Don Giovanni
A Bicentennial concert reading.
Conducted by Roland Vazquez.
Kresge Auditorium, Oct. 29.

MIT CHAMBER PLAYERS
Marcus Thompson, Director.
Program of works by Mozart,
Jacob Druckman and Saint-Saëns.

W
hen Roland Vazquez dis-
spersed the ensemble of finding a mando-
lin player three weeks before
the performance of Don
Giovanni was to take place in Kresge, vi-
nolinist Michael Tsuk G agreed to learn how
to play the instrument that is used to so
seductively accompany the Don in Del,
viene alla finestra. Thursday night, he
played it like a pro. The key to all of Vaz-
quex' projects appears to be no plan some-
ting larger than can realistically be done
at MIT, leave everything to the last min-
ute, and then produce a musical work with
both considerable substance and insight.

Don Giovanni is doubtless Vazquez'
greatest success so far. There were three
orchestral rehearsals, and the first time ev-
everyone had been together was on the night
of the performance. There had, in fact,
been people volunteering for the chorus
that very evening. The result was a pro-
duction of considerable dramatic cohe-
sion, with a team of talented young singers
performing as if they had been together all
their lives and an orchestra that was given
to unusual sensitivity and subtleties, which
both interpreted and underlined the com-
plex meaning inherent in Mozart's music.

Brian Davis was a terrific Don. His
voice was clear and carried a nice twinge
of arrogance. As the Don went about se-
ducing Zerlina in Lb ci dares la mano,
his sensuous, dominating lips dripped pure
evil — it was quite delicious!

The firm diction of Davis' Fin ci' han
sattended strongly projected the Don's as-
sertive self-confidence and a feeling of
urgency, power, and wickedness.

Jayne West, singing Zerlina, for her part
had a very pretty voice, the innocence of
which contrasted nicely with the darker,
sinister tones of Davis. Her sweetly sung
atti, batti, o bet Masetto was also done
with accomplishment, an alert orchestra
supplying sympathetic coloration.

Pamela Wood Ambush was highly dra-
matic as Donna Anna; Or sai chi I'onore
was sung with great emotion.

Tod Crager created in Don Ottavio, a
gentle, thinking character. Ottavio's sighs
could be heard in Dalle sue parea, his sin-
certainty could be felt in the beautiful O mio
nuovo.

Donna Elvira is a more hysterical role
than Donna Anna, and Joyce Parry-Frey
conveyed a strong sense of anguish and
desperation. Her Mi tradi had a deep
sense of tragic desperation, her well-con-
trolled articulation vividly conveying the
aria's Mozartean sorrow. The orchestra
here was soft, embracing and reflectively
poignant.

Don Bravo made for an entertaining Le-
porello — the scene where he has to pre-
tend to be the Don was especially amus-
ing, as was his temptation in O statute
simulans.

As preparations are under way for the
Don's date with the statue of the slain
Commendatore, the orchestra plays Non
più andrai from Le nozze di Figaro; Vaz-
quex band performed it with lightness and
humor. When the stone guest turns up, the
music gets darker, and Vazquez elicited
rich, chilling tones from his group of ac-
complished musicians. Mark St. Laurent
sang the Commendatore's part with the
same firm grip that he uses to pull the Don
into hell. Davis showed the Don as
unrelenting until the end.

The only significant flaw in this produc-
tion was with the chorus, which sounded
thin at best. Luckily, though, they do not
diminish the dramatic tension.

A final thought: If Vazquez can produce
such an inspiring evening with so few re-
sources and at such short notice, just
think what he could do with a full-scale
staged production and the time and budget
to bring it off to his highest standards.
The MIT Council for the Arts and other
potential funding sources should seriously
consider giving him the opportunity.