

SECTION I

Time—35 minutes

25 Questions

Directions: Each set of questions in this section is based on a single passage or a pair of passages. The questions are to be answered on the basis of what is stated or implied in the passage or pair of passages. For some of the questions, more than one of the choices could conceivably answer the question. However, you are to choose the best answer; that is, the response that most accurately and completely answers the question, and blacken the corresponding space on your answer sheet.

Passage A

While known all over the world for his lush melodies and deep provocative compositions, Italian opera composer Giacomo Puccini is also very strongly associated with the narrative plots of the works he wrote. This is somewhat surprising given that nearly all of Puccini's works were preexisting pieces of literature that were merely adapted, converted to libretto, scored, and played out in the opera houses of Europe. Puccini's famous *La Boheme* was based on a book of short stories published in France in 1851, while *Tosca* was adapted without significant change from Victorien Sardou's five-act melodrama, *La Tosca*. *Madama Butterfly*'s tale of an American soldier in Nagasaki was taken from a play which was in turn taken from a short story, and *Turandot*'s cold princess with her riddles was based on a tale in a book of old stories. The literary content of his works may be memorable, but for a master of operatic orchestration such Puccini, plot was a mere formality – a medium to allow the true beauty of opera music, beautiful singing and orchestration, to shine through. Whether he would have picked *Tosca* or one of Shakespeare's works would have made little difference in the path of Puccini's works to becoming beloved renown classics, since it was the music he wrote that truly set him apart and gave him his place in history.

Passage B

Opera composer Giacomo Puccini wrote works that covered a wide variety of plot settings, from ancient China in *Turandot* to medieval Belgium in *Edgar* to the California Gold Rush in *La Fanciulla del West*. The plethora of themes in Puccini's work illustrates his versatility as a composer, for Puccini knew his own abilities as a composer and how he could best write music to suit a particular plot. In this way, while the stories in Puccini's operas are somewhat arbitrary and often plucked from contemporary literature, Puccini chose and utilized storylines which he could best embellish with the type of music he wrote, and which best brought out his strengths as a composer.

For example, the story of *Tosca*, taking place in Rome during Napoleon's time, features a villainous character named Scarpia whose persona is characterized

by an abrasive horn flourish that is a recurring theme in the opera, indeed it is the very opening of the work. At the end of Act I of *Tosca*, Scarpia sings a monologue professing his sinister intentions which is underscored by a dark but beautiful string line from the orchestra. Likewise, *La Boheme* features a famous scene where the character Musetta taunts her former lover, singing a beautiful waltz exemplary of both her character as well as Puccini's style, which, as in other works, he utilized so well.

1. The author of passage A considers the specific plots of Puccini's operas to be
 - (A) more well-known than the music of these works
 - (B) less important than how these plots were converted into a libretto
 - (C) of almost no importance
 - (D) the primary way these works became popular
 - (E) more divergent in their themes than those of Puccini's contemporaries
2. Based on the two passages, Puccini wrote operas that took place in each of the following locations EXCEPT:
 - (A) Florence
 - (B) Belgium
 - (C) California
 - (D) Rome
 - (E) Nagasaki

3. The author of passage B discusses the character of Scarpia in lines 45-50 primarily to

- (A) give an example of how Puccini wrote music to emphasize a particular plot
- (B) illustrate a recurring theme among villains in Puccini's operas
- (C) compare this character with Musetta in *La Boheme*
- (D) demonstrate that Puccini was versatile at both embellishing hero characters and villains
- (E) provide additional evidence for a claim made in the first paragraph regarding Puccini's use of horn flourishes

4. Based on passage B, the relationship between Puccini and the plots he selected for his operas is most like

- (A) A utility company which arbitrarily selects a day on which utility bills will be due because nonetheless, one day must be selected.
- (B) A skilled cyclist who selects a bicycle which can readily be adapted to bring out all the cycling techniques at which the cyclist excels.
- (C) A municipality which has a plaque to honor the first child born in the town, though this is to some extent happenstance.
- (D) A politician who wears the same tie to all events so that voters will recognize the tie and associate it with that politician.
- (E) A sales associate who tries to determine a customer's price range before attempting to sell them a product in that range.

5. Which one of the following can be properly inferred from passage A?

- (A) Most people are familiar with at least some of the plots of Puccini's operas.
- (B) Other opera composers in Puccini's time typically used original plots for their works.
- (C) Puccini did not write any works which utilized original plots.
- (D) All of Puccini's operas debuted in Europe.
- (E) Not all of Puccini's works were based on pre-existing novels or plays.

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