ABSTRACT

Howard Hanson was the first American composer who attained international prominence in the early 20th century. During his time as conductor and director of the Eastman School of Music, he was perhaps one of the greatest promoters of modern musical expression and avant-garde performance techniques. However, Hanson was a composer who preferred composing in a traditional style, and his compositional style was faithful to nuanced Romantic expression and a Classical structure. Hanson’s music career ebbed and flowed with contrasting periods of struggle and success. His music was enormously popular during the 1930s and 40s but quickly entered a period of neglect after his death from which it is only now emerging.

Hanson’s Symphony no. 1 “Nordic” was written in 1922 while Hanson was studying at the American Academy in Rome. His fully matured musical language is displayed in the symphony, and Hanson used Symphony no. 1 to establish his symphonic style which persisted, with little variation, throughout his prolonged career. The intent of this document is to analyze Hanson’s Symphony no. 1, “Nordic,” and discover his compositional techniques that affected most of his later works. Furthermore, it is my hope that this research will provide comprehensive ideas to analyze his other orchestral compositions.