

# LEROY ANDERSON

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F O U N D A T I O N

**Notes on the  
History of the Harvard Band  
1925 - 1936  
by Leroy Anderson**

I entered Harvard in Sept. 1925 and joined the band on trombone. I then played for four years. I was auditioned by Robert Smith '22, Bangor ME, who became manager in his senior year. At that time Ambrose F. Keeley '29 of Falls River, MA was director and he held the single post, which included that of drum major and drillmaster, until late spring 1927.

It was the customary practice for directors and managers to select their own successors; the director selecting underclassman, and the manager selecting a freshman who became secretary-librarian, treasurer and finally manager in his senior year. In practice the director consulted with the manager and his staff before selecting his successor. Since I had two more years in college, in Keeley's senior year and was majoring in music, I was considered for the director's post but it was given to Harold L. Holland, '28 who was playing first trumpet. Coming from the Middle West, he gave a shot in the arm to the band's formations.

Holland held the post for two football seasons, since he had entered Law School after graduation. This broke the tradition of having an undergraduate as director, and when Holland found his law studies did not permit him to devote the time to directing the band, he turned the post over to me after the 1928 football season, since I was planning to return for an M.A. after graduating in June 1929. My selection was reported in The Crimson on Dec. 20, 1928. At the same time John W. Green ('28) 1G was elected president of the Band Club. Green had played baritone sax for five years.

The 1929 football season scheduled the following games: Oct. 5, Bates; Oct. 12, New Hampshire; Oct 19, Army; Oct 26, Dartmouth; Nov. 2, University of Florida; Nov 9, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor; Nov. 17, Holy Cross; Nov 23, Yale.

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The 1929 Band picture taken on the steps of Widener shows Harold Holland, then 2L, playing trumpet again, G.V. Slade, who was to succeed me as director, playing snare drum; and Malcolm H. Holmes ('28) then G2, playing one of the bass drums. I had been with Mal in the Pierian for 4 years; he was concertmaster & played double bass.

Walderman H. Boldt '30, who was one of the bass drummers and was to be manager, had told me just before college opened that he couldn't be in the band. I happened to meet Mal in the yard and asked him on the spur of the moment if he wanted to play bass drum. He accepted at once; a historic snap decision for the band. Leonard F. Hubbard a junior was advanced to take Boldt's place as manager.

The 1929 season was little different from the preceding ones, except that the bandsmen now had music for everything they played. I had made band arrangements during the preceding summer of "*Harvardiana*", "*Soldier's Field*" and "*Ten Thousand Men*". At that time only "*Our Director*" and "*Up The Street of Harvard*" were available and in print. During the season I wrote out simple five-part arrangements of the songs of the colleges we played. This gave everyone except the drummers a part to read.

During the following winter I applied for a John Knowles Paine Fellowship in Music for study abroad in 1930-1931, after I had received my M.A. in Music. In the spring of 1930 I was told by Prof. E.B. Hill, chairman of the Division of Music, that I had been refused the fellowship because of my leadership of the band. He said my interest in the band did not indicate a proper attitude on my part and suggested I give up directing the Band and spend another year of study before applying again. I still do not understand what he meant, but since the Paine Fellowship in those days was the next step in a career in music, I complied with his suggestion and turned the Band over to Guy Vernon Slade '32 of Jamaica Plain, MA. Slade had played piccolo in the 1928 season and snare drum in 1929 and was the outstanding candidate for leader. The announcement appeared in *The Crimson* May 26, 1930.

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The officers for the 1930 season were Leonard F. Hubbard '31 of Taunton, MA, manager for an additional year; Elijah Swift '32 of Burlington, VT, treasurer; and Charles E. Smith, '33 of Newton, MA, secretary-librarian. That fall I played the mammoth bass drum at the games, Harold Holland, now 3L, again played trumpet, and Mal Holmes played bass drum.

I have no records for the 1931 season, which was Slade's second year. Having been refused the Paine Fellowship in Music again, I had changed to the German Dept. and started work on a Ph. D. majoring in Scandinavian languages. As I remember, I still played the big bass drum.

When I returned from a European trip in the summer of 1932, Slade called me to say he was entering Law School and had decided he couldn't spare the time to lead the band. He asked me if I would take over the job, since he could find no one else available to handle the three-fold assignment of conductor, drill master and drum major. Although I was no longer subject to the opinions of the Harvard Music Department by now, I was still studying in Graduate School and earning my living playing in orchestras in Boston. I told Slade it was impossible for me to handle the whole job. Slade then proposed that I be music director, he drill master, and that some else, preferably an undergraduate, be drum major. This scheme would give each of us a reasonable amount of work and permit each to concentrate on his own specialty. Slade, in his two seasons of leadership, had revolutionized the maneuvers: with a system of his own based on rows (to keep sections reasonably together), he otherwise dispensed with the block system and was able to make rapid changes from one formation to another.

With approval of the managerial staff, the three-fold leadership was adopted for the 1932 football season. At the band try-out a freshman, William B. Tabler '36, appeared to ask if the band needed a drum major. This completed the trio that led the band for the next four seasons.

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Dividing the leader's job among three men was not so much a break in tradition as an inevitable development in the growth of the band. The point had been reached where no one man, far from being able to spend time required, could qualify in handling satisfactorily the complete leadership of the band. There was, understandably apprehension that divided leadership might result in a conflict of authority. Slade and I discussed this candidly and we decided to divide authority between us. I was to be in charge of the band at Wednesday evening music rehearsal and Slade at Friday afternoon drill practice. Slade was to select the music the Band played on the march and I was to choose what the Band played standing on the field or sitting in the stands. I was to prepare music Slade needed for formation and Slade was to arrange formations I needed for playing on the field. This arrangement worked without a hitch for four years.

By having a separate drum major we also acquired an assistant. Bill Tabler was especially valuable to Slade at drill practice where the band was frequently spread out all over the field and difficult to control. With the elimination of one man in authority, the manager now became the chief executive of the Band and thus undergraduate control was restored after succession of graduate school leaders.

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