

# Synopsis

## Act one

### Scene one

*The courtyard of an inn near Paris.*

Lescaut, a young adventurer, has come to the inn to meet his sister Manon, who is on her way to a convent. In the crowded innyard we see a procuress, Madame, with her stable of actresses and courtesans, including Lescaut's mistress; the Chevalier Des Grieux, a well-born young student; and Monsieur Guillot de Morfontaine, a rich man of the world. A coach arrives bringing Manon, whose youthful beauty has already attracted a fellow-passenger, an old gentleman. Lescaut is aware of Manon's value, and leads the old man into the inn to discuss the availability of Manon, while realising that Guillot de Morfontaine is also interested in her. But Des Grieux has fallen in love with Manon, and she agrees to elope with him. As they leave by coach, Lescaut returns with the old man, but Guillot de Morfontaine has made a much higher bid for Manon, and Lescaut agrees to go in search of her and induce her to accept Guillot de Morfontaine as protector.

### Scene two

*Des Grieux's lodgings in Paris.*

Des Grieux is writing to his father, but his passion for Manon drives all other thoughts from his head. When he finally leaves to despatch his letter, Lescaut enters with Guillot de Morfontaine who brings jewels and opulent clothes for Manon. Thrilled by this display of wealth, Manon responds to Guillot de Morfontaine and stifles her regret at leaving her first love in the consoling touch of furs and jewels. Lescaut awaits Des Grieux's return and tells him that there will be huge rewards if Manon stays with Guillot de Morfontaine.

## Act two

### Scene one

*A private house in Paris.*

Madame is giving a party, pairing off courtesans with various gentlemen. Lescaut, already drunk, arrives with the grieving Des Grieux, and they see the arrival of the magnificently dressed Manon on the arm of Guillot de Morfontaine. Lescaut dances drunkenly with his mistress, and the disconsolate Des Grieux watches Manon, who is admired by every man present. When the guests leave to take supper in another room, Des Grieux reminds Manon of his love. She is unmoved, then declares that she will go away with him if he wins a great deal of money from Guillot de Morfontaine at cards, and she gives Des Grieux a pack of cards which will enable him to win by cheating. Des Grieux is so successful that Guillot de Morfontaine's suspicions are aroused and a brawl ensues. Manon and Des Grieux escape, while Guillot de Morfontaine accuses Lescaut of complicity.

### Scene two

*Des Grieux's lodgings.*

Manon and Des Grieux prepare to leave Paris, but quarrel over Manon's jewels, then declare their love for one another again. Guillot de Morfontaine arrives with guards and the handcuffed Lescaut. Manon is arrested as a prostitute, and in the confusion Lescaut is killed.



In un conviviale brindisi al tavolino nell'Atto II, quadro primo dell'*Histoire de Manon*, un Vecchio gentiluomo (Matthew Endicott) seduto tra una delle prostitute (Serena Sarnataro) e uno dei clienti (Andrea Pujatti). Teatro alla Scala, Stagione 2012-2013.

### Act three

#### Scene one

##### *The port at New Orleans.*

A crowd at the dock-side watches the arrival of a penal ship bringing criminals to the French colony of Louisiana. Among a group of prostitutes deported from France is Manon. Des Grieux has accompanied her, claiming to be her husband. Even now Manon's beauty attracts an admirer: the gaoler of the penal settlement.

#### Scene two

##### *The gaoler's apartment.*

Manon is brought in and the gaoler makes love to her, giving her jewels as a recompense. Des Grieux enters and kills the gaoler, and then flees with Manon.

#### Scene three

##### *The Louisiana swamps.*

Manon and Des Grieux are fleeing from justice. Manon is feverish and in her delirium figures from her past appear and disappear amid the mists of the swamp. She declares her love for Des Grieux, then dies in his arms.