

ENGLISH HIGH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

English High School Alumnus: Lawrence (Berkowitz) Berk



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- Lawrence (Berkowitz) Berk:**
EHS Graduate Class of 1927
- * Born December 10, 1908, West End Boston, MA to Jewish immigrants from Russia and Poland.
 - * 1921 As a young boy of 13, Lawrence began moon-lighting as a musician in the Boston Clubs.
 - * 1927 Graduated from Boston English High School
 - * 1932 Graduated from MIT with an Architectural Engineering degree. With the scarcity of engineering jobs due to the great depression, Berk moved to NYC and took a job for the NBC radio network as a staff arranger. It was while in NYC that he began studying with teacher and music theorist, Joseph Schillinger.
 - * Early 1940's Berk returned to Boston and took a job with Raytheon.
 - * 1943 Became one of 12 teachers authorized in the Schillinger System.
 - * 1945 Berk opened Schillinger House on Newbury Street.
 - * 1954, Berk changed the name to **Berklee School of Music**, after his eldest son, Lee. Today it is the largest independent college of contemporary music in the world.
 - * 1979 Retired as President for the Berklee College of Music.
 - * Died, December 22, 1995 in Brighton, MA.



“I worked all the clubs, like the Yen Ho Restaurant on Huntington Avenue as a kid when I was attending English; there really wasn’t much to look forward to in music and I wasn’t interested in spending my life in clubs and theaters.”

– Lawrence Berkowitz

Before entering high school Berk played in the Wendell Phillips School orchestra. In order to help with family finances, he took a job at 13 years old as a pianist in a number of dance orchestras and performed regularly on the Ritz Carlton roof.

While attending **English High School** Berk’s talent was recognized by his teachers, and he often was asked to lead the school orchestra. Harry Carney, a classmate at **English**, was a jazz saxophonist and clarinetist who spent over four decades as a member of the Duke Ellington Orchestra (1910-1974).

“In the old days, it took a classical composer a year or more to complete a symphony. With this system, that time could be cut down to a week.” – Lawrence Berk



English High School continues the tradition with an excellent music and arts program. The program is the second largest in the district. In fact, EHS Music teacher, David Carkner, is a Berklee School of Music graduate.