

Welcome to Manon! During the performances of our first opera, I was struck by how very personal our experience is at Opera in the Heights. It's like having your very own opera company, close to you physically and emotionally; where you can really see and feel everything that's going on. It's a wonderful experience, almost unique in opera. I'm sure you'll share this very feeling during Manon with your Oh! family and friends.



Each of us is involved with Opera in the Heights! to a different degree and in different ways. I'd like to invite you to enhance your enjoyment of Oh! Join the **guild**, usher and come to the pot-luck dinner with singers and chorus; you'll get to know their personal stories. Come to the **free dress rehearsals**, hear the other cast sing and watch opera being made; win a walk-on role, tweet the opera or take photos and share them on our flickr group. Come to the **Wednesday night reception and talk** at Houston Piano Company to meet new opera friends and learn more about the opera you are about to see. Come to the **Thursday night pre-opera reception** at Karen Derr Realty Company; enjoy a glass of wine and chat with fellow fans. Join the **Social Club** for added opportunities to socialize with great friends who share your passion for opera. **House a singer** and have a player on the field to root for. Give your **time, or your talent, or your treasure**; for in any event the rewards are many-fold. **Join the board** and help steer this little-company-that-can ever onward. These wonderful things happen because Oh! has inspired you and people like you to make them happen. Call us; we'd love to help you personalize your involvement.

Jim and Rosalie Bates, friends of the founder, have done many of these activities; their involvement goes back to the beginning. Rosalie has contributed her time and talent as a member of the Guild and as its president and as a member of the Board as its secretary and so much more. I thank them deeply as underwriters of this production of Manon, and for everything they have so generously given.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Haase". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Bill Haase  
Managing Director  
Chairman, Board of Directors

# *Manon*

Music by Jules Massenet

Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Philippe Gille

\*THIS PRODUCTION IS SPONSORED BY JAMES R. AND ROSALIE A. BATES  
\*November 6, 2009 performance adopted by Opera in the Heights Guild  
\*November 7, 2009 performance adopted by Barbra and Joseph Munisteri  
and honors Joan Carlson, “a tireless volunteer for Oh!”

Artistic Director and Conductor  
William M. Weibel  
Cullen Conducting Chair

Stage Director  
Adam Ganderson

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## CAST

Emerald - Nov 5, 7, and 13  
Ruby - Nov 6, 12, and 14

Manon - Jacqueline Noparstak (EMERALD)  
Des Grieux - Timothy Birt (EMERALD)  
Manon - Jacqueline Thompson (RUBY)  
Des Grieux - Luke Grooms (RUBY)  
Lescaut - Yoonsang Lee\*  
Guillot - George Williams\*  
De Brétigny - Keir Murray\*  
Cont' Des Grieux - Daymon Passmore\*  
Poussette - Stacey Weber\*  
Javotte - Rachel Ross\*  
Rosette - Heather Scanio\*  
Innkeeper - Michael Moses\*  
Guardsman (1) - Scott Travis\*  
Guardsman (2) - Kenneth Alumbaugh\*  
Maid (Act II) - Rita Minter\*

*\*denotes artist sings in all 6 performances*

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## CHORUS

Kenneth Alumbaugh  
Patricia Bernstein  
Traci Davis  
Ekanem Ebinne  
Jada Edison  
Martha Elliott - Adopted by  
Karen T. Susman

Michael Leone - Adopted  
by Irene Bourke and Joseph  
Waiter  
Matt Maschek  
Jennifer Mergele  
Michael Moses  
Johnny Nichols  
Jayna Parker

Taylor Rawley  
Jordan Reche  
Tamara Tisdale - Adopted by  
Denise and Kinjo Yonemoto  
Scott Travis - Adopted by Mark  
Rosenberg and Ben Samuels

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## PRODUCTION TEAM

Assistant Artistic Director - Keith Chapman  
Stage Hand - Brian Eley  
Chorus Master - Calvin Fuller  
Stage Director/Stage Manager - Adam Ganderson  
Lightboard Operator - Maria Garmendia

Set Painter/Builder - Katie Jackson  
Costume Designer - Dena Scheh  
Lighting Designer - Kevin Taylor  
Repetiteur - Teruhiko Toda  
Make-up Artist - Stacey Weber

Surtitles written by Scott Heumann

The surtitle translation used in this production of *Manon* is owned by the Houston Grand Opera.  
Anthony Freud, General Director

Violin I  
John Cramer  
(Concertmaster)  
Johnny Chang  
Jane Kimmes  
Valentin Nicolaescu

Bass  
Greg Garcia

Flute I  
Wendy Bergin

Clarinet II  
Amy Chung

Bassoon I  
James Roberson

Violin II  
Kris Kelly  
Karen Wilkson

Flute II/picc.  
Kim Knudsen

Horn I  
Thomas Bacon

Viola  
David Bynog  
Dawn Whipp

Oboe I  
Grace Tice

Horn II  
Greg Davis

Cello  
Scott Card  
Brady Lanier

Oboe II  
Julie Jacobs

Trumpet I  
Jason Adams - Adopted by  
Bart and Jeff Altamari

Clarinet I  
Maiko Sasaki

Trumpet II  
Tom Tillotson

~~~~~ SPECIAL THANKS TO ~~~~~

**Those who are housing our artists:**

Peg and Jack Anderson, Elaine Massey and David Himel, Eric Arbiter, Anne Sloan, David Douglas and Lamar Mathews, Trudy Nelson, Betty Beem, Sharon Davis and Bill Morrison

Our volunteers who usher, operate the boutique, and prepare and serve the intermission refreshments.

John Burghduff for programming and running the titles and his assistant, Howard Marmell.

Thu Nhi D. Barrus for helping with French pronunciation.

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Houston Piano Company, the official piano company of Opera in the Heights and sponsor of The Ann Thompson Lecture Series

Matt Mullins and John Langman at Houston Gym for helping our out of town artists stay fit and healthy.

Jo Lyday, Davis Tucker, and Eric Arbiter for providing transportation for the artists.

Our flickr group members for the fantastic pictures they take and share with us at [flickr.com/groups/operaintheheights](http://flickr.com/groups/operaintheheights)

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Costs of this production are partially funded by donations from:  
Alice and Urvine Atkinson Shelley H. Baker Joan Carlson  
Martha E. Fagan Carol Ostlind Alana A. Robb Alvin Swick

Program Length

There will be two 10 minute intermissions after Act II and after Act III.  
The performance should run about 3 and ½ hours and end at 11:00 P.M.

## MANON

**Act I:** France, 1721. In the courtyard of an inn at Amiens, a crowd awaits arrival of the coach. Guillot, an elderly roué, and his wealthy friend Brétigny, who have ordered dinner for three actresses of easy virtue, Poussette, Javotte and Rosette. As they retire to a room, a young officer, Lescaut, comes to meet his cousin Manon, who is on her way to a convent. The coach soon arrives and with it Manon, who excitedly tells Lescaut about her first trip away from home. While he looks after her luggage, Guillot, calling for more wine, notices the pretty girl and flirts with her, but she only laughs at the elderly man's advances. Lescaut returns, and before joining friends at a gaming table warns Manon about talking to strangers. To herself, she wistfully compares her own bland future with the pleasure-filled life of Guillot and his glamorous companions. The Chevalier Des Grieux arrives at the inn and, on seeing Manon, falls in love with her. Seizing this opportunity to escape the convent, Manon suggests that they run off to Paris in Guillot's coach. The tipsy old bon vivant, who had intended to abduct Manon himself, stumbles from the inn just in time to hurl curses after the escaping lovers.

**ACT II:** In their Paris apartment, Manon and Des Grieux read a letter he has written to his father in which he describes his sweetheart and asks permission to marry her. When Des Grieux notices a bouquet of flowers Brétigny has sent, Manon tells a lie to allay his suspicions of her loyalty. Lescaut and Brétigny arrive, the former to demand that Des Grieux marry Manon, the latter to tell the girl that Des Grieux will soon be kidnapped by his irate father. The visitors depart, and Des Grieux goes off to send his letter. Left alone, Manon is unable to resist the temptation of luxury offered her by Brétigny and bids a poignant farewell to the life she has shared with Des Grieux. The young man returns, relating an idyllic vision of their future life together, but officers suddenly force their way into the room and abduct him.

**ACT III:** A holiday crowd fills a park at the Cours-la-Reine, where Poussette, Javotte and Rosette have eluded Guillot. Manon, surrounded by wealthy admirers, preens herself and sings a gavotte in praise of youth and pleasure. When Des Grieux' father, the Count, speaks with Brétigny, Manon overhears their conversation and learns that Des Grieux is about to take holy orders at the Church of St. Sulpice. She herself speaks to the Count and is piqued to hear that her former lover has grown cold to her charms. Manon rushes to St. Sulpice.

In the sacristy at St. Sulpice, some women describe the eloquence of the new Abbé. Skeptical of his son's new virtue, the Count tries to persuade Des Grieux to abandon the church and marry a suitable girl. After the father leaves, Des Grieux prays for the strength to resist the memory of Manon. However, Manon arrives, breaks his resolve with her ardor, and persuades him to run away with her.

**ACT IV:** The Hôtel de Transylvanie, a notorious gambling house, is crowded with merrymakers, including Lescaut, Guillot and the three actresses. When Des Grieux arrives with Manon, she suggests that he recoup their sagging fortunes at the faro table. As the young man plays cards with Guillot, Manon and the actresses sing in praise of living for the moment. Guillot, losing every hand, accuses Des Grieux of cheating and goes off to summon the police; the authorities soon arrive and with them the Count Des Grieux, who rebukes his son but promises him that his arrest will be only temporary. Manon swoons as he is taken away.

**ACT V:** Manon is to be deported to Louisiana on charges of immorality. On the road to Le Havre, where she must pass, Des Grieux and Lescaut bribe the guards to release her. Manon, in the last stages of consumption, falls exhausted in her lover's arms. Des Grieux though despairing, comforts her as, murmuring of their lost happiness, she dies.

- *William M. Weibel*

PRODUCTION TEAM



(M Mus in Piano, Rice)  
 With *Oh!* Since 1999.  
 Music director theatrical productions Houston, Galveston, Texas City, and Dallas  
 Recitalist, accompanist vocal department HSPVA  
 Music Librarian, Rice

**Keith Chapman**  
 Assistant Artistic Director



*Oh! Il Tabarro / Pagliacci*  
 Recent: Prop Designer, *The Wiz*, Ensemble Theater  
 Set Designer, *The Man Who Saved New Orleans*, Ensemble Theater  
 Set Designer and Props Designer at the Ensemble Theater

**Winifred Sowell**  
 Props Mistress



With *Oh!* since 2004.  
 Organist & choirmaster at St. James Episcopal church, adjunct professor at TSU, and Ebony Opera chorus master.

**Calvin Fuller**  
 Chorus Master



*Oh! Falstaff*  
*Macbeth*  
*Don Pasquale*  
*Madama Butterfly*  
 Kevin is originally from NY and designed lighting for theater, dance, music, puppetry for over a decade.

**Kevin Taylor**  
 Lighting Designer



(BS Mech Eng, MIT; MFA Stage Management, Yale School of Drama)  
*Oh!*: Light Board Operator / Stage Manager, *Il Tabarro / Pagliacci*  
 Recent: Stage Manager: Chicago Opera Theater, Ash Lawn Opera, Syracuse Stage, Yale Repertory Theater, and Dallas Theater Center

**Adam Ganderson**  
 Stage Director / Stage Manager



(Graduate Diploma in Piano Accompaniment, Bachelor of Music, Tokyo College of Music)  
 Recent: Assistant Conductor, National Theater Tokyo  
 Repetiteur, *Das Verrallene Meer*, Henze (World Premier), RAI Torino Symphony Orchestra  
 Conductor, *L'elisir d'amore*, Mira Mare, Japan

**Teruhiko Toda**  
 Repetiteur



An accomplished painter whose artistry has been seen for three seasons at *Oh!* as well as on the stages of Bobbinodtrinn Puppet Theatre & Catastrophic Theater.

**Katie Jackson**  
 Set Builder/ Set Painter



With *Oh!* Since 1999  
 A Fulbright Scholar and former Metropolitan Opera conductor with a world of opera experience

**William Weibel**  
 Artistic Director, Conductor



*Oh! Falstaff*  
*Macbeth*  
*Don Pasquale*  
*Madama Butterfly*  
*Others*  
 Designs Costumes for numerous opera and theater companies

**Dena Scheh**  
 Costume Designer

CAST



**Timothy Birt**  
Tenor  
Des Grioux (*Oh!* debut)

**Oh!**  
2011 Nadir, *The Pearl Fishers*  
**Recent:**  
Duke, *Rigoletto*,  
South Texas Lyric Opera  
Remendado, *Carmen*  
San Antonio Opera  
Almaviva, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*  
Lakeland Opera Theater



**Keir Murray**  
Baritone  
De Bretigny

**Oh!**  
2008 Yamadori, *Madama Butterfly*  
2008 Angelotti, *Tosca*  
2008 Quinault, *Adriana Lecouvreur*  
2009 Doctor, *Macbeth*  
2010 Schounard, *La Boheme*  
**Recent:**  
Sergeant Meryll, *Yeomen of the Guard*, Houston G&S Society  
Count Almaviva, *Le Nozze di Figaro*,  
Capitol Opera Sacramento  
Falke, *Die Fledermaus*, Pacific  
Opera Theater  
Belcore, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Rome  
Festival Opera



**Luke Grooms**  
Tenor  
Des Grioux (*Oh!* and role  
debut)

**Oh!:**  
2010 Nadir, *The Pearl Fishers*  
**Recent:**  
Gambler #1(cover), Metropolitan  
Opera  
Dwight/God, *Jerry Springer: the*  
*Opera*, Carnegie Hall-New York  
Fante, *I Due foscari*, Opera  
Orchestra of New York-  
Carnegie Hall  
Elvino, *La Sonnambula*,  
Opera Orchestra of New York-  
Young Artist performance



**Jacqueline Noparstak**  
Soprano  
Manon

**Oh!:**  
2007 Countess, *Le nozze di Figaro*,  
2010 Rosalinde, *Die Fledermaus*  
**Recent:**  
Foreign Woman, *The Consul*,  
Glimmerglass Opera  
Micaela, *Carmen*, Natchez Opera  
Festival  
Fiordiligi, *Così fan tutte*, O.S.H  
Opera  
Hanna Glawari, *The Merry Widow*,  
Liederkrantz Opera



**Yoonsang Lee**  
Baritone  
Lescaut

**Oh!:**  
2006, Masetto *Don Giovanni*  
2007, Morales *Carmen*  
2008, Shapless *Madama Butterfly*  
2010, Marcello *La Boheme*  
**Recent:**  
Escarmillo *Carmen* Sao Paulo,  
Brazil  
Belcore *L'elisir d'amore* Green  
Mountain Opera Festival  
Yamadori *Madama Butterfly*  
St. Barts Music Festival



**Daymon Passmore**  
Bass  
Comte des Grioux (*Oh!* debut)

**Oh!**  
2010 Samuel *Un ballo in maschera*  
(role debut)  
2010 Luther / Crespel *Les contes*  
*d'Hoffmann*  
**Recent:**  
Pimen *Boris Godunov*  
Dnepropetrovsk Opera  
Sarastro *Die Zauberflöte* Flagstaff  
in Fidenza  
General Godofredo *La Curandera*  
UT Butler School of Music  
Colline *La Boheme* UT Butler School  
of Music



**Rita Minter**  
Soprano  
Maid

**Oh!:**  
2008, Lady in Waiting, *Macbeth*



**Rachael Ross**  
Soprano  
Javotte

**Oh!**  
2009 Soprano Lover, *Il Tabarro*  
Chorus member 6 Productions  
**Recent:**  
Gianetta, *L'Elisir D'amore*, Italian  
Operatic Experience

CAST



**Oh!:**  
2010 - Nicklausse, *The Tales of Hoffmann*  
**Recent:**  
Annio, *La Clemenza di Tito*,  
University of Maryland  
Cherubino, *Le Nozze di Figaro*,  
University of Houston

**Heather Scanio**  
Mezzo Soprano  
Rosette (*Oh!* and role debut)



**Recent:**  
Zerbina *Maid to Mistress Lone*  
Star Lyric Theater  
Miss Silverpeal *The Impresario*  
Sugar Land Opera  
Angelica *Orlando Bay Area*  
Summer Opera Theater (San Francisco)

**Stage name: Stacey Weber**  
Soprano  
Pousette (*Oh!* Debut)



**Oh!** 2004, Lucia, *Lucia di Lammermoor*  
2010 Leila, *The Pearl Fishers*  
2010 Heroines, *Tales of Hoffman*  
**Recent:**  
Adina, *Elixir of Love*, Treasure Coast  
Opera  
Musetta, *La Boheme*, Metro Lyric  
Operau  
Violetta, *La Traviata*, Indiana  
University  
Laurie, *Oklahoma*, Janiac Opera  
Company

**Jacqueline Milena Thompson**  
Soprano  
Manon (Role Debut)



**Oh!:**  
2009, Tinca, *Il Tabarro*  
2009, Beppe, *Pagliacci*  
2009, Dr. Caius, *Falstaff*  
Plus 29 other roles

**Stage Name: George Williams**  
Tenor  
Guillot

CHORUS



**Kenneth Alumbaugh**  
Tenor  
2nd production



**Traci Davis**  
Soprano  
18th production



**Patricia Bernstein**  
Mezzo & Soprano  
6th production



**Ekanem Ebinne**  
Alto  
*Oh!* Debut

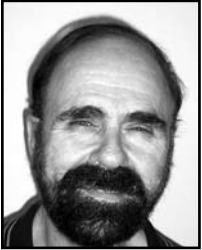
CHORUS



Martha Elliott  
Mezzo-Soprano  
21st production



Johnny Nichols  
Tenor  
2nd production



Michael Leone  
Baritone  
16th production



Taylor Rawley  
Tenor  
7th production



Matt Maschek  
Bass  
6th production



Tamara Tisdale  
Soprano  
10th production



Jennifer Mergele  
Mezzo-Soprano  
Oh! Debut



Scott Travis  
Tenor  
5th production



## THE POPULAR MASSENET

Manon, composed in 1882, is a distinctly French tale of a woman seduced and eventually undone by her weakness for life in the fast lane as practiced in 18th-century Paris. It is based on Abbé Prevost's 1731 cautionary novel, "Manon Lescaut." The novel is about a wise man who relates the story of the Chevalier des Grieux and Manon, as a warning to his young, aristocratic student. In the novel, Manon does not exist; she is an idea. The moral of Prevost's tale was: Upper-class men should not get involved with slutty, lower class girls. Of course, Massenet could not do that in the opera. He made both characters much more sympathetic. In the novel, des Grieux and Manon cheat at cards, in the opera they do not. In the novel, des Grieux kills someone and then makes some ridiculous excuse. In the opera, he does not. Some have been quoted as referring to Manon's wholehearted innocence. I would add "She is tender, superficial and quite brainless. What more could a sensible man want?" It's an amusing description, right on the money as far as it goes. But "wholehearted innocence"? Let's not overlook this sixteen-year-old girl's greedy streak, or the calculating cold blooded way with which she agrees to let her lover be abducted so she can move on to a courtesan's life of luxury. Tougher, more determined, with more strings to her bow than just another bimbo. Massenet and his librettists, Meilhac and Gille, collaborated 150 years after Prevost wrote his novel. They were more inclined to portray their main characters partly as victims of society rather than simple object lessons of the consequences of bad behavior. Manon came from the lower class. How can you be a victim if you have no rights? Massenet kept that in the opera. The opera shows the change in this girl, from the innocent 15-year-old to the woman in love, to the queen of Paris, to the greedy manipulator, to the fallen woman. Massenet assigns motifs to announce the presence of most of the main characters. They are consistent from start to finish, except for Manon's, which changes as she changes. The problem with Massenet is that he became unfashionable very soon after his death in 1912. He was perhaps regarded too much as stock-in-trade, and, until recently, we have rarely been able to hear the actual operas that made him one of the most popular Parisian musical figures of his time. He was to French opera what his contemporary Puccini was to the Italians - a man of immense popularity and stature, one feted by the claque and completely in tune with contemporary populist tastes. It is difficult not to view him as the Andrew Lloyd Webber of his day. Massenet's Manon is a French opera of more refined and delicate charms than Puccini's booming, Italianate Manon Lescaut, although both are based on the same Abbé Prevost novel. It is a big opera, but for best effect it needs a production with the intimacy of

opéra comique which makes it ideal for the confines of Lambert Hall.

With the death of Jules Massenet, which occurred on August 14, 1912 France lost her most popular and, besides Camille Saint-Saëns, most famous composer - a composer on whose actual merits, perhaps, exacting critics do not agree, but whose career may well be described as an almost uninterrupted series of successes. Jules Massenet was born, May 12, 1842, at Montaud, then a suburb of Saint-Etienne, the great manufacturing city of the centre of France - the youngest of twenty-one children. His biographers relate many more or less romantic anecdotes showing his early propensity for music; telling us, for instance, how his keen desire to study the art impelled him to escape from home with the intention of going to Paris and the hope of finding there the suitable teacher whom he had vainly sought in Saint-Etienne. His father, a manufacturer ruined by the Revolution of 1848, left Montaud for Paris, and there the boy became, in 1851, a pupil of the Conservatoire, studying the pianoforte in Laurent's class and winning the first prize in 1859. He began to learn harmony with Bazin in 1853; but after this master (a poor musician and poor teacher) had discouraged him, he became a pupil of Reber. In 1860 he entered Ambroise Thomas's class of composition, and in 1863 he won the first prize for fugue and the Grand Prix de Rome. His first works were principally songs and short pianoforte pieces, orchestral suites of facile and unpretentious style, a short opera-comique in one act, 'La Grand Tante' (produced in Paris, 1867), and a 'Requiem' (unpublished). In 1868 he made the acquaintance of the publisher, Georges Hartmann, who from the very outset had faith in him and greatly assisted him during the first stages of his career.

Massenet's first ambitious work, the opéra-comique in four acts, 'Don César de Bazan' (Paris, 1872), was an absolute failure. But in 1873 the young composer scored two decisive successes with the incidental music to Leconte de Lisle's tragedy, 'Les Erynnies,' and with the dramatic oratorio, 'Marie-Magdeleine,' both of which were performed at the Théâtre de l'Odéon. As early as 1876 he was decorated with the Légion d'Honneur. In 1877, 'Le Roi de Lahore,' one of his best operatic scores (although comparatively little known), was produced at the Paris Opéra; the following year he was elected professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire and member of the Institut, thus succeeding his former teacher and vituperator François Bazin. Since then, and until the end of his life, honours, fame and fortune came to him in profusion. The absolute failure of a comparatively great quantity of his works passed unperceived under the favour of several radiant and protracted triumphs, the most memorable of which are those of 'Manon' (Paris, Opéra-Comique, 1884),

'Werther' (Vienna, 1892; Paris, Opéra-Comique, 1893), and 'Thaïs' (Paris, Opéra, 1894). 'Esclarmonde,' which, when produced in 1889 at the Opéra-Comique, had a very satisfactory run of performances, has never since been revived until the Met presented it in November 1976 for 10 performances with Joan Sutherland and Giacomo Aragall conducted by her husband Richard Bonynge. Massenet has certainly been one of the most prolific of French composers. He has written no less than twenty-four operas or opéra-comiques (three of which, 'Panurge,' 'Amadis,' and 'Cleopâtre,' are as yet unknown, but we are told, are ready for publication), incidental music for several plays, pianoforte pieces, a great quantity of songs, choruses, and a few specimens of church-music. Besides 'Marie-Magdeleine,' he has composed the oratorios 'Eve' (1875), 'La Vierge' (1880), 'La Terre Promise' (1900), and the lyric scenes, 'Narcisse' (1878), and 'Biblis' (1887). His instrumental music is neither very abundant nor very pregnant, consisting chiefly of picturesque suites and other minor works. He never attempted to deal with the more earnest types of instrumental forms except once, and this attempt (a Pianoforte concerto written in 1903) was pronounced a failure even by his most enthusiastic devotees. The last opera of his performed during his lifetime, 'Roma' (Paris, Opéra, 1911), is also an isolated and not particularly felicitous attempt towards classical severity and grandeur. Massenet's prolonged and widespread success is one of the puzzling phenomena of modern musical history. While those who look a little below the surface find his music inexpressibly monotonous, casual hearers are surprised by his superficial versatility. . . . few of the real lovers of music will expect any of his works to remain among the compositions that keep their popularity after the death of the author. Harsh as it may appear, I believe this verdict to be a sound one. The chief idiosyncrasy of Massenet, as a man and as an artist, was an overwhelming desire to court success. His object was to seduce; and from the time that his music proved effective and became popular, he carefully avoided changing his manner. The characteristic melody 'à la Massenet,' graceful and elegant enough, but almost stereotyped, runs through all his scores, doing duty for Manon and Thaïs alike, for Roman Vestal or for gay Spanish lady, for dreamy German maiden and for haughty princess of yore. His early scores are, for the greater part, his best, with the one exception of the very pleasing and chaste 'Jongleur de Notre-Dame' (1902). Later, and for the plain reason that he never attempted to renovate his style, he sank into sheer mannerism. Indeed, one can but marvel that so gifted a musician, who lacked neither individuality nor skill, should have so utterly succeeded in throwing away his gifts. Success spoiled him. As M. Claude Debussy

once humorously remarked, 'he fell a victim to the butterfly-play of fascinating lady admirers.' Hence the monotony of works in the greater part of which he sedulously resorts to his favourite never-failing devices. Hence, also, the 'superficial versatility.' For if the actual progress of musical art during the past forty years left Massenet unmoved (and indeed he has taken no part in the evolution of modern music), the success of certain works appears to have influenced him not inconsiderably, inducing him to attempt a number of changes in manner if not in style. Thus, at a time when Wagner's dramas were becoming the order of the day in Paris, he wrote 'Esclarmonde,' in which the example of 'Lohengrin' is easily traceable. The popularity of Italian 'veristic' opera helps to account for the appearance in 1894 of 'La Navarraise,' and in 1897 of 'Sapho'; and Humperdinck's 'Hansel und Gretel' seems to have prompted him to write 'Cendrillon' (1899). The earnest ideals, the thirst for progress that are inseparable from genius remained unknown to him. He directed his ambitions towards a less distant goal. He wrote for this time, and his time has repaid his labours well, as appears from the history of his life and deeds. Avoiding arduous roads, well satisfied with what was within his grasp, he remained untormented by doubt or by longing. As a man he was not only kind, but courteous and eager to court favour, lavish in praise upon all young composers or artists who came into contact with him. He held the position of Professor of Composition at the Paris Conservatoire until 1896, his principal pupils being Alfred Bruneau, Gustave Charpentier, Gabriel Pierné, Xavier Leroux, Paul Vidal, Georges Marty, Lucien Hillemacher, and Augustin Savard. He can hardly be said to have exercised a wholesome influence as a teacher, and generally speaking, such of his pupils as have displayed more than ordinary merits as composers did not follow his example. In the works of M. Alfred Bruneau, for instance, no trace of Massenet's methods is to be found, except for a few melodic mannerisms. Not even as much remains in those of M. Pierné or M. Savard. In addition to the works mentioned above, Massenet wrote the following: 'Bérangère et Anatole' (1876), 'Hérodiade' (1881; London Opera House, 1911), 'Le Cid' (1885), 'Le Mage' (1891), 'Le Carillon' (1892), 'Grisélidis' (1901), 'Chérubin' (1905), 'Ariane' (1906), 'Bacchus' (1909), 'Don Quichotte' (1910; London Opera House, 1912). The funeral of M. Massenet took place at Egreville on August 17, and in accordance with the composer's wishes, was simple in character. Only members of the family were invited. Wreaths were sent by the Prince of Monaco, M. Gunsbourg (director of the Monte Carlo Opera), and by M. Carré (for the Opéra-Comique).

*William M. Weibel*  
*October 2009*

# OPERA IN THE HEIGHTS

## 2009-2010 Season Sponsors

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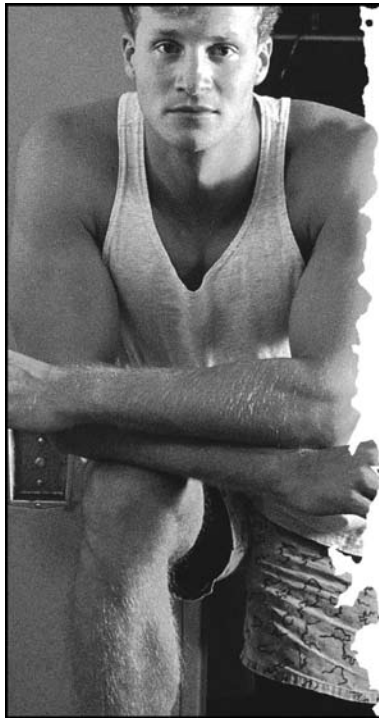
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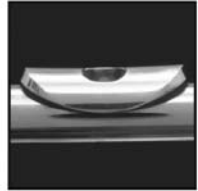
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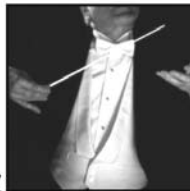
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