Andrzej Filończyk** Lescaut

**Rod Gilfry** de Brétigny

**Jean Teitgen** Comte des Grieux

**Yves Abel** Conductor

*Manon* Educator Guide  
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SIERRA

POLENZANI

BOSI

FILOŃCZYK

GILFRY

TEITGEN

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**ONLINE ACCESS** To access this guide online, including any audio selections and handouts, visit [metopera.org/manonguide](https://metopera.org/manonguide). All Met Opera on Demand (MOoD) clips referenced in this guide are from the performance on October 26, 2019.



| CHARACTER                       | PRONUNCIATION                               | THE LOWDOWN                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Manon Lescaut<br>SOPRANO        | <i>mah-NOHN</i><br><i>leh-SKOH</i>          | At first a shy and vulnerable teenager with a <b>penchant</b> for life's finer things, Manon is sent by her parents to a <b>convent</b> to keep her out of trouble. She is quickly seduced by the luxuries of city life, leading to her triumph and eventual undoing. |
| Chevalier des Grieux<br>TENOR   | <i>shuh-vah-LYAY</i><br><i>day gree-YUH</i> | An idealistic, honest, and somewhat <b>naïve</b> young nobleman, the Chevalier des Grieux instantly falls for Manon and risks his reputation—and his fortune—to keep her love.                                                                                        |
| Lescaut<br>BARITONE             | <i>leh-SKOH</i>                             | A military guard charged with his cousin's protection, Lescaut advises Manon to be on her best behavior—but he is no stranger to the <b>vices</b> of city life.                                                                                                       |
| Guillot de Morfontaine<br>TENOR | <i>ghee-YOH</i><br><i>duh mor-fohn-TEN</i>  | A rich man who is largely unsuccessful in his romantic pursuits, Guillot seeks revenge on Manon and des Grieux when he thinks they have cheated him.                                                                                                                  |
| de Brétigny<br>BARITONE         | <i>duh bray-tee-NYEE</i>                    | De Brétigny, a wealthy <b>suitor</b> , offers Manon an alternative to her life with des Grieux. On his arm, she becomes the toast of Paris.                                                                                                                           |
| Comte des Grieux<br>BASS        | <i>KOHN'T</i><br><i>day gree-YUH</i>        | A man of reason, the Count tries to moderate his son's idealism and separate him from the <b>corrupting</b> influence of Manon.                                                                                                                                       |

## GLOSSARY

**Penchant** (*n.*): a tendency to do something

**Convent** (*n.*): the place of residence for a community of nuns

**Naïve** (*adj.*): innocent, lacking experience or wisdom

**Vice** (*n.*): evil, immoral, or wicked behavior

**Suitor** (*n.*): a man pursuing a relationship with a particular woman

**Corrupting** (*adj.*): destroying or ruining the integrity of something or someone



## THE STORY

### Synopsis

**ACT I.** The noblemen de Brétigny and Guillot de Morfontaine are having dinner with three young women—Poussette, Javotte, and Rosette—at an inn in **Amiens**. People gather for the arrival of the coach to Paris, among them Lescaut. He is waiting for his young cousin Manon, who is on her way to enter a convent. The coach arrives, and Manon expresses her **exuberant** joy about her first journey away from home. Enchanted by her, Guillot offers to take Manon to Paris, but she and his companions laugh at him. Lescaut **reproaches** Manon for her behavior, which could shame their family. Manon gazes with envy at the elegant clothes of the other girls. The young Chevalier des Grieux arrives too late to catch the coach, which has already left for Paris. He falls in love with Manon at first sight, and when she tells him that it is her fondness for pleasure that has led her family to send her to a convent, he is determined to rescue her from such a fate. They escape together in Guillot's coach. The returning Lescaut furiously accuses Guillot of having kidnapped his cousin but then learns from the innkeeper that Manon went off with a young man. Guillot, mocked by everyone, swears revenge on the **eloping** couple.

### GLOSSARY

**Amiens** (*n.*): a city in northern France

**Exuberant** (*adj.*): overflowing, abundant, or excessive

**Reproach** (*v.*): to express disapproval or disappointment

**Elope** (*v.*): to run away together to get married



A scene from Act I of *Manon*  
MARTY SOHL/MET OPERA



**ACT II.** In their apartment in Paris, des Grieux writes to his father for permission to marry Manon. The maid announces visitors: Lescaut and another man, who, she warns Manon, is de Brétigny in disguise. Lescaut **berates** des Grieux for having abducted Manon. In fact, he is trying to profit by setting her up with de Brétigny. Des Grieux, to prove his honorable intentions, produces his letter. Meanwhile, de Brétigny tells Manon that des Grieux's father is planning to kidnap his own son that evening; if she does nothing to prevent it and instead comes to live with de Brétigny, she can have wealth and luxury. After Lescaut and de Brétigny leave, des Grieux goes out to mail his letter. Manon realizes she is unable to resist de Brétigny's offer and bids farewell to her life with des Grieux. Des Grieux returns to find her weeping, but she will not tell him why. He talks about his dream of an **idyllic** future together in the country. When there's a knock on the door, Manon begs him not to answer it, but he does. Looking out the window, she sees him being abducted.

**ACT III.** On a public holiday, a crowd gathers on the Cours-la-Reine **promenade**. Manon, now the toast of Paris and living with de Brétigny, praises the pleasures of her luxurious existence. Overhearing a conversation between de Brétigny and the Comte des Grieux, she learns that the Count's son, following an unhappy love affair, is about to become a priest and will preach later that day at the **seminary** of Saint-Sulpice. Manon doesn't believe that des Grieux could have forgotten her and leaves the festivities to find him.

At Saint-Sulpice, des Grieux has attracted much admiration for his sermon. The Count tries to dissuade his son from entering the priesthood in favor of marriage. Des Grieux is adamant but realizes that he can't forget Manon. When she appears, he angrily confronts her. She admits her guilt but begs him to forgive her and to remember their past love. Des Grieux **yields** to his feelings and **renounces** his vows.

## FUN FACT

Massenet was known to have many muses. After American soprano Sybil Sanderson performed *Manon* in England and then in the United States, the composer wrote the title roles of his next operas, *Esclarmonde* (1889) and *Thaïs* (1894), specifically for her. But Massenet didn't stick around for long. He soon turned his interest to French soprano Emma Calvé, for whom he wrote roles in his operas *La Navarraise* (1894) and *Sapho* (1896).

## GLOSSARY

**Berate** (*v.*): to scold or blame

**Idyllic** (*adj.*): full of natural, simple charm, especially related to the countryside

**Promenade** (*n.*): a public walkway

**Seminary** (*n.*): a school for training Catholic priests

**Yield** (*v.*): to give in to

**Renounce** (*v.*): to give up or surrender



**ACT IV.** Gamblers are gathered at the Hôtel de Transylvanie, among them Guillot and Lescaut. Manon and des Grieux arrive, and she reminds him that his fortune has nearly run out. He accepts Guillot's challenge to play. Manon, Poussette, Javotte, and Rosette consider what money might bring them. Des Grieux wins heavily, but Guillot accuses him of cheating, threatening to inform the Count. The police arrive, and des Grieux is arrested. The Count assures his son that he will be released soon. Manon, as his **accomplice**, is taken away to prison.

**ACT V.** Des Grieux and Lescaut have come up with a plan to rescue Manon, who has been sentenced to deportation to America, but their paid accomplices have deserted them. Lescaut manages to bribe the guards and leaves Manon and des Grieux alone together. Ill and exhausted, she begs des Grieux to forgive her for the shame she has brought him. While she recalls their past, he only thinks of their future together. But the rescue has come too late. As des Grieux assures her of his forgiveness and love, Manon dies in his arms.

## GLOSSARY

**Accomplice** (*n.*): someone who helps commit a crime



## The Novel *L'Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* by Abbé Antoine-François Prévost

Between 1728 and 1731, the French priest and writer Antoine François Prévost d'Exiles—known commonly as the Abbé Prévost after he joined the Catholic Church—published a seven-volume novel entitled *Mémoires et Aventures d'un Homme de Qualité, qui s'est Retiré du Monde* (*Memoirs and Adventures of a Man of Quality, Who Withdrew from the World*). The final volume, also the most successful and most controversial, was *L'Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*. That single text would go on to form the basis for no fewer than eight operas, as well as several ballets, dating from the end of the 18th century to the middle of the 20th.

First published in Amsterdam, *Manon Lescaut* comprises five sections and largely assumes the form of a **frame narrative**. The “man of quality” of the larger work’s title, Renoncour, meets the Chevalier des Grieux and sees Manon being taken away to be deported. Upon their next encounter years later, des Grieux tells Renoncour the tale of Manon, which unfolds in four parts. In each part, Manon betrays des Grieux, abandons him for another man, and then gets back together with him. First, she leaves him for Mr. de B... (the model for de Brétigny in the opera); then she finds des Grieux at the seminary at Saint-Sulpice, and they reunite before her brother, Lescaut, convinces her to live with Mr. de G... M... (the model for Guillot in the opera). This elder nobleman has des Grieux and Manon arrested when he learns of their ongoing affair. The lovers escape, but Manon once again leaves des Grieux for the son of Mr. de G... M..., leading to her arrest and **deportation** to Louisiana. Des Grieux follows Manon to New Orleans, where she is seduced by the governor’s nephew, leading to a duel with des Grieux. The lovers escape again, but the exhausted Manon dies in the Louisiana “desert.” (There is no desert in Louisiana; the Louisiana Territory, then under French control, stretched into the vast plains of the American Midwest.)

### GLOSSARY

**Frame narrative** (*n.*): a story within a story, usually told by one character to another

**Deportation** (*n.*): force removal or exile



In crafting *Manon* with librettists Henri Meilhac and Philippe Gille, Massenet **consolidated** several plot points that would have made for a tiring night at the opera. Rather than betray des Grieux three separate times, the operatic Manon only leaves him for another man once. There are additional noteworthy differences between Prévost's novel and Massenet's opera. In the former, Lescaut is Manon's brother and only appears after the lovers' reunion at Saint-Sulpice; in the latter, he is Manon's cousin and appears from the first scene. In the novel, Manon dies of exhaustion in Louisiana after her deportation, whereas the opera has her dying on the road to **Le Havre**. The Act III promenade scene at the Cours-la-Reine, meanwhile, is an invention of the composer, as is Manon's meeting with the Comte des Grieux in the same act. The novel largely filters Manon through des Grieux's experience, whereas that perspective is reversed in the opera. Perhaps as a result, Massenet's des Grieux is more reluctant to engage in lawless behavior like **manslaughter** or **bribery**—both of which he commits in the novel.

Massenet and his collaborators took influence from additional sources beyond *Manon Lescaut*. The text for the Act IV duet between des Grieux and Manon derives from a section of poet Alfred de Musset's collection *Namouna* (1830), which contains an ode to Manon. The Act III promenade scene, finally, which has no equivalent in Prévost's novel, was almost certainly based on an 1848 fictional **sketch** by Arsène Houssaye—who later wrote a preface to the 1874 edition of *Manon Lescaut*—describing the renowned 18th-century dancer Marie-Anne de Cupis de Camargo dazzling spectators at the Cours-la-Reine. In this way, the creators of *Manon* considered not only the original text but also its continued adaptation over the following century.

## GLOSSARY

**Consolidate** (*v.*): to unite or combine several things together

**Le Havre** (*n.*): a port city in the Normandy region of northern France

**Manslaughter** (*n.*): the crime of accidental or unintentional killing

**Bribery** (*n.*): offering money or gifts to persuade someone to do something, especially illegally

**Sketch** (*n.*): a brief description, narrative, or essay



## The Creation of *Manon*

**1731** The French priest and novelist Abbé Prévost publishes *L'Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, the last in a seven-volume novel entitled *Mémoires et Aventures d'un Homme de Qualité, qui s'est Retiré du Monde* (*Memoirs of a Man of Quality, Who Withdrew from the World*).

**1842** Jules Massenet is born on May 12 in Montaud, a town in the Loire region of central France. His mother is a gifted **amateur** pianist, and Massenet will receive his earliest music lessons from her.

**1848** The Massenet family moves to Paris.

**1853** Massenet, only 11 years old, begins studying piano at the Paris Conservatory. He is an excellent **pupil**, and in 1859 he wins the conservatory's first prize for piano students.

**1861** Massenet begins formal composition lessons at the conservatory. The following year, he wins not only second prize in the conservatory's composition competition but also an honorable mention in the contest for the Rome Prize, the most important composition award in France. While at the conservatory, Massenet earns extra money by giving private music lessons and playing piano and **timpani** in the cafés and theaters of Paris.

**1863** Massenet wins the Rome Prize, which funds two years of study in Rome. While in Italy, he meets the pianist and composer Franz Liszt, who introduces him to Louise-Constance de Gressy, a young French woman traveling through Italy with her mother. De Gressy and Massenet will marry on October 8, 1866. Their only child, Juliette, is born 18 months later.

## GLOSSARY

**Amateur** (*adj.*): engaging in an activity for enjoyment, rather than as a job

**Pupil** (*n.*): a student

**Timpani** (*n.*): a set of pitched percussion instruments, also known as kettledrums, used in orchestras



## FUN FACT

*Manon* was such a success that Massenet composed a sequel. *Le Portrait de Manon* (1894), a one-act opera that is rarely performed, follows Chevalier des Grieux—years after his affair with Manon—as he counsels his nephew Jean, who is in love with a young girl named Aurore. As it turns out, Aurore is none other than Manon’s niece and the daughter of Lescaut, her brother. (Never mind that Lescaut is Manon’s cousin in Massenet’s preceding opera!)

**1871** A group of French composers founds the Société Nationale de Musique (National Music Society), intended to support young French composers. In the wake of the Franco-Prussian War, the organization also hopes to develop a distinctly French style that can hold its own against the German style currently popular in Europe. Massenet is a founding member.

**1878** Massenet is appointed director of composition at the Paris Conservatory, a role he will hold for 18 years. He also enjoys his first taste of international acclaim when his opera *Le Roi de Lahore* (which premiered in Paris the previous year) receives a tremendously successful performance in Turin.

**1881** Massenet has a meeting with Henri Meilhac. The composer had been commissioned by Léon Carvalho, director of the Opéra-Comique, to write music for Meilhac’s libretto *Phoebé*. Massenet is not interested in the project, however, and—according to his memoirs—after spotting a copy of Prévost’s *Manon Lescaut* on Meilhac’s bookshelf, decides immediately to adapt the novel as his next opera.

**1882** Meilhac finalizes the libretto, and Massenet completes the score by the end of the year.



**1883** Massenet plays the score in a private **hearing** for Carvalho, and the orchestration is finished by the summer.

**1884** *Manon* receives its world premiere at the Opéra-Comique on January 19.

**1885** For the London premiere of *Manon*, Massenet writes additional melodies and **embellishments** for soprano Marie Roze, including the Act III gavotte (*“Obéissons quand leur voix appelle”* / “Let us obey when their voice calls”).

**1888** American soprano Sybil Sanderson, Massenet’s muse during this period, premieres a revised version of *Manon* in the Hague under the name “Ada Palmer.” The composer adds more coloratura embellishments and heightens the **tessitura** to suit Sanderson’s voice.

**1889** Massenet composes an alternative to the Act III gavotte for soprano Georgette Bréjean-Silver.

**1895** *Manon* premieres at the Metropolitan Opera, with Sanderson in the title role. A revised edition of the score, containing additions made since its premiere, is published.

**1912** On August 13, Massenet dies in Paris.

**1919** *Manon* receives its 1,000th performance at the Opéra-Comique.



Portrait of Massenet by Eugène Pirou  
WIKICOMMONS

## GLOSSARY

**Hearing** (*n.*): a listening of a musical work

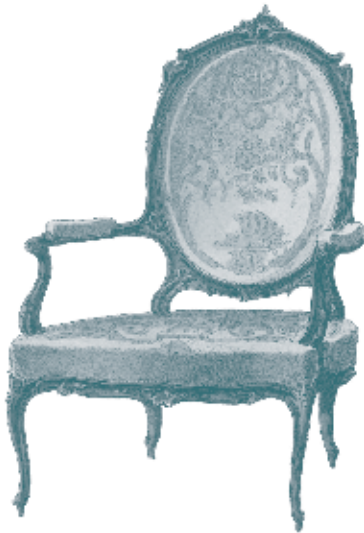
**Embellishment** (*n.*): an ornament or decoration that adds beauty

**Tessitura** (*n.*): the general range in which most notes of a part lie, from low to high



## If It Ain't Baroque, Don't Fix It

Chanet, *Fauteuil Louis XV à médaillon*, lithograph  
RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM



### GLOSSARY

**Baroque** (*adj.*): between the Renaissance and Classical periods, roughly 1600–1750

**Renaissance** (*n.*): a rebirth or revival of interest in something

**Parliamentary** (*adj.*): related to a form of government wherein the executive power is accountable to the legislature

**Democracy** (*n.*): a society where all citizens have equal rights and treatment under the law

**Florid** (*adj.*): ornate, as if covered with flowers

When Jules Massenet set out to compose an opera based on a novel published 150 years earlier, he was, in fact, doing something very modern. At the tail end of the 19th century in France, the 18th century was all the rage. After suffering a humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71—which saw France give billions of francs to the newly-formed German Empire, as well as the territories of Alsace and Lorraine—French intellectuals and artists began looking to their own national past as a source of inspiration. A group of composers, including Massenet and his peers like Camille Saint-Saëns, founded the Société Nationale de Musique in 1871 to promote French musical culture and counteract the influence of Italian and German composers.

In the world of opera, this turn to France's national past gave new life to works by Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–87) and Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764), major composers of the **Baroque** era. It was during this period that Rameau's complete works were edited and republished in editions intended for use by performers and scholars; Saint-Saëns himself edited the first volume of Rameau's keyboard music in 1895. There were other reasons why French artists ushered in a **renaissance** for 18th-century music. The fallout from the Franco-Prussian War brought an end to the Second French Empire ruled by Napoleon III (the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte) and paved the way for the Third Republic, a **parliamentary** system. Along with a renewed emphasis on political **democracy**, the Third Republic witnessed broader efforts both to celebrate what made France's national culture distinct and to make that culture accessible to as many citizens as possible.

Baroque music was perfectly suited to this purpose. Instrumental and operatic works of the Baroque era feature **florid** embellishments, popular dances, lighter instrumentation, symmetrical patterns, and shorter forms and set pieces. In other words, the Baroque style was considered graceful, charming, playful, decorative, and even



**coquettish** (much like Manon herself!). Although this style was initially developed within an **aristocratic** system, it took on new meaning during the Third Republic—both quintessentially French and appealing to the public. Participating in the pleasure of listening to and experiencing beautiful music, then, was no longer just the privilege of the elite, but the right of the **citizenry**.

*Manon*, beyond merely an adaptation of a popular 18th-century novel, incorporates music inspired by the Baroque period, especially Rameau. The most obvious examples are found in Act III, when Manon reemerges as the toast of Paris at the Cours-la-Reine. Immediately after her showstopping aria “*Je marche sur tous les chemins*,” (“I walk on every path”) Massenet includes a gavotte—a popular French dance of the 18th century—as Manon celebrates her youth (**Track 1** or **MOoD clip 31**). In fact, here Massenet recycles a melody he had previously used in an 1880 piece, “*Sérénade de Molière*,” based on an 18th-century theme. Immediately following the gavotte, Guillot attempts to woo Manon by bringing her to the opera (or rather, by bringing the opera to her). What follows is an extended ballet sequence (**Track 2** or **MOoD clip 35**) featuring a suite of Baroque-style dances—a rigaudon, a sarabande, a loure, and a musette—that was understood as a **pastiche** of Rameau.

Other moments in the opera include Baroque stylings. Lescaut’s caution to Manon, “*Regardez-moi bien dans les yeux*,” (“Look me straight in the eyes”) features ornamented bass lines reminiscent of the period (**Track 3** or **MOoD clip 8**). The chorus of onlookers outside the inn at Amiens, meanwhile, is accompanied by a minuet (**Track 4** or **MOoD clip 5**). And the eager anticipation of Poussette, Javotte, and Rosette before dinner at the inn is set against double-dotted rhythms also characteristic of Baroque dance forms. Combined with extraordinary coloratura and delicate melodies throughout the opera, these flashes of musical **anachronism** make for a thoroughly modern *Manon*.



Johann Esaias, *Trumeau de Glace, Orné avec les quatres parties de la Vie humaine*, c. 1760, etching

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, THE ELISHA WHITTELSLEY COLLECTION

## GLOSSARY

**Coquettish** (*adj.*): playful or flirtatious, often insincerely

**Aristocratic** (*adj.*): related to a system where an elite group are granted highest social status by birth

**Citizenry** (*n.*): a body or community of citizens

**Pastiche** (*n.*): a work of art created in the style of someone or something else

**Anachronism** (*n.*): a person or thing belonging to another time



### Manon Mania

The Abbé Prévost's 1731 novel *L'Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*—frequently shortened to just *Manon Lescaut*—was a bestseller in the 18th century but arguably became even more popular in the 19th, when it inspired a slew of operas, ballets, plays, and more. As early as 1772, the comic opera *La Courtisane Vertueuse* appeared, though its authorship is uncertain. 1820 saw the premiere of Étienne Gosse's melodrama *Manon Lescaut et le Chevalier des Grieux*. Just a decade later, two separate adaptations made their way to the stage: the ballet-pantomime *Manon Lescaut*, with choreography by Jean-Louis Aumer, music by Fromental Halévy, and a libretto by Eugène Scribe and Aumer; and the play *Manon Lescaut* by Pierre-Frédéric-Adolphe Carmouche and Frédéric de Courcy, which also included **incidental** music.

The story of Manon also made its way into the literature of the period. Alfred de Musset's "**oriental** tale" in verse, *Namouna* (1833), includes several stanzas that mention or describe the character. These sections of the poem were later used by Massenet and his librettists as a source text for Manon and des Grieux's Act IV duet. One of the most important novels of the century, *La Dame aux Camélias* (1848) by Alexandre Dumas fils—later adapted by the author as a stage play that itself became the basis for Verdi's *La Traviata* (1853)—makes reference to Prévost's novel and could be understood as a variation on the "fallen woman" trope made famous by the earlier work.

### GLOSSARY

**Incidental** (*adj.*): played in the background to create or enhance a particular atmosphere

**Oriental** (*adj.*): of or related to East or South Asia





Beyond Massenet, several composers saw the operatic potential of Manon's tale. William Michael Balfe, an Irish composer, based his opera *The Maid of Artois* (1836) on the narrative, as did French composer Daniel-François-Esprit Auber with his comic opera *Manon Lescaut* (1856), Portuguese composer A. A. Lopez with his operetta *Manon Lescaut* (1883), and German composer Richard Kleinmichel with his opera *Manon, oder das Schloss de l'Orme* (1887). It is likely that Massenet attended a celebration of the centenary of Auber's birth in 1882, where selections from his version of *Manon Lescaut* were performed. Perhaps the most famous operatic take on Prévost's novel, however, is none other than Giacomo Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (1893)—that composer's first major success on the world stage.

In the 20th century, filmmakers continued to revisit the figure of Manon. Silent films from Italy (1908), France (1910–11), the United States (1914 and 1927), and Germany (1926) adapted *Manon Lescaut*. This trend lasted into the middle of the century, when no fewer than five films based on the novel appeared between 1940 and 1970, including, notably, *Manon 70* (1968) starring French actress Catherine Deneuve.

The appetite for Manon soon went worldwide, with additional film adaptations produced in Japan (1981) and Venezuela (1986). Two French TV series, finally—3 × *Manon* (2014) and *Manon, 20 years old* (2017)—brought Prévost's novel into the 21st century.



### Think about it!

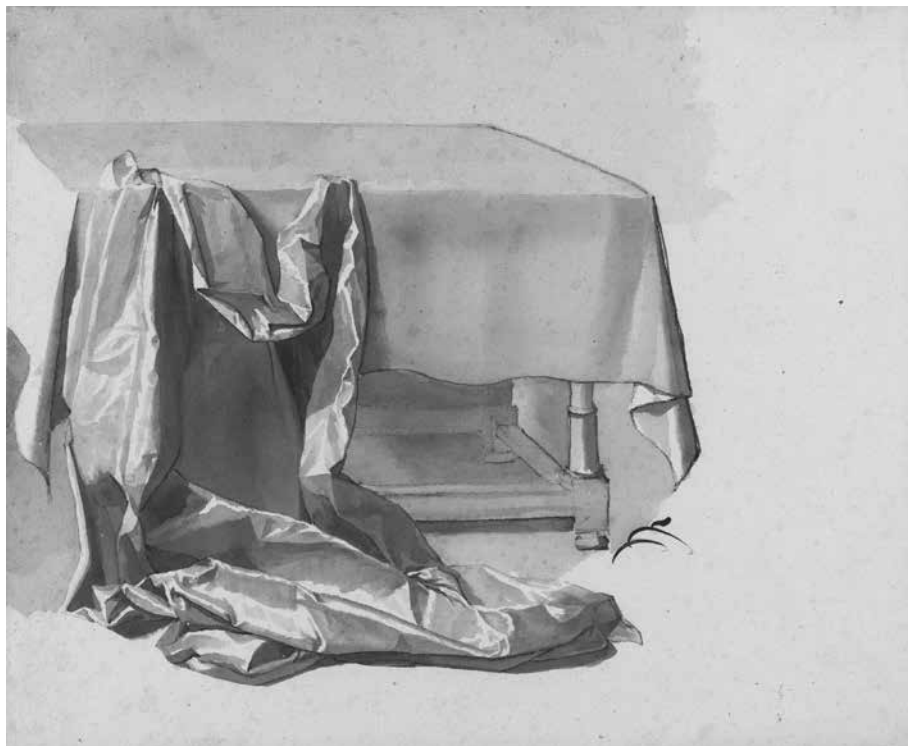
In his adaptation of the Abbé Prévost's 1731 novel, Massenet opted not to have Manon die after her deportation to Louisiana but instead on the road to Le Havre. Many operatic versions of the story, including Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (1893), include the episode in America.

- Why might Massenet have chosen to conclude the opera this way?
- What are the dramatic or narrative effects of Manon's death before her exile?
- Can you imagine how Massenet might have represented the scenes in Louisiana?
- If you have seen Puccini's opera, do you find it more convincing? Why or why not?



### Table Setting

Jan de Bisschop, *Drapery on a Table*,  
1665, pencil and ink on paper  
RIJSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM



Manon's moving Act II aria, "*Adieu, notre petite table*" ("Goodbye, our little table"; **Track 5** or **MOoD clip 20**), signals a major shift in the narrative of the opera while providing insight into Massenet's distinct take on the iconic title character. Until this point in the story, Manon is an innocent, vulnerable, and perhaps slightly **capricious** teenager. This short aria, an **apostrophe** to the small table in des Grieux's Paris apartment, occurs right at the moment when she realizes she will betray her lover and succumb to the temptations of a more luxurious life with another man—in this case, de Brétigny. "*Adieu, notre petite table*" thus goes to the core of a major question regarding Manon: Is she a femme fatale who seduces men and disposes of them? Or is she simply a young woman overwhelmed by the power of love?

### GLOSSARY

**Capricious** (*adj.*): whimsical, not guided by judgment

**Apostrophe** (*n.*): a speech or address to an abstract thing or idea

Massenet's score notes that the opening line should be sung "*avec émotion et simplicité*" ("with emotion and simplicity"), and the orchestral writing is indeed remarkably simple. Triads in the woodwinds announce the key of G minor. With each successive



bar, these triads are altered one note at a time, creating an effect somewhere between **stasis** and forward movement—an effective harmonic evocation of Manon’s predicament, conflicted as she is over the decision to abandon des Grieux. Massenet’s block chords begin to move in sequence, up a third and down a fourth: G minor, B $\flat$  major, F major, F minor, A $\flat$  major, E $\flat$  major seventh, and G minor (**Track 6**).

As Manon moves through the end of the first verse and into the second, the harmony undergoes a subtle shift in tonality. From G minor, Massenet moves to the parallel key of G major, then the subdominant chord (C major), then resolves to G major again, before sliding back into G minor (**Track 7**). This phrase begins with Manon remarking how, “Our little table had all the room we needed” (*“Notre petite table, si grande pour nous cependant!”*). With that recognition, there seems to be a glimmer of hope that Manon will stay. Indeed, when Massenet arrives at the key of G major, the score notes, “*En animant un peu*” (“a bit livelier”). But this sense of possibility fades as soon as it appears, and Manon resumes the aria’s second verse in the original key of G minor.

The second and final verse largely repeats the harmonic and melodic structure of the first, including the surprising key change. As Manon says her final “*adieu*” to the table—both a **metonymic** representation of her relationship with des Grieux and a decorative artifact that suggests Manon’s preoccupation with material possessions—Massenet writes a *forte* resolution in G major (**Track 8**). Suddenly concluding a plaintive aria in a major key lends an air of excitement and anticipation to Manon’s farewell. Her next line is even more revealing: “*Que ma pâleur ne me trahisse pas!*” (“My paleness mustn’t betray me!”) In the end, Manon is worried about being the victim of betrayal, not its **perpetrator**. That perspective can only spell trouble, however good her intentions.

## FUN FACT

*Manon* has been performed nearly 300 times at the Metropolitan Opera, but not always the same way. Until 1920, the Cours-la-Reine scene in Act III was frequently omitted. Once it was brought back, the Hôtel de Transylvanie scene was excluded. Now, the entirety of Massenet’s opera is presented at the Met, including the additions he made to the 1896 revision of the score.

## GLOSSARY

**Stasis** (*n.*): a state of little or no change

**Metonymic** (*adj.*): used or regarded as a substitute for or symbol of something else

**Perpetrator** (*n.*): someone who commits a crime or evil deed



### Philosophical Chairs

#### MATERIALS

- Handouts

#### OBJECTIVES

Learners will be able to:

- Express and defend their point of view on a given topic.
- Listen to thinking different from their own and respond with examples and evidence.

#### CONNECTIONS

- Delineate and evaluate arguments and claims.
- Evaluate a speaker's reasoning.
- Express ideas persuasively.

Philosophical Chairs is an activity designed to foster critical thinking, active inquiry, and respectful dialogue among students. To play, participants agree or disagree with a series of statements, but the game doesn't end there. The most crucial element is what happens next: Participants discuss their point of view and can switch sides if their opinions change during the discussions.

Each topic statement is deliberately open ended yet ties into several of the themes present in *Manon*—including romantic love, the pursuit of wealth, and the temptations of desire. Offer students a brief overview of the opera's plot, setting, and context, and remind them how to build a safe space for productive conversation. Some of the topics might be confusing or challenging—that's okay! As you and your students explore and learn about *Manon*, you can return to these statements: What do they have to do with the opera's story? How might these questions help us explore the opera's story, history, and themes?

**A NOTE TO FACILITATORS:** Between statements, provide some clarity as to why that statement was chosen. Explain to students where and how each theme shows up in the opera or invite students to offer their own explanations.

#### STEP 1. INQUIRE

Distribute the included handout with guidelines and statements, making sure to review the rules of engagement as a group. Next, invite students to read one of the statements—out loud as a class, to themselves, or in small groups. As they read, they should ask themselves:

- Do I understand the statement?
  - If not, what questions might clarify it for me?
- What immediately comes to mind when I read the statement?
  - What is my initial reaction: Do I agree or disagree?
- What led me to that decision?
  - What opinions do I hold about this statement?
  - What life experiences may have led me to think this way?



## STEP 2. RESPOND

Read the statements again out loud and ask students to commit to one side. They can agree or disagree, but there is no middle ground. (Many will not be completely comfortable committing to one side over the other—that's part of the game. It will help foster conversation and debate.)

## STEP 3. DISCUSS

Start a conversation! Use the following questions to guide discussion:

- Does anyone feel very strongly either way? Why or why not?
- Does anyone feel conflicted? Why or why not?
- Give voice to what you thought about in the first step:
  - What led me to make my decision?
  - What opinions do I hold about this statement?
  - What life experiences may have led me to think this way?
- What might you not have considered that others are now bringing up in the discussion?
- Did any new questions arise during the discussion?

As the conversation continues, students are free to change their minds or develop more nuanced perspectives.

*Repeat steps 1 through 3 for each statement.*

**SILENT OVERTURE** If you have timid students and/or a class with several emerging language learners, consider allowing time for students to silently reflect prior to diving into the activity. Post the statements around the room, provide each student with a small stack of sticky notes of two different colors, and have them complete a gallery walk silently reading the statements. As they read the statements, students should write down questions (one color sticky note) and thoughts that came to mind (other color sticky note) and place them around the posted statement.

Set a ten-minute timer for students to complete this activity. Then, set a five-minute timer for students to read their peers' thoughts and questions prior to completing the active class discussion part of Philosophical Chairs.



## ACTIVE EXPLORATION

### Bragging Writes

#### MATERIALS

- Handouts
- Audio tracks
- Synopsis (optional)
- Illustrated synopsis (optional)
- Musical Toolbox (optional)
- Mood Meter (optional)

#### OBJECTIVES

Learners will be able to:

- Identify the tone of an aria based on the libretto and musical elements.
- Draw on personal experience to devise their own libretto text with a consistent tone.

#### CONNECTIONS

- Maintain a style and tone appropriate for a given writing task.
- Create a poem or other response to a text, theme, or personal experience.

After the heartbreak of Act II, Manon emerges triumphant in Act III of Massenet’s opera. Now linked to an older and wealthier man, she has chosen her path as a member of high society and struts her stuff before an admiring crowd. As we know—and as Manon ultimately learns—this decision to follow de Brétigny will bear consequences that she must spend the rest of the opera untangling.

In this lesson, students will think about the differences among bragging, celebrating, and simply acknowledging one’s accomplishments by focusing on one of the opera’s most famous showpieces, Manon’s Act III aria “*Je marche sur tous les chemins*” (“I walk on every path”). After evaluating both the text and music of the aria on a “Humble Brag Scale,” they will create their own aria text, paying close attention to how literary tone affects the reader’s or listener’s understanding of a work.

#### STEP 1. EXPLORE

Begin the lesson by guiding students through a sorting activity. Students will evaluate a set of statements and, using the “Humble Brag Scale” handout included with this guide, determine where each belongs: bragging, celebrating, acknowledging, or somewhere in between. You can project these statements, put them on sentence strips, or cut them out and give one to each student or group of students.

To set the stage for later sections of this activity, lead students in a group discussion reflecting on their analysis of the statements. Here are some questions to guide their thinking:

- What are the differences among bragging, celebrating, and acknowledging?
- Is bragging ever justified? Under what circumstances?
- How does it feel to brag about yourself? What about when someone else brags about themselves?

#### STEP 2. LISTEN

Next, turn to the music of Massenet’s *Manon*. It might help to review the synopsis included with this guide or consult the illustrated synopsis of the opera ([metopera.org/manon-illustrated](http://metopera.org/manon-illustrated)). At the beginning of Act III, Manon—having left des Grieux to live with de Brétigny—walks the promenade at the Cours-la-Reine and wows a crowd of spectators. No longer the shy and overwhelmed teenager from Act I, she sings an entire aria, “*Je marche sur tous les chemins*” (Track 9 or MOoD clip 30), talking



about herself. Using the distinctions they have made among bragging, celebrating, and acknowledging, students will analyze this aria to determine where it fits on the “Humble Brag Scale.”

Begin with a cold listen of the aria, without providing the text or translation. Ask students to respond based solely on what they hear, then have them vote to determine where they think the aria falls on the “Humble Brag Scale.” Ask students to justify their choices using identifiable musical techniques, emotional qualities, or both. Use the Mood Meter and/or Musical Toolbox diagrams accessible in the “Additional Resources” section of the *HD Live in Schools* Educator Hub ([metopera.org/educator-hub](https://metopera.org/educator-hub)) to support students as they name and explain their observations.

Next, provide students with the “Text and Translation” handout included with this guide. Give them enough time to dig through the text, identifying any key words or phrases that sway them one way or the other on the “Humble Brag Scale.”

Finally, reincorporate the music. Listen to the full aria a second time, now with the text and translation, allowing students to refine their decisions.

Once the class has come to a consensus regarding where Manon’s aria sits on the “Humble Brag Scale,” explore the following questions:

- Is the tone of Manon’s aria justified? Why?



- How does she feel singing the aria? How do you know?
- How might the people around her feel hearing the aria? How do you know?
- How might des Grieux react if he were present?

Remind students there are no right or wrong answers here. Our perceptions of tone and what constitutes appropriate behavior are individual and influenced by our setting, communities, and culture. Some students may think Manon has every right to flaunt, while others feel she may need a slice of humble pie, and that's okay!

🕒 **A NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS:** This is a great place to pause the lesson. Steps 3 and 4 can be completed during a different session, as long as students (or you!) hold onto their handouts.

### STEP 3. WRITE

Ask each student to write their own short aria text (four to ten lines) that shares something about themselves. Before they begin writing, assign or have them select a target tone on the “Humble Brag Scale.” Remind students that tone is created through word choice, sentence structure, literary devices (e.g., metaphor, hyperbole, repetition, rhyme), and point of

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

### Love Advice for the Luxury-Obsessed

Manon is a beguiling and beautiful young woman with expensive taste. Her parents send her away to a convent in hopes that she will grow out of her love of finer things. Instead, she falls for the handsome Chevalier des Grieux and runs away with him. Despite her deep love for des Grieux, Manon eventually abandons her relationship with him so that she might have a more luxurious life with the wealthy de Brétigny. She sacrifices romantic love for her love of material splendor. And she goes on to pay a devastating price for her choice.

What might you advise Manon to do if you were her friend? How might you help Manon decide which kind of life she wants to live and what is best for her? Write a short letter to Manon giving her advice. In your letter, give her guidance on:

- How to decide what is truly important to her (marriage? comfort? autonomy?)
- How to decide what she values most (ambition? trustworthiness? loyalty?)
- How to imagine the possible outcomes of her choices
- Whether she should ultimately choose love or luxury



view. Students can model their aria text after “*Je marche sur tous les chemins*” or choose their own devised format.

#### STEP 4. REFLECT

After completing their respective aria texts, students can share with each other in pairs or small groups or with the whole class. They should be able to evaluate where each text belongs on the “Humble Brag Scale” and why. To conclude, consider revisiting the questions from Step 1:

- How did it feel writing about yourself?
- What was your experience reading/hearing someone else’s aria?

#### SCAFFOLD

- Set up Step 1 using the same format as the Philosophical Chairs activity included with this guide.
- Have students revise or rewrite Manon’s aria text to align with an alternative target tone—more boisterous, more humble, less confident, etc.
- Complete Step 3 for a character or figure from your own curriculum. Students can write an aria for a real person or fictional character; they should use what they know about that person’s character and achievements to determine the target tone of their aria text.
- Choose another aria you have studied or select one from the operatic repertoire and submit it to the same analysis. Some possible choices include “*Quando me’n vo*” (Musetta’s Waltz) from Puccini’s *La Bohème*, “*Toréador, en garde*” (Toreador Song) from Bizet’s *Carmen*, “*Ah! mes amis*” from Donizetti’s *La Fille du Régiment*, and “*Largo al factotum*” from Rossini’s *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*.



## ACTIVE EXPLORATION

### Costume Customs

#### MATERIALS

- Costume sketches
- Production photos
- Dice
- Found objects and materials

#### OBJECTIVES

Learners will be able to:

- Compare and contrast costume sketches and production photos from *Manon*.
- Make inferences about characters and plot from costume design elements.

#### CONNECTIONS

- Draw logical inferences from visual source material.
- Cite specific visual evidence to support those inferences.
- Learn and use topic-specific vocabulary.

*Manon* is all about contrast: the country and the city; the bare apartment and the opulent hotel; the extravagance of the opera and the solemnity of the church; the innocence of youth and the weight of experience. As the title character moves through each setting and situation on her long trajectory from naïve girl to dying prisoner, costuming plays a central role in suggesting where—and with whom—she stands. This is especially true for the Met’s production of *Manon*, for which Laurent Pelly served as both director and costume designer.

In this activity, students will investigate how elements of costume design—silhouette, texture, color, and drape—communicate information about characters before a single word is sung. The lesson will further help students practice close looking, visual analysis, and evidence-based inference through primary resource costume sketches and images from the opera.

#### STEP 1. EXPLORE

Start the lesson by prompting students to consider the social and cultural assumptions tied to clothing. We all learn not to judge a book by its cover, but costumes—the clothes and accessories worn by performers onstage—are among the crucial ways that theatrical designers convey information about characters in an opera, play, or movie. Ask students what they might assume about a character if their costume were:

- Dirty, torn, and threadbare
- Covered in sequins and sparkling jewels
- All black from head to toe
- A kimono, Nehru jacket, or yarmulke

As students communicate the assumptions they derive from these clothing styles, provide counterarguments that provide nuance and require them to think a little deeper. You could suggest the following:

- Can you wear expensive designer jeans with holes or tears?
- Can you thrift an article of clothing with plastic embroidery?
- Where might someone wear all black? At a funeral? At a formal event? While committing a crime under cover of night?
- Do only Japanese people wear kimonos? In what other contexts might someone wear one? How about other culturally specific forms of clothing?



- What additional information would you need to determine someone's character from their clothing?

## STEP 2. PLAY

Costumes don't just need to look good on stage. They also provide information about each character's age, job, social status, personality, where and when they are situated, and much more. Costume designers use the following elements to indicate these ideas:

- Silhouette (the shape of a garment)
- Texture (the feel or surface of a garment)
- Colors and patterns
- Drape (how a piece flows when you move)

To explore these elements more deeply, students will play a game using the "Costume Randomizer" handout included with this guide. Begin by reviewing each of the four design element categories and the words within them. If any words are unfamiliar to your students (e.g., corseted or monochromatic), take a moment to define them for the class.

Next, either as a class, in small groups, or individually, roll a die four times to select the corresponding word from each of the four categories. In the silhouette category, for example, a roll of three would correspond with "shapeless." In the color category, a roll of five could correspond with



“pattern.” Once students have identified their four costume design element words, they get to work!

Using whatever tools are available in the classroom (e.g., markers, pencils, paper scraps, clay), students will create a costume design that aligns with their randomly chosen elements. This creation session could be a full class period, or you could set a time limit to encourage students to finish just a draft. There may well be contradictions among the chosen elements, and that is okay!

Have students share their designs once they are completed. Consider what kind of character might wear each randomized creation. What might each design communicate about its wearer’s age, job, social status, period, or geography? Repeat the randomizer process as many times as you see fit.

 **A NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS:** This is a great place to pause the lesson. Steps 3 and 4 can be completed during a different session, as long as students (or you!) hold onto their handouts.

### STEP 3. ANALYZE

Now that students have thought broadly about the elements of costume design, they will apply their learning to primary sources and examine materials from the Met’s production of *Manon*. Working individually or in pairs, students should complete the “Image Analysis” handout included with this guide. They can work at their own pace, or you can project images for the entire class to analyze at once. Full-color production images can be found in the “Additional Resources” section of the *HD Live in Schools* Educator Hub ([metopera.org/educator-hub](https://metopera.org/educator-hub)). For each set of costumes, students should write the following:

**I SEE:** Describe what you see in the image, accounting for silhouette, texture, color/pattern, and drape.

**I THINK:** Describe what the costume conveys about the character (e.g., age, job, status, period, geography).

**I WONDER:** Pose at least one question or curiosity you have about the character. You may also want to compare the images to the others.

Feel free to adjust this language to reflect your pedagogical approach to exploring primary resources.



#### STEP 4. REFLECT

Once students have analyzed all the costume selections from *Manon*, use their “I WONDER” questions as a starting point for class discussion.

- Are there any shared questions about the characters in the opera?
- Did students notice the same design elements? Were there major differences in what they noticed?
- What are students curious to discover when they see the opera?

#### SCAFFOLD

- Invite students to make predictions about the characters and the opera’s plot based on their costume analysis. Record the class’s predictions and return to them after students see the opera. Ask:
  - Which predictions were accurate?
  - Which changed?
  - What costume details make more sense in retrospect?
- If students need more guidance, lead the first part of Step 3 as an “I Spy” activity instead of asking students to begin with “I SEE” statements. Name a specific costume design element and ask students to locate it in the images. For example: “I spy a costume with an hourglass silhouette,” “I spy feathers used as texture,” “I spy dark colors,” or “I spy layers that move.”
- To add a creation element, ask students to draw a favorite outfit, an imaginary outfit, or the outfit they are wearing that day. Then they can label the drawing using costume design vocabulary: silhouette, texture, color, and drape. Encourage students to use specific language to explain what they want others to understand about them or their character based on those design choices.



## Philosophical Chairs

Active listening, critical thinking, and respectful dialogue (even when we disagree about something) are learned skills. In order to improve, we must practice! Philosophical Chairs is designed to help us develop these skills while also learning about the opera.

### Directions

1. Read the Rules of Engagement
2. Read the Statements
3. Discuss

### Rules of Engagement

1. **Be sure you understand the statement.** If something is unclear, ask!
2. **Face each other.** Body language helps show that you're listening carefully and respectfully.
3. **Only one speaker at a time.** Everyone will get their turn to speak.
4. **Think before you speak.** Be sure that what you're going to say is what you really mean.
5. **Summarize the previous person's comments before adding your own.**
6. **Address ideas, not the person.** Challenging ideas or statements is good only if we respect the individuality and inherent value of the person who expressed them.
7. **Three before me.** To make sure everyone's voice is heard, you may not make another comment until three others have shared their thoughts.

## Philosophical Chairs (CONTINUED)

### The Statements

You might find these statements challenging—and you might find it challenging to talk with someone who has a different answer from your own. That’s okay! Remember, changing your mind when you learn new information is a sign of strength, not weakness.

1. You must leave home to find yourself.
2. You must be loyal to your family above all else.
3. I believe in love at first sight.
4. Temptation is unavoidable.
5. Self-interest guides all actions.
6. Money provides happiness.
7. You have little control of who you become.
8. Love is the most valuable thing in life.
9. It is never too late to apologize.
10. It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.



## Bragging Writes | Text and Translation

### TRACK 9 or MOoD CLIP 30

#### *“Je marche sur tous les chemins”*

Je marche sur tous les chemins,  
Aussi bien qu’une souveraine!  
On s’incline, on baise ma main,  
Car par la beauté je suis reine!  
Je suis reine!  
Mes chevaux courent à grands pas!  
Devant ma vie aventureuse,  
Les grands s’avancent chapeau bas!  
Je suis belle, je suis heureuse!  
Autour de moi tout doit fleurir!  
Je vais à tout ce qui m’attire.  
Et si Manon devait jamais mourir,  
Ce serait, mes amis, dans un éclat de rire!

Wherever I go,  
I travel like royalty!  
People bow and kiss my hand,  
Because my beauty makes me a queen!  
Yes, I am queen!  
My horses prance with heads held high!  
When they see my adventurous life,  
Noblemen tip their hats to me!  
I am beautiful and happy!  
Around me, everything comes to life!  
I do whatever I please.  
And should Manon ever die,  
It will be in a burst of laughter!

# Costume Customs | Costume Randomizer

## Directions

Roll a die to select one word from each of the four categories. Once you have identified your four costume design element words, get to work designing your randomized costume!

|   | SILHOUETTE | TEXTURE  | COLOR         | DRAPE    |
|---|------------|----------|---------------|----------|
| 1 | Structured | Rough    | Bright        | Flowing  |
| 2 | Natural    | Smooth   | Dark          | Spiky    |
| 3 | Shapeless  | Silky    | Dull          | Ruffled  |
| 4 | Fitted     | Leather  | Solid         | Layered  |
| 5 | Loose      | Feathers | Pattern       | Stiff    |
| 6 | Corseted   | Sequins  | Monochromatic | Trailing |

My randomized design element words are:

SILHOUETTE

\_\_\_\_\_

TEXTURE

\_\_\_\_\_

COLOR

\_\_\_\_\_

DRAPE

\_\_\_\_\_

## Costume Customs | Image Analysis

### Directions

Look at the costumes from *Manon*. Then write what you see, think, and wonder for each image.



IMAGE 1: Manon in Act I

I see: \_\_\_\_\_

I think: \_\_\_\_\_

I wonder: \_\_\_\_\_



IMAGE 2: Manon in Act III

I see: \_\_\_\_\_

I think: \_\_\_\_\_

I wonder: \_\_\_\_\_



IMAGE 3: Javotte, Poussette, and Rosette in Act I

I see: \_\_\_\_\_

I think: \_\_\_\_\_

I wonder: \_\_\_\_\_

## Costume Customs | Image Analysis (CONTINUED)



IMAGE 4: Javotte, Poussette, and Rosette in Act IV

I see: \_\_\_\_\_

I think: \_\_\_\_\_

I wonder: \_\_\_\_\_



IMAGE 5: Guillot de Morfontaine in Act I

I see: \_\_\_\_\_

I think: \_\_\_\_\_

I wonder: \_\_\_\_\_



IMAGE 6: Chevalier des Grieux in Act II

I see: \_\_\_\_\_

I think: \_\_\_\_\_

I wonder: \_\_\_\_\_

## Costume Customs | Image Analysis (CONTINUED)



IMAGE 7: Chevalier des Grieux in Act III

I see: \_\_\_\_\_

I think: \_\_\_\_\_

I wonder: \_\_\_\_\_



IMAGE 8: Voyageurs in Act I

I see: \_\_\_\_\_

I think: \_\_\_\_\_

I wonder: \_\_\_\_\_

# Post-Opera Review | *Manon*

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## Directions

For each character, think about the following: **Main Goal:** What does the character want? **Key Moment:** What was their most impactful moment or scene on stage? **Performance Choice:** How did the singer(s) show the character through voice, movement, and expression?

Use specific evidence from the opera—such as a scene, vocal choice, movement, or interaction with another character—to explain your thinking.

### Manon Lescaut

MAIN GOAL:

---

KEY MOMENT:

---

PERFORMANCE CHOICE:

---

### Lescaut

MAIN GOAL:

---

KEY MOMENT:

---

PERFORMANCE CHOICE:

---

### Chevalier des Grieux

MAIN GOAL:

---

KEY MOMENT:

---

PERFORMANCE CHOICE:

---

### Guillot de Morfontaine

MAIN GOAL:

---

KEY MOMENT:

---

PERFORMANCE CHOICE:

---

### Comte des Grieux

MAIN GOAL:

---

KEY MOMENT:

---

PERFORMANCE CHOICE:

---

# Post-Opera Review | *Manon*

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Rate the following elements of the opera on their effectiveness in communicating the plot and core theme of the opera, five being extremely effective, one being not effective at all. Justify your rating with at least one example from the opera.

**CHOREOGRAPHY AND ACTION DIRECTION**    RATING: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

JUSTIFICATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SET AND LIGHTING DESIGN**    RATING: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

JUSTIFICATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**COSTUME, HAIR, AND MAKEUP DESIGN**    RATING: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

JUSTIFICATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**OVERALL IMPRESSION** What is your overall impression of the opera *Manon*? How effectively did it communicate the main themes and emotions?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**STANDOUT SCENE** Which scene was most impactful? How did the music, performance, and staging work together to make it effective?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL CONNECTION**  
Choose a theme (love, pleasure, freedom, punishment). How does it connect to your own life or the world around you?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_