

WRITTEN BY Lanie Anderson
PHOTOGRAPHED BY Joe Worthem



the MAN *behind* THE MUSIC

Andrew Fox has arranged more than 200 pieces of music for the University of Mississippi marching band, including fan favorites *Forward Rebels* and the *Alma Mater*.



When the *Pride of the South* marching band begins to play *Forward Rebels*, University of Mississippi football fans immediately recognize the university's fight song and sing along: "Forward, Rebels, march to fame! Hit that line and win this game!"

The rustle of red pom poms in the air matches the song's tempo. Different sections of the band play the melody, countermelody, harmony and baseline. But many fans are unaware of the man behind the music of *Forward Rebels*: Andrew Fox (pictured far left).

An Oxford native, Andrew taught music theory and composition in the Ole Miss music department for 32 years and was also staff arranger for the marching band from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s. During that time, he arranged every song the band played. As a staff arranger, he took the melody of each song and reworked it so that every instrument had a different part to play. He also wrote segues from one song to another for the halftime show.

"The band had a certain number of people and instruments in it, so I knew what instruments I had to write for," Andrew said. "I wrote the tune in the right key so that the instruments could play it. It also had to be a certain length, and the band director designed the footwork. The tune had to fit all of that."

Between teaching and arranging music, Andrew stayed busy during football season. His wife, Beryl, said that their home near campus on Jackson Avenue became a makeshift office where her husband worked.

"The minute the Rebels finished a game on Saturday, the band director was over at our house, and he and Andrew were talking about the next show," Beryl said. "We didn't have a dining room for years. That was his office."

When Andrew set out to arrange music, he preferred a quiet space and created his own score paper for writing the music of each instrument in the band. During his tenure, he created a collection of 239 arrangements and 12 original compositions for the Ole Miss Department of Music.

Oxford Roots

Growing up, Andrew lived two blocks down the road from William Faulkner's Rowan Oak. In sixth grade, he learned to play trumpet in the band at University High School, now

Oxford High School. His skills on the trumpet earned him a spot in the first Mississippi All State Lion's Band in 1950, and he returned a second year before graduating high school and attending Ole Miss.

While in college and studying music, Andrew met Beryl, who also majored in music. When they graduated, the couple taught music in the public school system and eventually moved to Tallahassee, Fla., where Andrew earned a doctorate at Florida State University. In 1968, they moved back to Oxford and took jobs at Ole Miss. Beryl was the music librarian, and Andrew taught classes in the music department and eventually became staff arranger for the marching band.

"I was delighted to come back home," Andrew said. "The band director was James Ferguson at the time, and he said he needed an arrangement. Apparently, I did it well enough that he asked me to arrange music over and over again."

During Andrew's time as the marching band's arranger, the couple went to every football game, and their dachshund, Caesar, even earned a reputation among the members of the marching band and Ole Miss fans.

"This was before they had leash laws, and Caesar visited campus a lot from our house on Jackson Avenue," Beryl said. "I was sitting with the band at a football game one time when I saw Caesar coming up the aisle. He saw me, leaped three rows and jumped in my lap. The girl next to me said, 'We see him at the basketball games!' Everybody knew who Caesar was."

In addition to his arrangements for the marching band, Andrew wrote arrangements and compositions for choral performances, jazz bands and various concerts. He also wrote the *Double Decker Overture* to kick off Oxford's Double Decker Arts Festival and *The Oxford Eagle* to commemorate the local newspaper.

"Years ago, a reporter from *The Oxford Eagle* was in the Lafayette Oxford University Community Band," David Willson, director of bands at Ole Miss, said, "and we were playing a

march called *The Chicago Tribune*. Dr. Fox said that, if the *Chicago Tribune* had a march, we needed one for *The Oxford Eagle*."

Andrew just celebrated his 80th birthday and is retired, but he still writes music. Last fall, he wrote a song called *Pride of the South* in honor of the Ole Miss marching band for a concert directed by Willson.

A Music Legacy

Andrew's time at Ole Miss is not forgotten, especially for Willson, a former student of his and an Ole Miss band member while Andrew was staff arranger.

"Any craftsman, whether it's a carpenter, sculptor, master mechanic or surgeon, makes it look easy," Willson said. "Dr. Fox can write an arrangement, and it's going to be note-and-rhythm perfect. It's going to sound good, and it's going to work. He's just great at it."

Andrew became a mentor to Willson, who was a student at Ole Miss from 1969 to 1973. Willson recalled meeting him several times at the coffee shop on campus. He would ask Andrew questions about trumpet performance and music composition, and Andrew would write notes on a paper napkin for Willson.

"I probably drove him crazy," Willson said, laughing, "but I learned more from him in the coffee shop than I did in the classroom. I just find him to be a gentleman and an intriguing scholar. He's a wonderful human being."

Willson also said that Andrew is a rarity when it comes to music, calling him a "hidden gem of Mississippi."

"He can drop a nickel, hear the pitch and tell you what the note is," Willson said. "He also can listen to a piece of music and tell you what chord and inversion of the chord are playing. That's rare. He's good at what he does, and he's humble about it."

At football games today, his arrangements of *Forward Rebels* and the *Alma Mater* are still used. As the band plays and Ole Miss football fans begin to sing, Willson thinks of Andrew Fox, the man behind the music.