

Harvey Pittel's Complete Biography

There are few saxophone masters in the modern world, and even fewer who compare to Harvey Pittel. For Pittel, the title "master" is an appropriately well-earned and well-deserved description. The critics of the United States agree. *The New York Times'* Raymond Ericson wrote, in regard to one of Pittel's many New York concerts, that the music he heard was "An evening as stimulating musically as it was dazzling technically." Michael Steinberg of the *Boston Globe* wrote, Pittel is "A superb musician and instrumentalist, with an elegant sense of phrase, vast technical resources, and beautiful firmly-centered tone." The *San Francisco Chronicle* pointed out how Pittel has reached the goal for which all us musicians strive, "The thing about Pittel is that he plays so well and so stylishly... The control and variety of timbre – along with a varied chest of instruments – allows him to adapt to whatever he plays." And now the kicker, "One ends up hearing the music rather than the performer;" there just can't be a loftier goal, and one which Pittel achieves night after night after night. Winthrop Sargeant in *The New Yorker* furthered all of those sentiments when he wrote, "(Pittel is) Clearly a master of his instrument." The great critic Harold Schonberg, also of *The New York Times*, summed it up the same way, "(Pittel is) A master of his instrument." As Stan Lee would say, "Nuff said."

For Pittel, born June 22, 1943, however, playing solo recitals is just one portion of a vast web of musical endeavors. As an orchestral soloist he has performed with the New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Louisville, Sacramento, Chautauqua, San Jose and San Antonio symphonies, to list just a few. Among the many conductors Pittel has worked with are Zubin Mehta, Michael Tilson Thomas, Varujan Kojian, Carter Nice, Abraham Chavez, Neville Marriner, Ingolf Dahl, Seiji Ozawa, Andrew Davis, Aaron Sten and Jose Serebrier.

For Pittel, early collegiate work as a Music Education Major at the University of Southern California (USC) led him to graduate studies with Fred Hemke at Northwestern University where Pittel earned his master's degree. During the Vietnam War years Pittel served his country by accepting an appointment to The West Point Military Academy Band as an enlisted man. During this time he began further studies with Joe Allard of the Juilliard School. It was also during this time when Pittel made many trips to New York City to perform a wide variety of gigs, from small chamber pieces to works with orchestras, and it was just after leaving the West Point Band when Pittel won the Concert Artists Guild Competition and through this made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1971 playing to such acclamation he was re-presented by the same organization in 1973. When Pittel's tour of duty was over he accepted a position as the saxophone teacher at USC, building the studio up to full size from just four when he was hired. Concurrently with the USC position, Pittel, who is constantly in a state of high energy as this interview will attest to, furthered his teaching credentials by accepting concurrent positions teaching at Cal State Fullerton, Cal State Long Beach, Cal State San Diego and East Los Angeles Junior College.

Along with his many teaching successes, it was also during this period when Pittel's performance career took off. In 1978 he made the jump and moved to New York City on a fulltime basis, growing tired of continually hopping across the country from California to New York for all the gigs he was playing in the Big Apple. The move paid off and Pittel quickly found himself as perhaps the most in-demand saxophonist, no matter the genre, as a soloist worldwide. Today, in addition to a ridiculously busy performing schedule, Pittel is also the Professor of Saxophone at The University of Texas at Austin, performs as a soloist with professional orchestras and collegiate groups of all manner, gives countless solo recitals, tours with the Harvey Pittel Duo, the Har-

vey Pittel Trio, and the Harvey Pittel Saxophone Quartet, judges musical competitions throughout the world, gives innumerable master classes and clinics, and is frequently called upon to speak to different groups regarding music and its performance.

Along the way Pittel has been featured on a number of movie soundtracks, including *Manhattan* for Woody Allen, appeared as a guest on *The Today Show* - seriously how many saxophonists can list that on their resume - and been featured on *Live From Lincoln Center*. He has received numerous other awards including two Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund grants, and a National Endowment for the Arts Solo Recitalist grant. To be fair and honest, all of the accolades listed above still leave so many equally stunning achievements out. A funny and warm individual, this kind of a litany of accomplishments would, for us mere mortals, be the work of three lifetimes, but for Pittel, who is still young, one knows for sure it's only the beginning.

HARVEY PITTEL'S SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- Harvey Pittel – *Contrasts* (CRS Artists 0686)
- Harvey Pittel with Jupiter Symphony – *Live In New York* (Crystal Records)
- With RCC Wind Ensemble – *Shape Shifter* (Sea Breeze Classical Records)
- With Univ. of Texas Saxophone Ensemble – *Over The Rainbow and Bach Again* (Naxos)
- With Univ. of Texas Saxophone Ensemble – *Tex Sax Next Generation* (Mark Records 7119)
- With Univ. of Texas Saxophone Ensemble – *Tex Sax* (Mark Records 2280)
- Harvey Pittel Saxophone Quartet – *It Might As Well Be Spring* (HP Records 0400)
- With Univ. of Texas Wind Ensemble – *Husa / Maslanka Concertos* (Mark Records 3932)
- With Univ. of Texas Wind Ensemble – *At Carnegie Hall* (Mark Records 26970)
- Harvey Pittel – *La Linge, La Sonorite, A Tribute to Marcel Mule* (Mark Records 5050)
- With Louisville Symphony - *Music of Paul Chihara* (New World Records 815)
- Harvey Pittel Saxophone Quartet – *Live In Chicago* (Mark Records 2106)
- Harvey Pittel – *Moving Along* (Crystal 655)
- Harvey Pittel - *Bach and Noodles* (Crystal 654)
- With New York Philharmonic – *Pictures At An Exhibition* (CBS MK 35165)
- With Ry Cooder – *Jazz* (Warner Brothers BSK 3197)
- With Teresa Strata – *Strata Sings Weill* (Nonesuch 9 79131-1 F)
- Harvey Pittel Saxophone Quartet – *A Little Night Music* (@ 1987)
- Harvey Pittel with Louisville Symphony – *Amram Ode to Lord Buckley* (Louisville LS781)
- Harvey Pittel Saxophone Quartet - *Don't You Remember The Time* (Harojama 9743)
- Harvey Pittel with London Sinfonietta – *Rodby Concerto* (Crystal S500)
- Harvey Pittel with Westwood Wind Quintet – re issued on CD *Sextour a vent* (Crystal S 353)
- Harvey Pittel Trio (Crystal S157)
- Harvey Pittel Saxophone Quartet (Crystal S155)
- Harvey Pittel Plays Music for Alto and Soprano Saxophones (Crystal S105)