

Read the text. For questions 1–5, choose the correct answer.

A mind-blowing new production

Opera has always been one of my passions and last week I was fortunate enough to attend a wonderful performance at the Royal Opera House in London. It was the opening night of *La Traviata*, one of Verdi's most popular masterpieces. Its star-studded cast included the wonderful Italian diva Roberta Giovinco in the leading role and French tenor Robert Truffaut as her young lover. The orchestra sounded better than ever as American conductor Eve Wilson brought great emotion to the heartbreaking story with her wonderful tempi. As one would expect, the production is first class; the chorus and orchestra did a fabulous job and the settings were worthy of the Royal Opera House. The singers were the icing on the cake; all major roles were well sung and generally looked the part. Most opera-goers have heard and seen *La Traviata* many, many times but, the way I see it, there are just about two truly memorable Violettas (the central character in this opera). By memorable, I mean possessing that vocal skill and acting ability which, when combined, produce a performance that is spellbinding. The first was seeing a young Dame Julianne Seymour with the same opera company in London. From the first few moments of the party scene to the end of the performance, Seymour truly was the popular party-girl who slowly discovered love. The second was Roberta Giovinco in this performance. Because this is an intimate production, with great attention to detail as requested by wonderful director Sir John Wilson, any flaws in acting would be instantly obvious, but that evening there were none: she was one with her part. Vocally, Giovinco captivated the audience, who gave her a well deserved standing ovation both at the end of the first act and after the grand finale. This experience has to be lived first hand to be totally understood. Words can convey only so much.

Given the dominance of Violetta, Robert Truffaut more than held his own with Giovinco as the smitten Alfredo. In fact, he is an excellent actor when it comes to displaying his character's shy nature in the beginning, followed in turn by his believable romanticism, seething anger and broken-hearted resignation. Displaying an exceptionally agile voice and an almost improvisational-sounding style in his phrasing and inflections, he brought his arsenal of skills together most effectively in his Act II aria. The audience responded warmly and many 'Bravos' were heard. Both he and Ms. Giovinco are young singers and thus bring a high level of believability to their roles. Alfredo's father, Georgio Germont, was sung by veteran baritone Xavier Lopez. Time has treated his voice well, and he did an excellent job in capturing the 19th century patriarchal family; the second act duet with Violetta was simply splendid.

Needless to say, this Italian masterpiece is an opera which is highly melodic and would be a good entry level opera for folks who are wondering what the fuss is all about. For any lover of Verdi's works, this is a 'must attend' performance. So book your ticket now – the last performance in the series is on March 28.

1. The main roles in the new Royal Opera House production of Verdi's *La Traviata* were sung by ...
 - A) singers who are virtually unknown to the opera world.
 - B) singers who are already famous in the opera world.
 - C) young English singers.
 - D) famous Italian singers.

2. According to the writer, Roberta Giovinco ...
 - A) was the first soprano to give life to the character of Violetta in a most memorable way.
 - B) managed to achieve something only Dame Julianne Seymour had done before.
 - C) did not meet his expectations as far as her character portrayal is concerned.
 - D) is too old to play the part of Violetta.

3. The new production of *La Traviata* ...
 A) allows room for flaws in acting, as more attention is paid to the singing.
 B) is directed by American Eve Wilson.
 C) is directed by someone who demands great attention to detail be paid.
 D) has no stage director, allowing the cast to move as they please while on stage.
4. The character of Alfredo in the new production of Verdi's *La Traviata* ...
 A) is supposed to be shy throughout the opera.
 B) was portrayed by an inexperienced baritone.
 C) was clumsily portrayed by Robert Truffaut.
 D) goes through a variety of feelings and emotions throughout the opera.
5. According to the reviewer, Verdi's *La Traviata* ...
 A) can be enjoyed by anyone, irrespective of their experience with opera.
 B) can only be enjoyed by people with specialised knowledge in music.
 C) lacks any sort of melody, which makes it difficult to take in.
 D) is no longer a popular opera nowadays.

Read the text. For questions 6–15, choose the correct answer.

Vivienne Westwood

Some may say it is a trivial matter, others will insist it is a most complex **(6)** of art.
 Regardless

(7) the label it receives, fashion has always fascinated people all over the world. Fashion designers in the likes of Alexander McQueen, Yves Saint Laurent or John Galliano, to name **(8)** a few, are huge names in the industry not only for the clothes they created, but also for the messages they managed to get **(9)** through their work. The list, however, would fall short of complete if we **(10)** not to mention a name that has literally made history in this field – Dame Vivienne Westwood. She is a true **(11)** legend, with a career spanning more than four decades. Many things have been said about her life and career, and many rumours have been spread. For this reason, the designer herself decided to put pen to paper and set the record **(12)** Her new book, simply entitled *Vivienne Westwood*, is part memoir and part biography of the British fashion icon. For anyone who is interested in fashion in general and the relationship between culture and society in particular, this is a must-read. The book covers Westwood's very beginnings, with her eventful childhood, all her **(13)** and lows, but also her very present, when she finally gets all the **(14)** she deserves. The book reminds us to be true to ourselves and to block **(15)** all those things that simply do not seem right to us. Whether you are a fashionista or not, this book will undoubtedly inspire you.

- | | | | |
|-----------|---------|-----------|------------|
| 6. A) way | B) form | C) status | D) subject |
| 7. A) of | B) in | C) by | D) from |

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| 8. A) as | B) such | C) and | D) but |
| 9. A) over | B) across | C) up with | D) in |
| 10. A) are | B) would | C) were | D) did |
| 11. A) alive | B) lively | C) lonely | D) living |
| 12. A) straight | B) real | C) palpable | D) true |
| 13. A) ups | B) tops | C) highs | D) peaks |
| 14. A) loan | B) credit | C) position | D) situation |
| 15. A) out | B) in | C) over | D) By |

For questions 16–20, choose the best answer to complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first one.

16. He never gave me the impression that he was kind. He never ... kind.
A) came to terms with being
B) came across as being
C) came up with being
17. The weather is both chilly and windy. Not ... it's also windy.
A) only it is chilly but
B) just is it chilly but
C) only is it chilly but
18. I use a notebook to help remember all of my meetings. I use a notebook ... all of my meetings.
A) to stay away from
B) to keep track of
C) to keep in touch with
19. She doesn't often go to the theatre. She is ... to the theatre.
A) not used to go
B) not accustomed to go
C) not accustomed to going
20. My sister will be furious when I tell her. My sister will ... when I tell her.
A) hit the roof
B) let off steam
C) make amends

21. Mr and Mrs Reid did not approve ... their children's academic choices.
A) about **B)** of **C)** on **D)** to **E)** with
22. ..., known by the pen name George Eliot, was an English novelist, poet, journalist, translator and one of the leading writers of the Victorian era.
A) Mary Ann Evans **B)** Ellis Bell **C)** Eric Arthur Blair
D) George Sand **E)** Irwin Shaw
23. What is a dust jacket?
A) a short coat **B)** a cleaning cloth **C)** a paper cover
D) a rain jacket **E)** a leather bookmark
24. New Zealand is a democratic state with its own parliament whose official head is
A) the elected president **B)** Parliament **C)** Queen Elizabeth II
D) the British Commonwealth **E)** the Maori's representative
25. Fill in the blanks with the missing words to complete *The Olympic Creed*: "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but ..., just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but The essential thing is not to have conquered but ... well."
A) to take out/ the battle/ to have fought
B) to take part/ the competition/ fight
C) to take part/ the struggle/ to have played
D) to take up/ the struggle/ to have done
E) to take part/ the struggle/ to have fought
26. The employees felt ... they had been given misleading information about their salaries.
A) alike **B)** unlike **C)** as like **D)** as if **E)** as
27. For us it's a real Catch-... situation; when we have the time to take a holiday, we don't have enough money and when we have enough money, we don't have the time.
A) 21 **B)** 22 **C)** 100 **D)** 23 **E)** 50

28. Mike was as sick as a ... when his favourite football team lost the match.

- A)** bear **B)** dog **C)** cat **D)** lamb **E)** parrot

29. Barely had the storm died down ... the mist set in.

- A)** but **B)** and **C)** than **D)** so **E)** when

30. Mary kicked ... her slippers, switched ... the bed lamp and turned ... for the night.

- A)** up, on, in **B)** off, off, up **C)** off, off, in **D)** out, on, off **E)** off, off, out