BERGLIEZ: Overtures; Roman Carnival; The Corsair; Beatrice and Benedict; Benvenuto Cellini. The Trojans: Royal Hunt and Storm. Boston Symphony Orchestra, Charles Munch cond. RCA Victor LSC 2458 $5.98, LM 2459 $4.98.

Interest: Full-blooded romanticism Performances: Whirlwind Recording: Good Stereo Quality: Fine

In the ten years that Munch has been musical director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra he has probably performed and recorded more Berlioz than any other conductor in the world. The music on this disc has been sitting in the RCA Victor files for more than two years, and its release is most welcome.

Munch approaches this music with uninhibited vitality and exuberance. In the overtures the pace is fast—so fast, at times, that one wonders how the string players can articulate clearly; but they do, in a welter of dynamics of virtuosity and polish. The poetry of the "Royal Hunt and Storm" episode from The Trojans is persuasively conveyed, though the choral interpolations, which Beecham included in his performance of the music for Angel (35506), are missing. The recorded sound is vibrant and exciting.

BRUCH: Violin Concerto No. 1. (see MENDELSSOHN)


Interest: American chamber music Performance: First-rate Recording: Good Stereo Quality: Excellent

Elliot Carter (b. 1907) has matured slowly as a musical creator, passing through both an Americanistic stage and a neo-classic stage, and emerging in 1951 with his First String Quartet as one of the most powerful voices in American music, intellectually formidable, yet wholly personal and immensely powerful. Carter's music is a sort of music that draws on the whole armament of modern music, yet it comes out not as an eclectic hodgepodge but as pure Carter—logical, vital, powerful, with an almost Beethoven-like forthrightness. And like the more complex Beethoven masterpieces, Carter's music takes a lot of careful listening. It helps, too, if one can follow with the score.

The secret of Carter's communicative flair, despite such intellectual complexities, as the use of "metric modulation," stems from his point of view. "I regard my scores as scenarios, auditory scenarios, for performers to act out their instruments, dramatizing the players as individuals and participants in the ensemble."

Certainly the instrumental combination chosen by Carter for this music (written for Sylvia Marlove's Harpsichord Quartet) provides an ideally contrasted cast of characters for an auditory scenario. The resulting music is brilliant and often stirring. The performance here is vital, yet precise, and it is beautifully recorded.

With Harold Shapiro's First String Quartet, written during his student days at Harvard, we come to a somewhat lesser order of endeavor—skillfully eclectic writing in the neo-classic vein, but with considerable lyric impulse. Again, both performance and recording are first-rate. D. H.

CASSELLA: Paganiniiana. (see RACHMANINOFF)


Interest: Classy American songs Performance: Could scarcely be improved Recording: Very good Stereo Quality: Good

Theodore Chanler, born in 1902, is an enormously special figure among American composers. His reputation remains a considerable one, even in face of the fact that he has written no knotty string quartets, no great-grand-pieces. Neither has he done anything fancy nor anything even relatively advanced about Contemporary Musical Techniques. Rather, he has given his career mostly to the composition of a collection of songs, only slightly more than a handful, that are among the most sensitive and fastidious in the international contemporary repertory.

His masterpiece in the medium is the Nine Epitaphs (originally published as eight) on verses by Walter de la Mare—a work that Columbia has recorded handsonely and faithfully. Here is the characteristic Chanler: the uncanny succinctness, the intensely personal attitude toward "normal" harmony; the sure way with both prosodic inflection and personal melodic curve; the wonderfully touching command of musical understatement.

Such music is, naturally, of the sort to which Phyllis Curtin, whose gifts as a singer involve similar gifts for subtlety and understatement, is ideally suited. She brings the best of herself to the work, and the goodness of Miss Curtin's best needs no comment from me.

Lester Trimble, another American, born in 1923, has written an almost overpoweringly attractive cycle of songs in his Four Fragments from The Canterbury Tales. The Chaucerian English has a pungent, vernacular ring to it; the harpsichord—clarinet-

HIFI/Stereo