

*Symphony No. 2, Op. 30 ("Romantic")* • Howard Hanson (1896-1981)

SCORED FOR: TWO FLUTES, PICCOLO, TWO OBOES, ENGLISH HORN, TWO CLARINETS, TWO BASSOONS, FOUR HORNS, THREE TRUMPETS, THREE TROMBONES, TUBA, TIMPANI, SNARE DRUM, CYMBALS, HARP, AND STRINGS..

Howard Hanson was born in Wahoo, Nebraska and his talent for music was noted and nurtured from his earliest years. When he was barely out of elementary school, it was determined that he should attend the Institute of Musical Art (now the Juilliard School) in New York City. From there went to Northwestern University in Chicago, receiving his bachelor's degree at the young age of nineteen. Hanson's talents as an administrator were soon noticed by George Eastman, and at age 28 Hanson was hired as the director of the Eastman School of Music, a post that he held for 40 years (1924-1964). During his tenure he was highly regarded as composer, scholar, educator, and conductor, promoting new American compositions and developing the Rochester Philharmonic into a world-class orchestra.

Hanson often described himself as a "neo-Romantic," citing Grieg and Sibelius for their important influence on his style. Even though his harmonic language does adopt some of the austerity of his contemporaries it is more often based on the lush sounds found in the works of Mahler. He does employ dissonance, (it would be disingenuous to deny it), however it is done so skillfully that the listener hardly realizes it, hearing only the moods it engenders. Like a true romantic, Hanson is incapable of abandoning rich melodic lyricism, and his Symphony No. 2 is a testimony to that fact; the work is filled with great melodic inventiveness, refreshing and pleasing to the ear.

For those interested in further study of Howard Hanson and his work, a recently published book by Allen Cohen titled *Howard Hanson in Theory and Practice* may serve as a guide. Here is a quote from the book that describes, in rather intense musicological terms, the overall style of Hanson: "Grounded in tradition, the harmonic practice of [Hanson's] maturity could be described as expanded tonality or 'pantonality'--tonal centrality without the consistent use of functional progressions, major or minor mode, or traditional triadic structures--although it often makes use of triads and often implies the major or minor mode. Some of the stylistic 'fingerprints' throughout many of his works are passages based on modal scales, especially the Dorian; themes derived from or reminiscent of Lutheran chorales or Gregorian chant; extended tertian chords such as sevenths, ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths; quartal and quintal harmonies; pedal points (late in life, Hanson said that he might have been over-addicted to pedal points); motoric ostinati in fast passages, and a back-and-forth alternation between two triads or altered triadic chords, often over a dissonant pedal."

The following are the program notes submitted by the composer for the symphony's premiere performance given by the Boston Symphony Orchestra on 28 November 1930, Serge Koussevitzky, conductor. This work was commissioned by the BSO as a portion of their fiftieth anniversary celebration.

Concerning my second symphony, as the subtitle implies, it represents for me a definite and acknowledged embracing of the romantic phase. I recognize, of course, that romanticism is, at the present time, the poor stepchild, without the social standing of her elder sister, neoclassicism. Nevertheless, I embrace her all the more fervently, believing, as I do, that romanticism will find in this country rich soil for a new, young, and vigorous growth.

My aim, in this symphony, has been to create a work young in spirit, romantic in temperament, and simple and direct in expression. The work is in three movements. The first, *Adagio-Allegro moderato*, begins with an atmospheric introduction in the woodwinds, joined first by the horns, then the strings, and finally the brass choir, and then subsiding. The principal theme is announced, *Allegro moderato*, by four horns, with an accompaniment of strings and woodwinds, and is imitated in turn by the trumpets, woodwinds and strings. An episodic theme appears quietly in the oboe and then in the solo horn. A transition leads into the subordinate theme, *Lento*, with the theme itself in the strings and a counter subject in the solo horn. The development section now follows, with the principal theme announced in a changed mood by the English horn and developed through the orchestra. The episodic theme, influenced by the principal theme, also takes an important part in this section. The climax of the development section leads directly to the return of the principal theme in the original key by the trumpets. This is followed in turn by the episodic theme now in the clarinets and then in the first horn, with canonic imitation in the oboe. The subordinate theme follows and the movement concludes quietly in a short coda.

The second movement, *Andante con tenerezza*, begins with its principal theme announced by the woodwinds with a sustained string accompaniment. An interlude in the brass, taken from the introduction of the first movement and interrupted by florid passages in the woodwinds, develops into the subordinate theme, which is taken from the horns in the first movement. A transition, again interrupted by a florid woodwind passage, leads into a restatement of the principal theme of the movement.

The third movement, *Allegro con brio*, begins with a vigorous accompaniment figure in strings and woodwinds, the principal theme of the movement--reminiscent of the first movement--entering in the four horns and later repeated in the basses. The subordinate theme, *Molto meno mosso*, is announced first by the violoncellos and then is taken up by the English horn, the development of which leads into the middle section *Più mosso*. This section begins with a pizzicato accompaniment in the violas, violoncellos, and basses, over which is announced a horn call.

This call is taken up by the trombones and leads into a fanfare, first in the trumpets, then in the horns and woodwinds, and then again in the trumpets and woodwinds. The climax of this fanfare comes with the announcement of the principal theme of the first movement by the trumpets, against the fanfare rhythm in the woodwinds. The development of this theme leads into a final statement of the subordinate theme of the first movement fortissimo. A brief coda of this material leads to a final fanfare and the end of the symphony.