

HOFMANN: *Piano Pieces* Fabiana Biasini—
Hera 2120—62 minutes

Some of Josef Hofmann's piano music will be known to collectors from his own recordings. This (I believe) is the first release devoted entirely to his compositions with all but three of the 20 selections identified as world premiere recordings. For that reason alone it will be of special interest to collectors.

Fortunately, the fetching pianist who gazes at you from one eye on the cover has the means to convey her enthusiasm for this renowned pianist-composer. Born in Italy, Biasini graduated from the Santa Cecilia Academy and eventually migrated to New York where she continued studies at the Manhattan School of Music with Byron Janis and Miyoko Lotto. She made her North American debut at Charleston's Spoleto Festival and is currently pianist-in-residence for the Rome Symphony.

Hofmann's piano music consists primarily of relatively short pieces that make good encores or program fillers. Not unlike the works of say, Moritz Moszkowski, Emil Sauer, or Xaver Scharwenka, they can be charming and thoroughly delightful. They are rarely designed to challenge the listener, but can set formidable challenges for a player's technique. The longest of the pieces, at about six minutes, is 'Nenien'. The shortest, from a group of eight preludes, is well under a minute. There is even a "Valse Caprice" written under the pseudonym "M.Dvorsky", often used by Hofmann.

Biasini has the sensitivity and technique to play the nationalist dances and small form pieces in a manner that I believe would have won approval from the master himself. If we add some excellent sound engineering and informative notes about Hofmann (but not the music), this becomes an irresistible package.

BECKER