

MANON with Estonian Ballet in Vilnius



By Henning Høholt on 10/06/11 • Categorized as Ballet



From Manon with Estonian National Ballet, Alena Shkatula and Maksim Tsokarjov as Manon and Des Grieux. Foto: Harri Rospu

The famous whole evening ballet *Manon* by the choreographer Sir **Kenneth MacMillan**, to music by **Jules Massenet** which is being performed around in the world with the leading balletcompanies, such as La Scala, Royal Opera House, Mariinsky Theatre, American Ballet Theatre, Bayerisches Staatsballet, The Royal Danish Ballet, Manon was one of the performances presented by the **Estonian National Ballet** during their successfully visiting to the **Lithuanian National Ballet and Opera House** in Vilnius, lately.

It is a compliment to a company when Lady **Deborah MacMillan** is giving permission to let them perform her late husband's famous work. And the Estonian production, staged by **Karl Burnett** has become a success.

Many outstanding soloists in leading and smaller roles. A very good corps des ballet who shows how high the quality of the Estonian National Ballet is with the management of balletchief **Toomas Edur**. Furthermore it was a pleasure to note the pleasant atmosphere on stage, - that the audience could feel.

It starts in eighteenth century Paris, Lescaut, **Anatoli Arkhangelski**, *Manon's* corrupt brother, is outside a seedy inn, in a frozen scene of beggars, courtesans and wealthy aristocrats.



Set in France and Louisiana in the early 18th century, the story follows the hero le Chevalier Des Grieux and his lover Manon Lescaut. Des Grieux comes from a noble and landed family, but forfeits his hereditary wealth and incurs the disappointment of his father by running away with Manon. In Paris, the young lovers enjoy a blissful cohabitation, while Des Grieux struggles to satisfy Manon's taste for luxury. He scrounges together money by borrowing from his unwaveringly loyal friends and from cheating gamblers. On several occasions, Des Grieux's wealth evaporates (by theft, in a house fire, etc.), prompting Manon to leave him for a richer man because she cannot stand the thought of living in penury.

Alena Shkatula was brilliant in the titelrole, *Manon*, where she showed all the details that the role demands, from innocence in the very beginning, pride and joy at having succeeded to find happiness with a rich man, disruptive, grief and redemption after having felt abused, betrayed and exiled, but she continued to be together with her beloved Des Grieux, performed by **Maksim Chukaryov**. All these sides of the history **Shkatula** performed and danced splendid, with very many beautiful details.



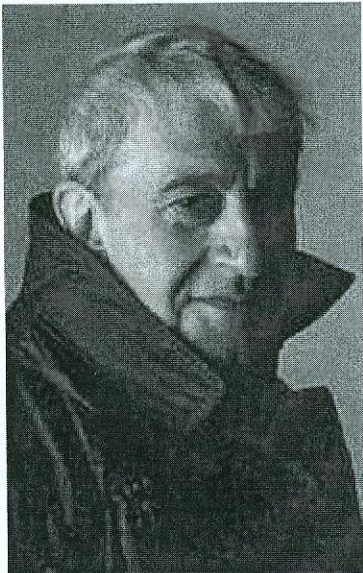
From Manon with Estonian National Ballet,
Vitali Nikolajev as mr. G.M. and Alena
Shkatula as Manon. Foto: Harri Rospu

Anatoli Arkhangelski was a strong and elegant brother, Lescaut, who wanted all the best for his sister, but in addition took a chance on a little extra income for him self, as long as his sister was the winner. Masculin powerful dancing. Funny, when he was playing drunk and dancing at the bal together with his girlfriend, **Luana Georg**, who danced brilliantly and virtuouse.

Maksim Chukaryov in the role as Des Grieux, the boy friend of Manon, is a very beautiful and handsome young man, and as that perfect in the role as Des Grieux. Every one in the audience understand why Manon could fall in love with this young guy. He is strong, and in the the pas de deux parts it was a pleasure to enjoy their strong cooperation and all the "easy look a like" lift he did with Manon. However, unfortunately, in his solo parts it didn't

work so well. Part after part in the solos was ok, but it was not fluiding, his solos was not hanging together. For me a demanding solo, shall start in the one end and end when it is ending. there must be a fluiding line through all of it. But mr. **Chukaryouv** splitted it all up in the one little part after the other, and when the beautiful music was hanging together, his solos was not. These soloparts was not successful. But I do see this talented dancer's great potential, only that he need to relax and that he, him self, want to let it all hang together. It can come to be successful for him in some years, if he continues to work seriouse with it. - I seriously dont hope I am mistaken?

In other roles, as The rich man, mr G.M. we enjoyed **Vitali Nikolajev**, As the "Madame" a beautiful **Kaja Kreitzberg**. As the commander of the Beggars we enjoyed **Jonathan Hanks** in a beautiful and wellformed solo. **Eva Andre** was the first of the 5 courtesans. closely followed by **Nadezda Antipenko**, **Heidi Kopti**, **Marika Muiste**, **Olga Rjabikova**.

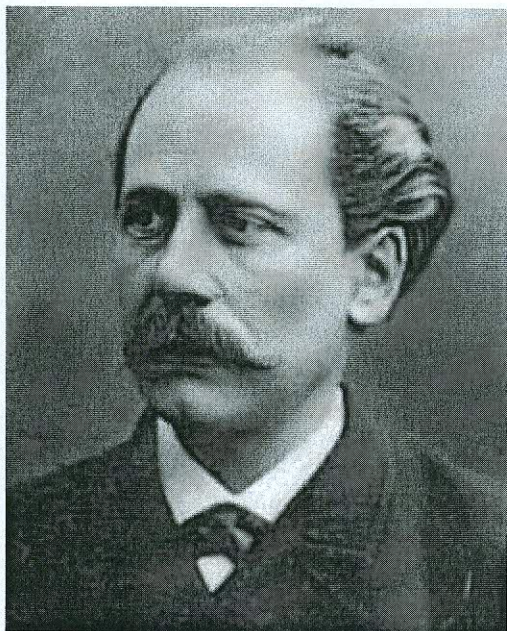


Sir Kenneth Macmillan

In the staging the stage director on behalf of **MacMillan** is **Karl Burnett**, who knows the work inside out, and can give it all the right feelings and moods, which there are many of in Manon. The scenography, sets and beautiful and well functioning costumes are by the **Mia Stensgaard** from the **Royal Danish Ballet**, I especially likes that she is good in all the shades of caricatures and types on the stage, from the rich, - normal to the beggars and the prostitutes in the very sad ending. The performance is followed well up by the lightdesign by **David Richardson** from the **English National Ballet**.

Risto Joost conducted the **Estonian National Opera and Ballet Orchestra** in the beautiful music by **Jules Massenet**, it was floating very well. The good arrangement of the music for Manon is by **Martin Yates**. **Joost** has a good feeling for the dancers need for the right

tempi, and a good eye up to the dancers for how it is going. Therefore the dancers also like to cooperate with **Risto Joost**. The orchestra is full of great musicians, and with a very good sound in the strings, in addition the other groups, wooden players and horns of all types. Further one the percussion worked very well. I was a great pleasure to enjoy, when the orchestra is doing a good home work during the rehearsals, and even one by one before the rehearsals and before coming to the performances. At Manon we enjoyed **Andrus Haav**, violin, **Kristjan Saar**, cello in different soloparts.



Jules Massenet

*PROGRAM: "I would like to mention the beautiful programme book following this Estonian production of Manon, full of first class large photos, good history in Estonian, with synnopsis in English, Russian and Estonian. Compiler is **Liina Viru**. Designer: **Stella Tillo**, editor of the progamme: **Kristina Körver**. But in this case, what lifts it up extraordinary are the most wonderful photos by **Harri Rospu**. Without these phots the programme has not been such a beautiful edition".*

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