

Gene Pokorny

Gene Pokorny occupies the Arnold Jacobs Principal Tuba Chair (endowed by Christine Quast) of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He was appointed to the position by Sir Georg Solti in 1971 and began playing full-time with the Orchestra the following year.

Gene Pokorny is a proud native of Southern California, where he studied tuba there with Jim Reynolds, Larry Johansen, Tommy Johnson and Roger Bobo. After attending the University of Southern California in Redlands and graduating from the University of Southern California, he played in the Israel Philharmonic, the Utah Symphony, the Saint Louis Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. While in Los Angeles he played in several movie soundtracks including Jurassic Park and The Fugitive. Sir Georg Solti invited him to play with the Solti Orchestra Project at Carnegie Hall with his World Orchestra for Peace. Under Solti's direction, the World Orchestra for Peace performed at the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. After Solti, the orchestra has continued to perform in London, St. Petersburg, Moscow and Jerusalem all for charity. Performances are currently scheduled in Krakow and Stockholm for September, 2009. Former Chicago Symphony Orchestra music director Daniel Barenboim invited Gene to play in the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin production of Wagner's Ring cycle in 1997 and in that orchestra's Mahler marathon taking place in May 2009 at Carnegie Hall.

In appreciation for the five years he spent in the Utah Symphony over thirty years ago, he returned to that state in spring of 2010 as a part of his sabbatical from the Chicago Symphony and will be giving tuba recitals, music appreciation classes, master classes and clinics from the larger cities to universities to reservations in the outback.

In June 2000, he premiered John Stevens' Journey, Concerto for Contrabass Tuba and Orchestra, which was commissioned by and performed with the Chicago Symphony. He has given repeated performances of that piece with the CSO and other orchestras. In June 2008, he gave the premiere of John Stevens' Monument written in memory of his teacher, Tommy Johnson, in Cincinnati at the International Tuba Euphonium Association Conference.

When he isn't counting rests in the back row of the stage of Orchestra Hall, Gene may be seen playing with the Do-It-Yourself Sousa Band (third clarinet section) in addition to giving music appreciation classes to children through the Orchestra's education department. He was a consultant in Mim Harrison's book, Spoken Like a Pro, published by Levenger. He is on the Honorary Board of Directors of the International Women's Brass Conference.

He performs solo recitals internationally and, in addition to his three solo CDs available, he is currently recording of orchestral tuba parts played alone for the benefit of young tuba players ready

themselves for professional auditions. In the summer of 2006, a play-along CD/workbook on the Hip-Bone Music Publications label was released as a collaborative effort between Gene and the Rolling Stones trombonist Michael Davis. He wrote an exclusive chapter pertaining to orchestral auditions for the Tuba Source Book published by Indiana University Press. He has also written articles for the International Tuba Euphonium Association Journal and The Instrumentalist.

In the summer of 2008, he started an annual weeklong tuba seminar at the University of Redlands. In May 2006, he received the Outstanding Alumnus Award from the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music, and in March 2007, he received an honorary doctorate in music from the University of Redlands.

Gene is a member of the Union Pacific (Railroad) Historical Society and spends time as a "train watcher" (watching and chasing trains). He is a card-carrying member of The Three Stooges Fan Club ("victim of soicumstances!") and is an avid enthusiast of his good friend David "Red" Lehr, the greatest Dixieland sousaphonist in the known universe. Gene, his wife Beth Lodal (a musician who happens to have a real job) and their basset hounds, etc. (non-musicians who happen to have lives), regularly forage from their refrigerator, which is located in Forest Park, Illinois.