



*45 Years of the
Radcliffe Pitches
in Pictures*

In today's world, with a wealth of *a cappella* groups and everything from *a cappella* competitions on TV to a series of *Pitch Perfect* movies, it's hard to imagine a time when *a cappella* groups were relatively unknown. It's even harder to imagine a time where there was only one *a cappella* group at Harvard, and an exclusively male group at that. But that's exactly what we found when we entered Harvard as freshmen in 1974. It was a time before *a cappella* was well-known, a time before *a cappella* was cool, a time before *a cappella* was for women singers. We decided to change that.

We arrived at Harvard as freshmen in the fall of 1974 at a time of transition for women at the university. We were the last group of women to be accepted to Radcliffe, and the first to graduate from Harvard. We were some of the first women to live in Harvard Yard. The ratio of men to women was 4 to 1, and everything on campus was, for the most part, male-oriented. There was only one *a cappella* singing group on campus at the time: the all-male Harvard Krokodiloes. We were both singers and loved their style, creativity, and camaraderie, but it was very clear we were not going to be able to join the Kroks, so we decided to start our own group. We quickly found out that you can't just put up a sign and start a group. We had to navigate university rules and regulations and petition for a charter from Dean Epps, who wasn't so sure we would actually accomplish the task. When we finally got our official status, it was the spring of 1975 and we held auditions, hoping enough women would show up.



Throughout the process the Kroks took us under their wing and were incredibly helpful and generous with their time and support. They embraced our vision and identity in an institution that was not yet set up for women. They were obviously early feminists.

To start with, Chris Ruppenthal from the Kroks adapted their audition poster, which featured a man driving a boat with a bikini-clad girl adoringly holding onto him, to a Pitches version, showing a woman steering the boat and the guy behind her holding a mop, having clearly just cleaned the boat. It was a funny take on their poster and apparently caught a lot of would-be singers' attention. We ended up with a plentiful turnout on the first day of auditions. When we didn't have any music, Peter Mansfield

gave us the Krok version of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" for our audition piece, which then became our first song.

Next, we had to find a name. After a contest and many outlandish suggestions, we chose "The Radcliffe Pitches," a take-off on a negative phrase used to describe Radcliffe women at that time. We wanted to be known as a group that was gutsy, tough, and high-quality, instead of cutesy and sweet, like other female groups we heard at the nearby women's colleges. We got many raised eyebrows and comments for our choice of name, but we



owned it and flaunted it. It was, however, a little awkward when we informed Dean Epps of our chosen name.

With a name and a few musical arrangements, we began the hard work of creating a repertoire, a style, and a sound. We rehearsed three times a week for two hours at a time, with the goal of being ready to sing at graduation festivities that June. When graduation finally came around, we performed four songs—"Somewhere Over the Rainbow," "You'd Be Surprised," "Oh Johnny," and "Climbin' Up the Mountain"—which were the only songs we knew. When the crowd went wild and demanded an encore, we had no choice but to sing the same four songs again, which elicited even more cheers. Clearly, we needed to learn more songs. By the end of that year, we had a full repertoire that would become the group's signature numbers for the next several years, including "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," "Mood Indigo," "Lullaby of Broadway," "Stormy Weather," "Button Up Your Overcoat," "Sentimental Journey," "Let's Misbehave," "Solitude," and "In the Mood." The Kroks continued to support us, and we eventually went from opening for them to headlining our own shows. We created our own version of the style, creativity, and camaraderie that we had originally longed for while watching the Kroks our freshman year. It was amazing to create this

close community of women in an environment that had relatively few women at the time.

Despite all the hard work, we had so much fun. We still remember the excitement of our first performance at Sanders Theater in 1976, which seemed so overwhelming and scary until we got on the stage and sang our first note. It was clear we had established ourselves as a high-quality singing group with its own distinct sound. We could now hold our own with the Kroks and the other



groups performing in the Jamboree that night.

In the fall of 1976, we hosted our first Jamboree at Lowell House, and for the opening of the show we planned a great spoof as a surprise. We started the evening dressed in tuxedos, singing the Kroks' opening song, "House of Blue Lights." We had recruited the Kroks' music director, Peter Lerangis, under an oath of secrecy to help us pull it all off—we would be wearing the Krok uniform of tuxedos, so we were relying on him to make sure they wore something else. Peter had to convince the Kroks that they should open with "The Lumberjack Song" wearing lumberjack outfits. They thought he was nuts and couldn't understand why he was so insistent. Yet somehow he prevailed, and we totally surprised and impressed the Kroks.



Over the next year we solidified our reputation and expanded our repertoire. Invitations to sing at other schools followed. We took our first road trip to sing at Yale, then another to sing at Princeton and Dartmouth, and then embarked on a Philadelphia tour. But nothing like the international tours the Pitches have today.

Our success was the result of a lot of hard work, determination, creativity, and trust on the part of everyone in the group. Our group members pitched in by finding or arranging music, seeking

places to rehearse and places to sing, prevailing on roommates and friends to come to our concerts, setting up concerts in their hometowns for our first tour, persuading *a cappella* groups at other schools to host us for their Jamborees, and even spending reading period producing our first record.

Being a part of the Pitches helped define our experience at Harvard. We had an amazing creative outlet, a strong support system, long-lasting friendships and fun. We learned to work as a team and to set and achieve goals—all important life skills we use today. We created an instant family of 14 women doing something we all loved.

We are so proud to have opened a door for so many other young women as they arrive at Harvard. We hope each of you loves your time with the Pitches as much as we did. It is hard to believe 45 years have passed since our first auditions and we are so thrilled that the Radcliffe Pitches continue to be a proud Harvard tradition. We thank all the Pitches from the past five decades for carrying on this tradition, and not only keeping the Pitches relevant, but also taking them to the next level. You are now the twenty-first century version of our original 1970s group.

Thank you all for carrying on the legacy of The Radcliffe Pitches. We look forward to seeing all of you and singing with you at our 50th reunion in a few years.

All our love,

Kathy Manning '78, original music director

Diane Nabatoff '78, original business manager

The original Pitches:

Pam Hogan, Margo Lukens and Mary Schumaker: first sopranos
Ann Leary, Nancy Sullivan and Diane Nabatoff: second sopranos
Janet Heroux, Sue Sawyer, Patty Woo and Kathy Manning: first altos
Candy Cason, Ann Cox, Donna Proenzano and Joan Soble: second altos.



Irving Berlin 1919

You'd Be Surprised

arr. Peter Mansfield 1975

INTRO

Handwritten musical notation for the Intro section. It features two staves with treble and bass clefs. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The time signature is 4/4. The notation includes chords and single notes, with the lyrics "baba baba (etc.)" written below the first staff. A "dim" marking is present on the second staff.

(SOLO)

doodoo...
doo doo...

Handwritten musical notation for the Solo section. It consists of two staves with treble and bass clefs. The key signature remains two flats. The notation is primarily composed of chords, with some single notes. A "dim" marking is present on the first staff.

He's such a ... To Part II

Handwritten musical notation for the final section. It features two staves with treble and bass clefs. The key signature has two flats. The notation includes chords and single notes.

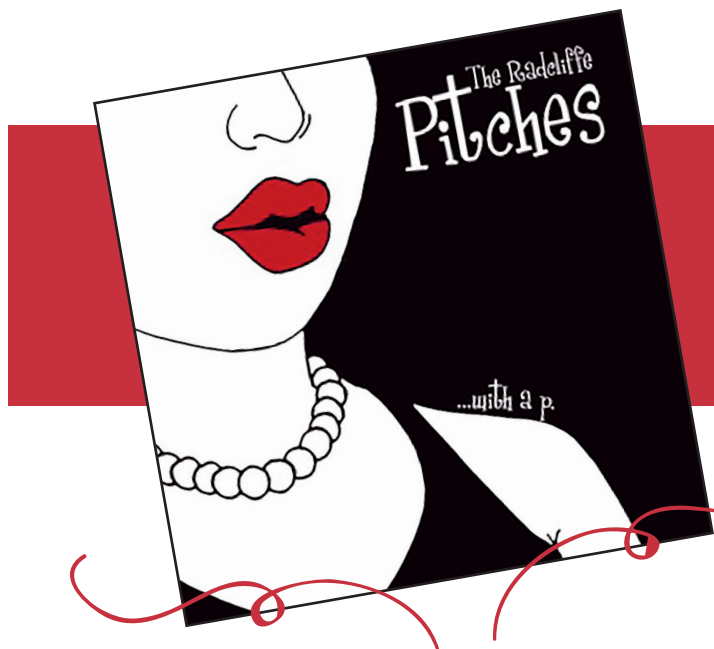
arr.
P.L.M.
©1975

You'd Be Surprised

pg 2

Handwritten musical score for "You'd Be Surprised" on page 2. The score is written on ten staves with lyrics and musical notations. Chords are written above the staves: E_b^6 , Fm^7 , Bb^7 , Bb^7 , A_b , and E_b^6 . The lyrics are: "He's such a de-li-cate thing But when he starts into squeeze You'd be sur - prised Look very strong He doesn't But when you sit on his knees You'd you'd be sur - prised He doesn't look like much of a lo - ver but don't judge, look by its - er coz in a Morris chair You'd be sur - prised".

Ed. Note: "You'd Be Surprised"? I sure was! When I first found out there was sheet music for this song, I was astonished. Like many Pitches, I learned this arrangement from those who had been in the group before me, listening closely as my teacher demonstrated the notes by moving her hand up and down for each "doot." When I finally received this sheet music, I realized that what I had been singing all these years was not what was written on the page! But that's ok. One of the beautiful things about this song is that it's been passed down from generation to generation of Pitches, so that we're now all tied up in a grand tradition of musical telephone. Whether you sang this version or some other version, there's no question that it's close to every Pitch's heart.



...with a p: Pitches News Clippings

Reading these articles from the 1970s and 1980s, it seems that earlier generations of Pitches may have had a bit to prove to those who didn't take a cappella singers seriously, or who didn't understand the humor in our name.* The fact that the group has built a vast community of alums and continues to thrive 45 years later is a testament to the efforts and sheer chutzpah of those earlier women in showing audiences that the Pitches can be just as talented and entertaining as any other group, while still retaining our unique style.

*Note that when soliciting suggestions for a name, the original group got a lot of rather outlandish submissions, including "The Wandering Menstruals." Most of the other suggestions are probably not fit for print.

'Cliffie Pitches

For the Radcliffe Pitches, the days of Andrews sisters' cuteness and pristine singing outfits are over. Having what other singing groups call "their best year in history," the Pitches can be found in bare-backed black dresses and Bermuda clubs, always "In The Mood" to sell out concerts and to party.

Now in their 11th year, the Pitch repertoire has added the sultry "Swing," Kelloggs' "Snap, Crackle, Pop," and the Eurythmics' "Right By Your Side" to old favorites like "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy." Costumes include leather mini skirts and orange high heels (for Halloween). Their office in the Hasty Pudding Club basement (complete with collapsible roof) sports Yaz tapes and a torso picture of "Scott," the unofficial mascot.

"The Pitches have no one particular sound," says Director Kelly Parsons '87. "We're sort of a female Nylons, but jazzier. At a recent Sanders jam, the Pitches did a rap song spoofing Harvard men and then donned horned-rims and four-color-premied pens to sing 'She's a Polytechnical Girl.' Was this song a statement of female power? 'We just sing. We don't make statements,'" quips Parsons.

Sound fun? Before rushing to audition, be warned: The Pitches mean serious music. "It's very important how we sound," says Business Manager Elize Feldman '88. "We are here to learn music." She adds, however, "Next year is going to be a major party."

Pitch tryouts test for this mix of music and fun. "We ask sundry questions that may or may not have any relevance to anything," notes Feldman. A joke is requested but not mandatory. "We want to see how you'll handle NOT having a joke," explains Feldman. "You can't just get up and say, 'Hee,



PHOTO BY LARRY MAGGIO

hee! Here's a song. 'You get put on the spot a lot.' And the pressure can start fast. Samantha Ho '88, who made the group this fall, remembers, "It was 'Hello, we're going to learn 8 songs in 3 weeks.'"

*"We're just one
writhing plethora
of titillating
flesh."*

—Charlotte
Brownlee '89

Pitch humor also sweetens life on the road. The members recall many examples of "Pitches in Hell": any bad concert. "I can't stand going to New Jersey," says Coleen Keating '88 of that tour. "It's always Pitches in Hell."

During one performance at the local Algonquin Club, described by several Pitches as "drunken, lecherous old boys," Parsons was grabbed by a member of the audience and swung around stage. Parsons kept her composure and the group finished the set. "We were sent nine bottles of wine from the men after the show," laughs Michelle Orr '88.

Such sexist treatment is rare, though. The Pitches enjoy their all-female status and Radcliffe sponsorship. The connection earns gigs at reunions and RUS events.

The affiliation can be confusing, when the Pitches open with "Hi, we're the Radcliffe Pitches from Harvard." "It sounds rather silly," notes Ho, who adds that "little old ladies sometimes get offended." In fact the name "Pitches" deliberately spoofs the "Radcliffe Bitches" stereotype—the group was once called the 'Cliffe Notes. "So many people think they're the first ones to notice we sound like 'The Radcliffe Bitches.' They think they're so original," says Parsons.

One Pitch audience was not so grateful to see the new, humor-added Pitch show. The Pitches' Sanders joke of reciting punch lines

from 14 consecutive dirty jokes ("Not every Harvard man has been in a Ferrari") totally bombed at Princeton. "They were appalled," says Julia McDonald '88. "I thought they were asleep. It looked like an orgo lecture out there," Parsons concurs. "Princeton is humorless."

However, devotees seem more the order of the day for the group. Besides receiving free glossies of their concert "From Alfie, your biggest fan," a backstage love note once asked out the entire alto section. "We used to go from charming to annoying," says Parsons. "In recent years we've learned to relax a little."

This past Spring Break, the Pitches added Bermuda to their list of conquered territories. "It rained all day and we drank all night," jokes Charlotte Brownlee '89. She also speaks of "Pitches on Wheels," where the girls rode mopeds in concert dress between gigs. "We'll go back there," promises Feldman. "It's small, amazingly fun, and the drinking age is 18." However, Orr hopes the group will sing more bar concerts to cut down on "trip expenses."

For some Pitches, the group is a stop on the way to stardom. Frettra Miller '84 is currently in Hollywood, making, among other things, a Kentucky Fried Chicken commercial. Some Pitches retain dual citizenship with the Collegium or do solo cabarets to satisfy all their musical urges.

The Pitches thrive on the transition from prim singers (who were once sent a pizza on stage from the Kroks) to the jazz-n-pizazz performers of today. However, not everyone applauds their climb. After one concert in Darien, Connecticut, older matrons in the crowd sent the Pitches a letter accusing them of "titillating the men." Their behavior was pronounced "disgraceful." "We're just one writhing plethora of titillating flesh," laughs Brownlee.

"I think it's great that we were 'titillating,'" defends Parsons. "We used to just be boring. Titillating people is much better than boring them."