

# Taconic Opera hits high note with *Don Giovanni*

By Kathy Grantham

Cris-crossing the currents of human emotions and behavior, Mozart's librettist let it rip with the opera *Don Giovanni*.

Three exciting Taconic Opera performances of *Don Giovanni* staged at the Paramount in Peekskill (October 21 and 22) and SUNY Purchase Performing Arts Center (November 4) left opera aficionados ecstatic.

Letters, phone calls and e-mails to Taconic Opera Director Dan Montez brought pledges and compliments.

He staged a *Don Giovanni* that excited audiences with a wicked and irresistible Don.

Conductor Jun Nakabayashi was closely attuned to the Mozart score, capturing the rise and fall of each nuance and note.

CASTING *Don Giovanni* with talented singers who are also agile, Montez brought new life to a familiar story.

Soprano Barbara Tobler (Donna Anna), who sang the part of an innocent young woman seduced by Don Giovanni (who murders her father), combined vocal polish, emotional dignity and tonal beauty.

Tenor Thomas Roche (Ottavio), whose

colorless character of Donna Anna's fiancé is often described as devoid of drama, sprang to life on his way to the police station.

Baritone Robert Garner (Don Giovanni) was dashing as a member of the Spanish nobility, with a swagger that implied the power of privilege and great wealth.

Garner's singing and acting reflected the Don's love 'em and leave 'em attitude toward women.

Soprano Samia Bahu, cast as Elvira, the Don's distraught wife, is a spinto-lyrico with impressive vocal power and tremendous acting skills. In a wild and stunning trade racing around the stage, she sings her rage from the bottom to the top of her range.

Alan Andrews is known for his comic antics and splendid bass baritone. He was resourceful as Leporello, servant to Don Giovanni, sometimes upstaging his master as an earthy clown.

Baritone Douglas Jabara was well chosen as Masetto, a robust, truculent and hostile peasant, upset because the Don was flirting with his bride Zerlina. Soprano Tina McVey-Cody, with her pleasingly sweet soprano, acted the role of newly married village maiden, over-



Giovanni (Robert Garner) and Leporello (Alan Andrews) are surrounded as their deceit is revealed.

come by the attention.

The highlight of the hair-raising graveyard scene revealed the stone statue of the Commendatore, as bass David Felertag enlivened the stone figure with a resonant voice.

When Don Giovanni invited the stone

statue to dinner, the audience was on tenterhooks, knowing the terrors of Hades awaited.

The stage burned with an unholy red glare as an unrepentant Don Giovanni was dragged down to a blazing Hell. What great stagecraft!