The Inaugural Concerts were performed Wednesday and Thursday nights from September 24-25, in the Fogg Auditorium. The first of the two Inaugural Concerts was a romantic dream and classic nightmare. The Roumanian String Quartet, a group founded in 1967 at the Bucharest Conservatory, along with two MIT faculty members, John Buttrick and Margaret Thompson, performed. They were all technically astute, but when it came to interpreting the music, they were somewhat confused. They excelled in playing romantic music, but failed dramatically in their renditions of classical pieces.

The opening piece was Beethoven's Trio in D, Opus 70, 4th (Ghost). Buttrick, Associate Professor of Music at MIT, performed with violinist Mariana Sirbu and cellist Mihai Dancila of the Roumanian Quartet. Like all of Beethoven's music, this trio represents the mingling of the classical and romantic elements that marked the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The trio clearly favored the romantic interpretation.

The first movement of the Beethoven, the Allegro con brio, begins with a vigorous theme for all three instruments in bare octaves. Except for the occasional overlapping by Buttrick on the piano, the opening was musically fine. The romantic elements of the piece continued immediately with a smooth lyrical motive on the cello, which Dancila played beautifully. The Largo, the second movement, may be one of the slowest movements ever written. Buttrick and Sirbu, working on the strings, suggested the ghosts that the music suggests, and the piece has been nicknamed the Ghost Trio. This movement, the Presto, was not performed as the sparkling finale it is known to be. It was too slow, depriving the movement of its rhythmic energy. The second movement, Mozart's Quartet in C Major, K.515, began with a very well-played musical dialogue between the first violinist and cellist. However, the interpretation of the rest of the piece was void of the elements that make Mozart's music the epitome of aristocratic, refined, classical music. The eloquence, delicacy, and brightness—so characteristic of this work—were replaced by heaviness, roughness, and dramatics. Unlike the Beethoven, Mozart's work cannot be interpreted as a romantic piece. Thus, the Mozart was quite tedious.

Inaugural Ball was a romantic dream and classic nightmare. The Roumanian String Quartet, a group founded in 1967 at the Bucharest Conservatory, along with two MIT faculty members, John Buttrick and Margaret Thompson, performed. They were all technically astute, but when it came to interpreting the music, they were somewhat confused. They excelled in playing romantic music, but failed dramatically in their renditions of classical pieces.

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Students enjoyed speeches

The cost of the inauguration opened a deluge of controversy. Despite some student boycott of the week, the reactions of most students in attendance at events were positive. "It was a good change," one student said. "I don't know if it was worth the money, but a presidential inauguration only comes along once in a great while, so it probably was." Russell Baker, NY Times columnist was on campus last Friday evening in the first of a series of lectures commemorating the inauguaral year. (photo by Rick Parker)

Baker reading kicks off series

Russell Baker, one of this country's foremost humorists, spoke in 2002 last Friday as part of the inauguration festivities. His lecture was also the kickoff of a series entitled, "Writers Read at MIT.

Mr. Baker is well known for his twice-weekly editorials in the New York Times and for his "Sunday Observer" column in the Times Magazine. His work ranges over all topics and is popular for its satirical style.

Baker was introduced by Professor Frank Conroy of the MIT Writing Program, the organizer of the reading series. Conroy remarked that he had hoped to get Baker to write the introductory paragraph for him. "He wouldn't do it. He said, 'Just get my name right.' "

Baker explained this reluctance by saying, "I feel no compulsion to be amusing, for it would be a bit of pompous. For someone who didn't know which of the Ball were positive. 'It was great.' -'I had a lot of fun.' -'Jerome was blasted.' -'They should inaugurate a new president every term.'"

The Ball, featuring three bands, took place in Lobdell Lounge, the Sala de Puerto Rico, and duPont Gymnasium. "The Ball was a lot of fun," conceded Shepard, "but trying to make duPont look like a formal room was a bit of a lost cause." Most generally, "The Ball was positive. It was great." -'I had a lot of fun.' -'Jerome was blasted.' -'They should inaugurate a new president every term.'"