MIT Brass performs with great expression

MIT BRASS ENSEMBLE

By Dave Fox

A brass ensemble in perhaps one of the most flexible of small classical music groups. Depending on the ability of the players, such a brass ensemble can play very softly and with great emotion or triumphantly with fanfares. On Wednesday evening, the MIT Brass Ensemble presented a concert in which they achieved both extremes effortlessly, moving the listener to powerful emotions.

The MIT Brass Ensemble, directed by trombonist Larry Isaacson, is a standard ensemble with four trumpets, four horns, three trombones, one euphonium, one tuba, and three percussionists. There is a fairly wide repertoire for such a setting, and Isaacson drew selections from several areas to put together a balanced program, allowing all of the musicians to shine in the spotlight.

The evening began with Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man." This piece featured a tuba solo. The Ensemble presented the whole piece with the emotion suggested by the subject matter, making this a powerful and moving closing statement.

The MIT Brass Ensemble seems much improved since their Family Weekend concert last fall. On Wednesday night they had a very good tone quality, and articulated dynamics, and emotions to shape the music such that the sound was never boring to the ear. The sound in the auditorium was superb. (I think Kresge is the perfect size for this sort of concert.) I recommend this ensemble highly to anyone who enjoys classical music; they presented their music in fine fashion. Check them next time you perform on campus.

O'Neill examines a range of emotions in A Touch

A TOUCH OF THE POET
American Repertory Theatre, 64 Brattle Street, Cambridge. New through March 26.

By Ann Ames

Bluntly the play begins, the staging of Eugene O'Neill's A Touch of the Poet at the American Repertory Theatre is captivating. The set lies on a low wooden platform rotated 90 degrees with respect to the stage. One of its corners points down into a huge garbage chute, and the other, facing the audience is a huge, square lateral space to create an oppressively narrow perspective. The tall, shabby walls of the tavern's dining room lean slightly above the stage, giving the audience a perspective of the life of the Melodys, an Irish family trying to make its way in America.

The dramatic highlight of the night was the closing piece, "Fanfare Liturgique" by Henri de Dion Tomaits. This musically describes, in four different sections, significant events surrounding the life of Jesus Christ. With a unified musical theme throughout, the four sections depict the Annunciation, the Good News of salvation, the Son of God, and the crucifixion and ascent into Heaven. The various moods of the four movements were contrasted with good variety by the ensemble. Particularly high spots included the opening fanfare played by the horns and low brass, an excursion by soloist by tenor and the wonderful dynamic variation in the final movement, which covered the gamut from pianissimo to fortissimo. The Ensemble presented the whole piece with the emotion suggested by the subject matter, making this a powerful and moving closing statement.

O'Neill's plays are often described as "tragic" as a result of the lives of their characters, and this is certainly a tragic play. However, the masterful staging by Joe Dowling and the excellent acting by the cast make this production of A Touch of the Poet a satisfying and thought-provoking experience.