

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Egidio "Gene" Morra

Teacher/Band Director



Egidio "Gene" Morra was born on April 4, 1906 in Panni, province of Foggia in southeast Italy. From the time he was very young, Mr. Morra was drawn to music. He first played professionally for his father's band at age eight. At age sixteen, Mr. Morra moved from Italy to Brooklyn, New York. He resumed his studies under Dr. Percy J. Starnes, Professor of Music at Columbia University. Mr. Morra received an honorary college degree in music from Columbia University.

In 1931, Mr. Morra was a featured soloist for Victor's Symphonic Band in Asbury Park and Gotham's Symphonic Band. During the mid 1930's, other engagements ensued with Giuseppe Creatore's New York State Symphonic Band and the Manhattan Concert Band under the direction of Anthony Giammatteo. During the 1946, 1947 and 1948 seasons, Mr. Morra was associated with the Charles Wagner Opera, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and the Sigmund Romberg Orchestra, where he held the position of first trombonist. Because of his great musical ability, he gained a seat on the NBC, Radio City and CBS symphonic orchestras during this time he also appeared on the Jackie Gleason Show.

From 1948 to 1958 Mr. Morra was the featured euphonium soloist with the Cities Service Band of America conducted by Paul Lavallo over the NBC radio network. During the summer months in the late 1950's, Mr. Morra appeared as guest soloist and conductor for various park concerts throughout New York City.

In addition to his roles in various orchestras, Mr. Morra was a writer member of ASCAP, many of Mr. Morra's compositions were published by Carl Fischer, Inc. His talents also included an arrangement of "Midnight in Moscow" and "La Boehme". He also wrote the music to the Power Memorial Academy Alma Mater. Most significantly, Mr. Morra wrote an "Ave Maria" which he dedicated to the late Pope Pius XII. For this he was bestowed with the Apostolic Blessing for himself and his family.

As an educator, Mr. Morra taught at Regis, Brooklyn Prep and the School of American Music before coming to Power Memorial Academy in 1960. His career as a teacher of musical theory and conducting "his boys" in their respective bands brought Mr. Morra his greatest degree of professional satisfaction.

Mr. Morra had the unique ability to bring out the very best musical talent in each individual student. His ability to play all instruments made it possible for him to write each band member's part according to their ability. The most significant accomplishment Mr. Morra achieved in his career at Power Memorial Academy was having the band play their annual concert at Lincoln Center. It always made Mr. Morra so happy when he would look in the audience and see the pride in the eyes of the parents of "his boys".

When referring to those Lincoln Center Concerts, we must never neglect to mention Mr. Morra's original arrangement for the Power Memorial Academy Band of "Midnight in Moscow". It became his and the band's signature performance. In addition to the Lincoln Center Concerts, Mr. Morra and the Power Memorial Band were regular participants in the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York City.

Mr. Morra and his wife, Carmela, were married in 1939 and were totally devoted to one another. After his retirement, Gene and Carmela continued to enjoy a very happy life together. Aside from his music, what brought Gene and Carmela their greatest joy was spending time with their beloved daughter, Mary, son-in-law Frank, and grandsons Anthony Gene and Frank Paul, Jr. Gene and Carmela Morra were devout Catholics. The best tribute that can ever be made to them would be to say that God, Family and Music defined their beautiful life together.