

Gilbert H. Mitchell

Gilbert H. Mitchell was born in Lykens, Pennsylvania, a small town between Harrisburg and Pottsville, Pennsylvania on April 4, 1925. He began the study of cornet at an early age with Harry McCall, a local bandsman. As a seventh grader he began further studies with C. Eugene Erb, a pupil of Frank Simon. Mitchell began study with Ernest Williams when he was a tenth grader and later attended the Williams summer band camp. At the Williams school he studied voice with Cecil Jacobson, composition and arranging with Erik Leidzen and conducting and solfeggio with Pierre Henrotte, concertmaster and conductor of the Metropolitan Opera.

Gil began his musical career playing trumpet with the Radio City Music Hall Symphony Orchestra, the New York City Symphony under the direction of Leopold Stokowsky and the New Orleans Symphony conducted by Massimo Freccia. Concurrently he played with the Les Brown Band and at New York's Copacabana Night Club in the summer months. In 1946, Mitchell was drafted into the Army. During basic training, he was given orders to report to the Army band in Washington. As a result of his audition at the Army band, he was assigned there as cornet and trumpet player. At that time, the army band was under the leadership of Capt. Hugh Curry. After spending one year with the band he decided to make that his full time career and was soon advanced to the position of Principal Cornettist. Mitchell co-founded and directed the Army band's brilliant Herald Trumpets.

In September 1960, in an unprecedented move in Army music, Mitchell was promoted from Master Sergeant to Captain and appointed assistant leader. He retired from the band on November 30, 1970 as Associate Conductor and in the grade of Lt. Col. In his long and illustrious career, he was awarded the Army Commendation Medal (3 oak leaf clusters) for outstanding achievement in the course of his duties. In the 1970, the President award him the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services.

Retirement from the service was only the beginning of several new careers for Gilbert Mitchell. For five years, he was conductor of the US Department of Agriculture Symphony Orchestra and for ten years he was the conductor of the Northern Virginia Chamber Orchestra playing for children throughout the state of Virginia in various venues. For 13 years he was professor of trumpet at George Mason University. In 1997, he formed the Brass of Peace in order to create a more enriched musical experience for his talented trumpet students.

Many alumni have gone on to conservatories such as the Curtis Institute of Music, Eastmann, New England Conservatory, Juilliard School, as well as Indiana University, MIT, University of Michigan and other fine schools. Many graduates of Brass of Peace have also gone on to become employed in the nation's symphony orchestras and orchestras throughout the world, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony and the Portland Symphony

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