



History of the Pitzen Brass Ensemble

January 2024



Cover Photos

Top Photo: Pitzen Brass Ensemble, 1985

Upper Row Left to Right: Paul Bauer, bass trombone; Glenn Monson, trombone; Neal Berntsen, trumpet

Middle Row Left to Right: Kevin Hartman, trumpet; Walter Hamberg, trumpet; David Ferguson, trombone

Lower Row Left to Right: Mitchell Arnold, conductor; Tod Bowermaster, horn; Adele Trawick, horn; James Smelser, horn; Stephen Proser, horn; Charles Schuchat, tuba

Bottom Photo: Pitzen Brass Ensemble Resurrection, 2022

Left to Right: Kevin Hartman, trumpet; Don Schultz, trumpet; Sarah Jessen, trumpet; Dean Psarakis, trumpet; Daniel Byer, percussion; James South, trumpet; Kevin Owen, horn; Robert Hoyle, horn; Timothy Myers, trombone; David Ferguson, trombone; Patrick Smith, trombone; Israel Gutierrez, bass trombone; Michael Roylance, tuba; Robert Carpenter, tuba

Pitzen Brass Ensemble Photo Credits

Page 13, Pitzen Brass Ensemble Resurrection trumpet section: James South
All Other Photos: Deborah Campana

History of Pitzen Brass Ensemble

The Pitzen Brass Ensemble was an independent, self-governing, elite ensemble of young professional brass and percussion musicians who performed throughout the Chicago area from 1978 through 1989. Born of the tradition of symphonic musicianship established by the legendary Chicago Symphony Orchestra brass section, the Pitzen Brass Ensemble became known for its brilliant and stylistic performances. All Pitzen Brass musicians studied music at Northwestern University with members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and carried on the tradition of their educators and mentors through their performances with the Ensemble. In this regard, the Pitzen Brass Ensemble became the vanguard brass ensemble of its generation and the foundation for the next wave of great brass players.

Origins: The Pitzen Brass Quintet

The Pitzen Brass Ensemble had its roots in the Pitzen Brass Quintet, a group of five talented and highly motivated undergraduate brass students at the Northwestern University School of Music. The enterprising young musicians of the Pitzen Brass Quintet joined forces in 1976, outside any formal institutional or academic programs at the University, and soon began performing both on campus and throughout the Chicago area. An important coach and mentor in the quintet's formative years was Grigg Fountain, Choir Director at Northwestern University's Alice Millar Chapel.

Before long the Pitzen Brass Quintet was appearing in a variety of events, such as Chicago's first Earth Day ceremony at the Adler Planetarium on the shores of Lake Michigan, to the esteemed Bach Week Festival at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Evanston. Here the young quintet performed *Contrapuncti* from J.S. Bach's *Art of the Fugue* with Northwestern University organ professor and international recording artist Wolfgang Rubsam. In spring 1978, the Pitzen Brass Quintet entered the prestigious Coleman Chamber Music Competition at Caltech in Pasadena, California. The vast majority of entrants in this competition were traditional chamber ensembles consisting of piano, strings, and woodwind instruments. To the astonishment of the judges and audience, this upstart brass quintet captured the second prize Saunderson Award. Exhibiting what would become a Pitzen hallmark, the Pitzen Brass Quintet independently funded their entry and travel to the Coleman Competition themselves—and wore their financial and artistic autonomy as a badge of honor.

Birth of the Pitzen Brass Ensemble

In late 1978, the Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago engaged the Pitzen Brass Quintet to organize a large brass ensemble to perform over three successive days at a major interfaith conference in Chicago. The Quintet immediately expanded its ranks of musicians and recruited Northwestern University graduate composition student Mitchell Arnold to conduct the large group. The multiple performances at the conference were so successful and the musicians became so energized by the high level of ensemble playing that they decided to continue rehearsing and performing together as a large group. The Pitzen Brass Ensemble was born.

The Pitzen Brass Ensemble's first concert program was presented to a full house at Alice Millar Chapel on April 21, 1979. That concert laid the foundation for the Ensemble's reputation as an elite large brass ensemble and initiated a full decade of groundbreaking and inspiring brass and percussion concerts.

Innovation was at the heart of the Pitzen Brass Ensemble. The advertising buzz that the Ensemble created for its first concert in April 1979 included an impromptu outdoor performance at The Rock next to University Hall on the Northwestern campus. One might say this foreshadowed today's flash mob.

FRIDAY, APRIL 20, 1979

Brass group 'rocks' at NU

By Lise Lustgarten

Among the places the Pitzen Brass Ensemble has performed is Northwestern's illustrious Rock.

The 15-member ensemble played there Wednesday at noon to gain publicity for their upcoming concert at 3 p.m. Saturday in Alice Millar Chapel.

The ensemble was formed in 1976 as the Pitzen Brass Quintet. Last year the quintet won the \$1,000 second prize Saunderson Award at the Coleman Chamber Music Auditions at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena.

"**THE EXPANSION TO** a larger group was very exciting," said music graduate student Mitchell Arnold, the ensemble's conductor. "There's been a lot of good group brass music written between the Renaissance and the present. There's more to do with a large group."

All the members of the ensemble have taken classes with the NU music department, Arnold said.

"Having been aware of each other's abilities from musical ensembles, we decided it would be fun and productive if we could get together as a performing group," he said.

The Pitzen Brass Ensemble has been rehearsing together since late September. Their performances have been mostly limited to churches in the Chicago area, Arnold said.

"**THIS IS A HIGHLY** professional group," said music senior John Kargut. "We were blessed with very fine teaching here, which contributes to the quality of the group."

The concert Saturday will feature music ranging from 16th century dance suites to contemporary pieces, Arnold said.

Daily Northwestern, April 20, 1979

Pitzen Brass Ensemble Subscription Series Concerts

At the outset, the Pitzen Brass Quintet and conductor Mitchell Arnold served as the artistic and organizational core of the large Ensemble. This small group arranged concert logistics, created programs, and soon established an annual series of three concerts per year, complete with season brochures, advertising campaigns, and subscriptions.

The concerts in this series were generally presented at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Evanston, which the Pitzen Brass Ensemble used as its regular rehearsal space, administrative home base, and concert hall. Easter sunrise services at St. Luke's became an important annual event in the Pitzen Brass Ensemble calendar, with stirring liturgical music for brass, organ, and chorus composed and arranged specifically for those services.



1981 standing room only Pitzen Brass Ensemble subscription series concert, St. Luke's Episcopal Church. Left to Right: Peter Wahrhaftig, tuba; Mitchell Arnold, conductor; Steven Mayer and Timothy Myers, trombone; William Essert and Robert Smith, trumpet.

Full houses and standing room only audiences became regular occurrences at the subscription series concerts. Chicago area audiences were captivated by the Pitzen Brass Ensemble's unique programming of music originally composed for large brass ensemble, including great classics, rarely heard twentieth century works, and world premieres, many by Chicago composers (see Appendix C). Superb performances of this challenging literature were guaranteed by the group's exceptional musicianship and uncompromising commitment to highly refined and incisive ensemble playing.

By the mid-1980s, the Pitzen Brass Ensemble had become a recognized leader among performing ensembles in Chicago, deriving much of its support and energy from the grass roots of the local, metropolitan, and regional brass community. The informal structure and organization of the original Ensemble rapidly evolved to become more formalized, with the establishment of Pitzen, Inc., a non-profit corporation whose board of directors included Northwestern School of Music faculty, members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and Pitzen alumni who held leadership positions in other symphony orchestras.

Much of the financial support for the Pitzen Brass Ensemble came from funders such as the Evanston Arts Council, the Illinois Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and numerous individual and corporate donors. Soon, the Ensemble was advertising for local businesses and other performing ensembles in its concert programs. Revenue and publicity were also generated through the sale of Pitzen merchandise.

Each successful concert and subscription season solidified the relationships the Ensemble was building in the community, which in turn created greater exposure and new performance opportunities beyond the established series. The Ensemble continued to forge and strengthen those relationships with educational institutions, cultural organizations, and media throughout the metropolitan region.

A key ally in the local media was music critic Kyle Gann. Celebrated authority on late twentieth-century music, composer, author, journalist, and most notably, music critic for the *Village Voice*, Gann publicized and wrote reviews of Pitzen Brass Ensemble concerts in the *Chicago Reader*. Examples of Mr. Gann's and other Pitzen Brass Ensemble reviews are found in Appendix D.

Upper Row Left to Right:
Walter Hamberg, trumpet
Thomas Rolfs, trumpet
Neal Berntsen, trumpet
Patrick Jensen, trumpet

Middle Row Left to Right:
Kevin Hartman, trumpet
Glenn Monson, trombone
David Ferguson, trombone
Paul Bauer, bass trombone
Alan Tobias, trombone


Lower Row Left to Right:
Mitchell Arnold, conductor
Stephen Proser, horn
James Smelser, horn
Greg Flint, horn
Tod Bowermaster, horn
Charles Schuchat, tuba

See Appendix E for
larger image.

2 READER - Section 2

READER'S GUIDE TO THE MUSIC SCENE

Continued from previous page



Critic's Choice: PITZEN BRASS ENSEMBLE

This is Brass City. Chicago turns out no more exemplary performers than its brass players, and the Pitzen Brass contains some of the best in town. What's more, director Mitchell Arnold leaves no stone unturned in his search for interesting and unusual repertoire, and thus every Pitzen concert provides fascinating glimpses into a number of diverse and obscure corners in the history of music, all worth investigating. This Sunday's concert looks to be the best of their '85 season. For one thing, *España: La Lucha*, a commemoration of the Spanish Civil War by estimable Chicago composer Frank Abbinanti, will receive its world premiere. The Pitzen will contribute to the recent revival of the works of the eccentric, occasionally experimental Australian composer Percy Grainger with two pieces based on folk songs. Also included will be works by Stravinsky, Wilhelm Lichtein (a Gabrieli student), Pablo Casals (!), Russo-German romantic Oskar Bohme, and dances from Praetorius's ever-popular collection *Terpsichore*. Arnold's enlightening commentary is a pleasure, and some will find the acoustics of Saint Luke's Church alone worth the trip. Sunday, 7:30 PM, Saint Luke's Episcopal Church, 939 Hinman (at Lee), Evanston; 328-5261 or 262-8100 ext. 538.

—Kyle Gann

BAGUETTES, Hyatt Regency Woodfield, 1800 E. Golf, Schaumburg: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 6-11:30 pm, Francois Franco, 885-1234.

BARN OF BARRINGTON, 1415 S. Barrington Rd., Barrington: Fridays through Sundays and Wednesdays, Kenneth Goodman, 381-8585.

BEESTAR INN, 6935 N. Sheridan: Tonight and Saturday, Ivy Block. Next Friday, April 19, John Burnett. Next Saturday, April 20, Before & After, 973-6600.

BENTLEY'S, 10300 W. Higgins, Rosemont: Saturdays, Grotic Blues Brothers, 299-5688.

BEPPINO'S, Como Inn, 546 N. Milwaukee: Tuesdays through Saturdays, John Sakellariades, 421-9222.

BIDDY MULLIGAN'S, 7644 N. Sheridan: Tonight, Michael Black & the Dreads, Nyan Como, Tony "Big Red" Aiken, Yabba Griffiths, Main Attraction (benefit for Ethiopian Children's Relief Fund) Saturday, Bo Diddley, Monday, Safari, Wednesday, Ron LaSalle & the Twin Bullet Band, 761-6532.

BILLY AND COMPANY, 124 S. Milwaukee: Wheeling, Tuesdays through Saturdays, Dean Jackson, 541-6160.

THE BISTRO, Hyatt Regency O'Hare, River Rd. at Kennedy Expy., Rosemont: Mondays through Saturdays, Gandy, Sundays, Debbie Fiore Trio, 696-1234.

BOBBY LONDON LOUNGE, Schaumburg Marriott Hotel, 50 N. Martingale, Schaumburg:

Kyle Gann "Critic's Choice" publicity from April 1985 *Chicago Reader*

The Chicago Public Library CULTURAL CENTER
presents

Margaret Hillis
Artistic Adviser

Al Booth
Founder/Director



Jane M. Byrne, Mayor
City of Chicago

Wednesday, November 18, 1981, 12:15 pm

THE PITZEN BRASS ENSEMBLE
Mitchell Arnold, Music Director

<u>Prelude: Le Concile des faux dieux</u> from <u>Le Martyre de Saint Sebastien</u>	Claude Debussy (1862-1918)		
<u>Divertimento for Two Trumpets</u> Opus VII (1730)	Michel Corrette (1709-1795)		
<u>Drei Equale for four trombones</u>	Beethoven (1770-1827)		
<u>Canzon VI</u> from Canzon e Sonate (1615)	Giovanni Gabrieli (1554-1612)		
<u>Nonet for Brass</u> Opus 49	Wallingford Riegger (1885-1961)		
<u>Fest-Und Gedenksprüche</u> (Festive & Commemorative music) Opus 109	Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)		
<u>Canzon Septimi toni no. 2</u> from Sacrae Symphoniae (1597)	Giovanni Gabrieli (1554-1612)		
<u>Trumpets</u> William Essert Jeffrey Hickey Patrick Jensen Dean Psarakis Robert Smith	<u>French Horns</u> Tod Bowermaster Charles Hodgson Jonathan Ring Brian Thomas	<u>Trombones</u> Charles Boston David Ferguson Timothy Myers Stephen Wilson <u>Bass Trombone</u> Charles Boston	<u>Alto Trombone</u> Stephen Wilson <u>Tuba</u> Peter Wahrhaftig



(please see reverse side)

Free Admission

The Chicago Public Library Cultural Center
78 East Washington Street
Chicago, Illinois
269-2837

The Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts are presented every Wednesday at 12:15 p.m. in Preston Bradley Hall. All concerts are broadcast live on WFMT radio (98.7 FM). These programs are sponsored by Talman Home Federal Savings and Loan Association.

Program from Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert, November 1981

In addition to its annual subscription concert series, the Pitzen Brass Ensemble began appearing throughout the Chicago metropolitan area very soon after its formation.

Early performances as guest artists included concerts on series presented by St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, First St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Mundelein College. In its second full season in November 1981, the Pitzen Brass Ensemble presented an exceptional concert on the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series, which was also broadcast on classical radio station WFMT.



Pitzen Brass Ensemble trumpets & trombones, 1985 — Left to Right: Kevin Hartman, trumpet; Walter Hamberg, trumpet; Glenn Monson, trombone; David Ferguson, trombone; Paul Bauer, bass trombone

Pitzen Brass Ensemble Musicians

Initially, the majority of Pitzen Brass Ensemble musicians were Northwestern University School of Music undergraduates. As the Pitzen Brass Ensemble matured, a new core of brass players began to emerge, made up of mostly graduate music students from Northwestern. This new leadership continued to build upon the Ensemble's early success, fueled by the passion, energy, creativity, and commitment to excellence that each musician brought to the ensemble.

The Pitzen Brass Ensemble quickly became sought after, not only by concert promoters and audiences, but also by the best young professional brass players, all but one who were Northwestern University students and alumni. New musicians joined when older Ensemble members were offered coveted positions in professional symphony orchestras, wind and brass ensembles, bands, university music schools, and conservatories across North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Throughout this natural and healthy succession of membership, conductor Mitchell Arnold was able to provide the continuity and stability necessary for nurturing the development of the Pitzen Brass Ensemble as an artistic force in the community.

As many Pitzen Brass Ensemble alumni were developing their musical careers and establishing themselves in prominent performing and teaching positions on four continents, other Pitzen alumni were branching out from the music profession and exploring new career opportunities. Those people were finding professional and intellectual stimulation in fields such as law, psychotherapy, engineering, urban planning, publishing, and high tech.

Several Pitzen alumni have become successful entrepreneurs, developing such innovations as brass instrument design improvements, home devices, and products with applications in gerontology. Although careers in such businesses and professions may appear to be inconsistent with performing in an elite brass ensemble, most of these Pitzen Brass Ensemble alumni found that they learned many transferable skills from their music education and performing experience with the Pitzen Brass Ensemble. All these alumni give credit to the Ensemble for instilling in them the values of discipline, uncompromising pursuit of excellence, teamwork, performing at the highest level, and leadership.

Finale of the Pitzen Brass Ensemble

The final subscription series concert of the Pitzen Brass Ensemble was presented at St. Luke's Episcopal Church on June 18, 1989. For this concert, the Ensemble pulled out all the stops and invited upwards of 14 additional guest musicians, including Pitzen Brass Ensemble alumni, top Chicago freelancers, and Chicago Symphony Orchestra trombonist Frank Crisafulli, who had influenced so many Ensemble members as their teacher, coach, and mentor through the 1970s and 80s. The full program for this capstone concert is included in Appendix C.

The Pitzen Brass Ensemble			
Mitchell Arnold, <i>Musical Director</i>			
Trumpets	Horns	Trombones	Tuba
Neal Berntsen	Gregory Flint	Jim Armstrong	Charles Schuchat
Kevin Hartman	Cathy Moss	Paul Bauer	
Matt Lee	Stephen Proser	Daniel Cloutier	Percussion
	James Smelser	David Ferguson	Steve Elkins
Guest Performers			
Trumpets: Bruce Briney, Glenda Cloutier, Mickey McCurdy, Kari Phelps, Channing Philbrick, Margaret Philbrick, Judy Saxton			
Trombones: Frank Crisafulli, Mark Fisher, Cecil Key, Art Linsner, Susan Smith, Debra Taylor			
Tuba: Rex Martin			

List of musicians performing in final Pitzen Brass Ensemble subscription series concert

Although Pitzen, Inc. was winding up its business in late 1989, a significant performing opportunity presented itself in October of that year, when the Pitzen Brass Ensemble was invited to perform at the dedication ceremony for a new public art installation in Chicago's Jonquil Park: *Eagle Columns* by sculptor Richard Hunt. For its part, the Ensemble performed a new work commissioned for the occasion, the *Eagle Columns Fanfare* composed by Pitzen conductor Mitchell Arnold.

**DEDICATION
of
EAGLE COLUMNS**

A SCULPTURE BY RICHARD H. HUNT

*Sunday, October 22, 1989
Eleven-thirty o'clock in the morning
Jonquil Park*

Extract from Dedication Ceremony Program for *Eagle Columns*

DEDICATION PROGRAM

Presiding

BETTY FROMM,
President, Lincoln Park Conservation Association

BERT KUBLI *National Endowment for the Arts*

ALLEN HERNES *Co-Chairperson, LPCA Jonquil Park
Sculpture Committee*

SARA LEONARD *Co-Chairperson, LPCA Jonquil Park
Sculpture Committee*

MUSIC *Eagle Columns Fanfare* Mitchell Arnold

**The Pitzen Brass Ensemble
Mitchell Arnold, *Conducting***

RICHARD HUNT *Sculptor*

DEDICATION TO THE PEOPLE OF CHICAGO

WALTER NETSCH *Commissioner, Chicago Park District*

ADJOURNMENT



Eagle Columns (source <http://www.publicartinchicago.com/2010-studio-visit-richard-howard-hunt/>)

In retrospect, the *Eagle Columns* Dedication Ceremony, which included presentations by Richard Hunt and dignitaries from the Lincoln Park Conservation Association, Chicago Park District, and National Endowment for the Arts, was an emblematic finale for this prestigious group of musicians who had contributed so much to the public artistic life of Chicago, the broader community of Northwestern University, and the next generation of symphonic musicians around the world.

Conclusion

Membership in the Pitzen Brass Ensemble demanded a common commitment to the principle that a self-governing ensemble of excellent musicians can independently attain the highest standards in the performance of great brass music, and can continually improve upon those standards, season after season. The musicians of the Pitzen Brass Ensemble were motivated by more than money, self-promotion, recording contracts, and the allure of embarking on concert tours. These immensely talented musicians with their sharply honed ensemble skills were inspired by the ideals that brought them together: technical mastery of their instruments; highly developed ensemble sensibility; unity of sound, intonation, articulation, dynamics, and interpretation; profound understanding and expression of musical and stylistic values; and most of all, camaraderie. This extraordinary dedication to musical excellence created some of the finest brass ensemble concerts ever heard in Chicago—the city that is accustomed to hearing the best symphonic brass playing in the world. Beyond those concerts, the Pitzen Brass Ensemble nurtured, sustained, and launched many of the finest brass performers, coaches, and teachers in the world today.

The Pitzen Brass Ensemble



Pitzen Brass Ensemble subscription series program cover, 1983 – 1989

June 2022 Renewal

The Pitzen Brass Ensemble had accomplished unparalleled success through the eleven years it was active in the 1970s—80s. At that time, those ambitious young musicians assumed that this vital part of their artistic development could not continue. After all, they were embarking on exciting new careers in music performance, teaching, and other professions in Chicago, across North America, and around the world. Rather than staying together, they took the inspiration and skills they learned at Northwestern University and in the Pitzen Brass Ensemble to their new communities and shared them with new colleagues, students, and audiences. Each remembered the values and ideals they had developed together, even though the Ensemble was no longer active.

This inactive status changed, however, at the instigation of Northwestern University alumnus Patrick Smith, who earned a MMus degree in trombone performance. Mr. Smith had been a classmate of the founding members of the Pitzen Brass Ensemble and attended its debut concert more than 40 years ago. Now a senior electrical engineer at the MIT Lincoln Laboratory, he also produces brass concerts in the Boston area.

Because he had been inspired as a student by the Pitzen Brass Ensemble, Patrick Smith decided to produce a *Pitzen Brass Ensemble Resurrection* concert as part of a larger brass music festival he was planning for June 2022. He didn't expect all the musicians in the *Pitzen Brass Ensemble Resurrection* to be Pitzen alumni; rather, Mr. Smith's aim was to present a concert with as many Pitzen alumni as possible, performing some of the literature the original Pitzen Brass Ensemble had played more than three decades earlier. He contacted several Pitzen alumni in 2021 to begin organizing the 2022 event, including founding horn players Kirsten Bendixen and Seth Orgel, Canadian trumpeter in the original Pitzen Brass Quintet Don Schultz, and conductor Mitchell Arnold. This key group of Pitzen alumni enthusiastically took up the challenge and began recruiting other musicians who had been regular members of the Pitzen Brass Ensemble in the 1980s.



June 2022 rehearsal for the Pitzen Brass Ensemble Resurrection in Worcester, Massachusetts
Left to Right: Mitchell Arnold, conductor; Sarah Jessen, trumpet; James South, trumpet; Kevin Hartman, trumpet; Don Schultz, trumpet; Dean Psarakis, trumpet; Kirsten Bendixen, horn; Seth Orgel, horn; Timothy Myers, trombone; David Ferguson, trombone; Michael Roylance, tuba

By June 2022, an ensemble of 18 brass and percussion musicians, half of whom were original members of the Pitzen Brass Ensemble, was assembled to perform a full concert as part of Patrick Smith's *Afternoon of Brass* in Worcester, Massachusetts. Recruiting excellent brass players and percussionists to fill out the other half of the Pitzen Brass Ensemble Resurrection was easier than most had expected, because many Boston area musicians were still familiar with the Pitzen Brass Ensemble's reputation, and because the Pitzen alumni had strong connections with the classical music community in New England. Local musicians who joined the Pitzen Brass Ensemble Resurrection included members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Boston Pops Orchestra, and faculty members of the University of Connecticut, Trinity College, and Wesleyan University.



Trombonist Timothy Myers and Conductor Mitchell Arnold on rehearsal break



Pitzen Brass Ensemble Resurrection in concert June 2022

Left to Right: David Ferguson, trombone; Daniel Byers, timpani; Kirsten Bendixen, horn; Timothy Myers, trombone; Kevin Owen, horn; Robert Hoyle, horn; Patrick Smith, trombone; Seth Orgel; horn; Israel Gutierrez, bass trombone; Michael Roylance, tuba; Mitchell Arnold, conductor



Pitzen Brass Ensemble Resurrection June 5, 2022, Mechanics Hall, Worcester, Massachusetts

Left to Right: Sarah Jessen, trumpet; Kevin Hartman, trumpet; Seth Orgel; horn; Dean Psarakis, trumpet; Kevin Own, horn; Timothy Myers, trombone; Mitchell Arnold, conductor; Kirsten Bendixen, horn (behind Arnold); David Ferguson, trombone; Robert Hoyle, horn; Patrick Smith, trombone; Michael Roylance, tuba