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# Howard Hanson

## Hanson, Loeffler, Thompson

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**Howard Harold Hanson** (October 28, 1896 – February 26, 1981) was an American composer, conductor, educator, music theorist, and champion of American classical music. As director for 40 years of the Eastman School of Music, he built a high quality school and provided opportunities for commissioning and performing American music. He won a Pulitzer Prize for one of his works and received numerous other awards.

In 1921 Hanson was the first winner of the Prix de Rome in Music (the American Academy's Rome Prize), awarded for both *The California Forest Play* and his symphonic poem *Before the Dawn*. Thanks to the award, Hanson lived in Italy for three years. Upon returning from Rome, Hanson's conducting career expanded. He made his premiere conducting the New York Symphony Orchestra in his tone poem *North and West*. In Rochester, New York in 1924, he conducted his *Symphony No. 1*. This performance brought him to the attention of George Eastman.

Eastman chose Hanson to be director of the Eastman School of Music. Business master George Eastman, inventor of the Kodak camera, and roll film, was also a major philanthropist; he used some of his great wealth to endow the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester. Hanson held the position of director for forty years, during which he created one of the most prestigious music schools in America. He accomplished this by improving the curriculum, bringing in better teachers, and refining the school's orchestras. Also, he balanced the schools' faculty between American and European teachers, even when this meant passing up composer Béla Bartók. Hanson offered a position to Bartók teaching composition at Eastman, but Bartók declined as he did not believe that one could teach composition. Instead, Bartók wanted to teach piano at the Eastman School, but Hanson already had a full staff of piano instructors.

In 1925, Hanson established the American Composers Orchestral Concerts. Later, he founded the Eastman-Rochester Orchestra, which consisted of first chair players from the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and selected students from the Eastman School. He followed that by establishing the Festivals of American Music. Hanson made many recordings (mostly for Mercury Records) with the Eastman-Rochester Orchestra, not only of his own works, but also those of other American composers such as John Alden Carpenter, Charles Tomlinson Griffes, John Knowles Paine, Walter Piston, and William Grant Still. Hanson estimated that more than 2000 works by over 500 American composers were premiered during his tenure at the Eastman School.

*Notes from Wikipedia*

### Recording and restoration notes

These recordings were transcribed from both original 1950s Mercury LP pressings and 1970s Dutch reissue pressings. Although the latter offered much better overall disc quality, they suffered from a particularly unpleasant brand of fake electronic stereo, which attempted to create stereo spread by the simple expedient of putting the treble onto the left channel and the bass onto the right channel. Unfortunately this very occasionally resulted in some phasing problems when the two channels were summed back to mono for XR remastering. In the three or four instances (of a second or less) that I detected of this, I was able to either significantly reduce or entirely fix the problem. More generally the sound quality of the older recordings was less than brilliant, and though I have managed to achieve significant improvements, there is a noticeable reduction of top-end treble towards the end of both recordings. In this respect the Hanson symphony and the Loeffler are both much better, and all four recordings have greatly benefited from 32-bit XR remastering. **AR**

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# Hanson

conducts  
**American Music**

**Hanson**  
Symphony No. 4  
Songs from "Drum Taps"

**Loeffler**  
Memories of my Childhood  
(Life in a Russian Village)

**Thompson**  
The Testament of Freedom

David Meyers, baritone  
Eastman School of Music CHORUS  
Eastman-Rochester Symphony  
Orchestra

**Howard Hanson, conductor**  
Mercury studio recordings 1952-1954

