Berklee College of Music presents

Larry Monroe's

RECUERDO
recuerdo

1. (reminiscencia) MEMORY
2. (souvenir) SOUVENIR; (regalo) memento, keepsake
Larry Monroe’s Odyssey: From Vermont to Valencia

By Bob Blumenthal

Alto saxophone is Larry Monroe’s instrument, but you won’t find his name among the personnel on many recordings, and while he has been an influence on an honor roll of fellow reed players (including Walter Beasley, Donald Harrison, Branford Marsalis, Donny McCaslin, and Miguel Zenon), it was not through woodwind instruction. Monroe is an educator, to be sure, but also an administrator, a diplomat, and ultimately a visionary. As he retires, after 50 years in the Berklee community, he can look back upon a career that has shaped the school as much as anyone not named Berk, Burton, or Brown.

The seeds were planted in Randolph, Vermont, where Monroe grew up in a music-loving family. “My father is from Boston, and his youth was devoted to swing music,” he recalls. “I owe my knowledge of music to him, and to his incredible collection of 78s. He really appreciated the great big bands—whether they were black bands or white bands didn’t matter—and he took me to see Gene Krupa when I was very young. You didn’t talk when you listened to music with him. Boston was his New York, a vibrant music scene. Mine, too.”

Early clarinet and saxophone lessons suggest a New England version of The Music Man. “A veteran of the Hal McIntyre and Gene Krupa bands would show up in a station wagon full of instruments, and for $2.50, 60 cents of which went toward purchasing one of the instruments, you got a lesson,” Monroe explains. “All of my friends had baseball cards, while I bemoaned the absence of jazz trading cards.”

It was during these years that Monroe got his first exposure to Berklee, when Herb Pomeroy’s big band with Charlie Mariano, Sam Rivers, and Alan Dawson appeared at a nearby college. Yet higher education was beyond the means of Monroe’s family, and a friend of his father’s suggested an alternative route into music through the band at the Westover Air Force base in Chicopee, Massachusetts. With the U.S. military engaged in no foreign conflicts in 1958, and the promise of educational support via the G.I. Bill at the end of his service, enlisting made a lot of sense to the aspiring alto saxophonist.
Monroe describes his soldier persona as “a typical jazz guy, showing disdain for military discipline whenever I could. When it came time to play, though, even the biggest pains sat first chair if they were the best musicians. Ultimately, I got stationed in Spain, where I had my first real jazz experience sitting in with Don Byas and other expatriate Americans.”

Discharged in 1962, Monroe had enough money through the G.I. Bill to enroll in Berklee’s summer semester program. After his funds were exhausted, the custodian in the dorm where he was living—who also happened to be from Randolph, Vermont—let Monroe remain through the Christmas holidays. “I spent every night during those months jamming with the community of students from Berklee, New England Conservatory, and Boston University,” he recalls. “All I wanted to do was play and write music.”

Monroe then tried to get by for a couple of years as a freelancer. “I got tired of being broke, and took a day job. I lost a couple of jobs when they found out that I was a jazz musician, since jazz musicians are supposed to be unreliable by definition. I finally got a job as an assistant bookkeeper at the Harvard Coop, where they were not concerned about my musical interests. I was writing music on my lunch breaks, playing sessions at night, and saving up the money I would need to re-enroll at Berklee.”

The Coop had other ideas for Monroe’s future, however. Recognizing his skill with numbers, his bosses offered to support his enrollment at Bentley College, where he could prepare for a career as a C.P.A. Then his wife intervened. “She convinced me that my heart had been in music, and that music was what I should pursue. So I returned to Berklee in 1965.”

The school, which was soon to become Berklee College of Music, was in the process of becoming a very different place. “John LaPorta arrived at Berklee to teach saxophone on the same day that I returned as a student,” Monroe explains, “and he totally revamped the school. Larry Berk had developed a program that took students with established musical proficiency on their instruments and enlarged their knowledge in areas such as arranging. John took Larry’s vision and expanded it to accommodate students who entered with various levels of skill. This is what turned the school into a major college.”
Monroe found the environment both inspiring and intimidating. “I was in awe of the Woodwind Department, with Joe Viola in charge,” he emphasizes. “Joe was a virtuoso, and he and Joe Allard at Juilliard had elevated the technique of playing the saxophone, an instrument that classical conservatories had ignored. And my classmates included real players, like Richie Cole and Pat LaBarbera. But I also loved arranging, so I decided to study and work with John LaPorta and Ted Pease—and Herb Pomeroy, of course. Herb was the pivotal guy who ensured that, for all of us, it was built around Duke Ellington.”

Berklee only offered three choices of majors at the time, and Monroe selected music education. “Even when I was a kid, I realized how difficult making a living in music would be, especially as the big bands were on their way out and I had no interest in jazz-rock or a pit band in Vegas. Herb, a player with great feeling and a great communicator, made the notion of teaching palatable. The plan was to graduate, teach privately, and maybe teach at Berklee.”

Yet Larry Berk and Robert Share, the school’s first administrator, had already realized Monroe’s potential as an educator. During Monroe’s senior year, Share suggested that he begin teaching courses on weekends and after his daily classes. When Monroe expressed a desire to complete his undergraduate degree, Share worked out a schedule in which Monroe could stretch his last year of courses over two years, and Berk persuaded state officials to accept Monroe’s Berklee teaching as the student teaching credit he had been scheduled to acquire at Wellesley High School. “I taught everything except saxophone, because Joe Viola, Charlie Mariano, and other great players had that covered,” Monroe says. “Like everyone else at the time, I taught all of the core subjects and had to create my own syllabus for each subject. It was a very collegial atmosphere. We all taught together and played together.”
Monroe and his wife still loved Spain, and found ways to visit at least once a year. By the time he graduated and became part of the full-time faculty, he had found an annual gig there substituting for Pedro Iturralde, an alto saxophonist who was among the first to record a fusion of jazz and flamenco music. These annual trips led to lifelong friendships and provided necessary inspiration. “Don Byas was still alive, and he was very encouraging. He would tell me to come early to his gigs and sit in, then show me specific things to work on before returning the following week.”

Upon returning from Spain after one holiday, Monroe was asked by Share to take responsibility for ear training in a school-wide attempt to standardize the curriculum. Suddenly Monroe the teacher became Monroe the methodologist. “Up to that point, we had been using classical solfeggio ear training books. We shifted to an approach that was song-based, in the music of Gershwin and Porter and more contemporary harmony. I spent the next Thanksgiving break writing two textbooks, and then two more over the Christmas holiday. They were handwritten and copied, and they remained the texts for the next 30 years.”

Other Monroe contributions to the Berklee curriculum included a course, Listening and Analysis, which taught students “to listen as musicians, not audience members.” In 1977, he took on added responsibility producing student concerts. “After Berklee obtained the Mass. Ave. property that became the Performance Center, Bob Share suggested that I organize some concerts. We went from what had annually been 40 concerts in the two small spaces in the 1140 Boylston building to what became 800 concerts by 1992.” That was the year in which Monroe ended his term as dean of performance, a title he acquired after Share’s successor, Warrick Carter, had restructured the school’s departments.

By the early 1980s, Monroe, Gary Burton, Ted Pease, and Larry Bethune had become something of a kitchen cabinet to the school’s top administrators, and they all became convinced of a need for more outreach. “Toshiko Akiyoshi and Sadao Watanabe were the first two Berklee scholarship students back in the ’50s,” Monroe explains, “because Larry Berk saw the international future of jazz. But Berklee had never followed up on that, and we realized that the school had to recruit more actively internationally. So Gary put an octet of faculty members together in 1985 for what we thought would be a concert tour plus one
When we arrived at what was in our minds a one-shot clinic, we found 125 students expecting a five-day course. So we had to create a curriculum on the fly."

A prospect this daunting would have intimidated many, but fit perfectly with Monroe’s philosophy of life. “I don’t just improvise music,” he insists. “I’m comfortable improvising all kinds of things, which means being prepared, taking everything in and processing it, then making decisions and adjustments spontaneously. The attitude had been driven home during my student years, when I learned that you could surprise yourself. John LaPorta had taught me that a prepared improviser didn’t need as much conscious control. It’s an approach I’ve taken with most things in life.”

It was shortly after the Japanese trip that Carlo Pagnotta, the president of Umbria Jazz, contacted Berklee about improving the educational component of its July festival in Perugia, Italy, a collaboration that Monroe administered over what is now a 27-year affiliation. Soon Monroe and Burton saw the potential for additional international partnerships. “We each knew schools with the potential to develop excellent programs, and we saw that a combination of such outreach plus recruiting would allow Berklee to strike the proper balance in U.S. and international enrollment.”

Beginning with partnerships in Tel Aviv, Barcelona, and Athens, Monroe took the lead in creating the Berklee International Network in 1993, a collective that eventually grew to 14 schools. At that point, Berklee president Lee Eliot Berk appointed Monroe vice president of the college’s newly formed Office of International Programs. It meant more time on the road and an opportunity to instill his improvisation-based philosophy around the world. “I told everyone who worked with me that we were not going to be the stereotyped ‘ugly Americans,’ that we would appreciate each culture and treat
everyone as individuals rather than simply ‘internationals.’ It fit my curious nature, although I was arrogant enough to insist that ‘the language of musical exchange is English.’ That simply made more sense than pretending that I could get by with a few words in pidgin Finnish or Greek.”

After more than a decade as Berklee’s most successful international ambassador who never won a music poll, Monroe was ready to retire. Then new president Roger H. Brown persuaded him that another new initiative required his expertise. “Roger had a vision of creating Berklee’s first international campus in Valencia, Spain, and I knew Spain and the international scene. So I gave up the International Program to become vice president for Academic Affairs/Berklee Valencia, and to organize the curriculum.” With the Valencia campus having accepted its first class last month, Monroe takes pride in his efforts and the concept of focusing on music of the entire Mediterranean region as the campus’s spiritual center. “For centuries, culture has flowed through the Mediterranean to the rest of the world. Spain is perfectly situated, both geographically and politically, to codify all of this Mediterranean musical culture, the same way that Berklee in Boston has approached American music.”

Through it all, Monroe has never lost his love of playing the alto sax, as anyone who passed his office before classes began each morning can attest. “I saw early on the possibility of drifting into administration and giving up playing, but that was not Larry Berk’s way. He wanted the school’s leaders to be practitioners, and while I was never going to be the next Cannonball Adderley, I always had a passion for playing. I knew that students appreciated teachers who could play, and that teachers responded to administrators who could play, so I showed up early every day and practiced. Lee Berk used to kid me that Miles Davis probably wasn’t going to call, but I had overheard Bill Pierce telling a student that, to be a player, regardless
of whether you had a gig or not, you had to play every day. So I never stopped.”

He also never lost his affection for the institution that has been his home for a half century. “I love the fact that, then and now, no one at Berklee complains when a student drops out to move on with his or her career. We were an incubator. We replaced ‘the street’ as an environment for growth with answers. Musicians need that environment, they need the company of other musicians, and they need answers. They need a musical haven, which is what Berklee was for me, and what Berklee does better than any other school in the world.” Thanks, in no small part, to the efforts of Larry Monroe.

**The Berklee of the mid-1960s** had just moved from its modest Newbury Street townhouses to 1140 Boylston Street, the former Hotel Bostonian. There, in what likely was the former closet of a larger hotel suite, the talented Larry Monroe and two other faculty leaders oversaw the Berklee core curriculum in ear training, theory, and harmony, while at the same time mentoring a generation of future Berklee faculty leaders who would become department chairs and program leaders in the years to come.

My usual arrival time in those years was between 7:00 and 7:30 a.m., and more often than not, my arrival was sweetened by the sweet strains of a saxophonist (Larry Monroe) practicing in the “stick-built” practice rooms behind the 1140 lobby elevator. There weren’t many who preceded my arrival at the office, and I was always delighted that Larry counted so musically among the number who did.

Larry always had that strong commitment to musicianship at the highest level. When we began the High School Jazz Festival, he was a leading voice for its educational identity, the participation of trained adjudicators, and prompt systematic feedback to the band director and the student musicians. These rigorously professional approaches were to serve Berklee well in the future decades of expanded summer and other outreach programs, where Larry took a major role in crafting Berklee in Los Angeles, Berklee at IAJE, and numerous other festival and conference programs. And his organization and leadership of the Professional
Performance Division demonstrated clear commitment to placing Berklee educationally at the forefront of what the students had to know and do in the musical seas in which they would need to swim.

Berklee on the Road became the nom de plume for the many outreach endeavors, and Larry was right in the middle of it all. They transitioned from national to international outreach, starting with our executing the educational component of the Umbria Jazz festival, and from there to Berklee in Japan, Berklee in Israel, and to Berklee in just about every corner of the world where music is a viable part of the culture. Integrating these many collaborations and relationships into a cohesive and productive Berklee International Network that has been a tour de force owes much to Larry Monroe. In all of these activities, Larry has been a key to organizing talented and supportive faculty teams and curricular approaches that resonate well with the needs and levels of the participants. The indisputable musical integrity of the many programs has been a major source of the high regard in which Berklee is held throughout the world.

President Roger H. Brown once commented to me that Larry soaked up international culture like a sponge, and it came as no surprise to me that Larry was asked to take a leading role in the establishment of Berklee’s Valencia campus and programs. From the saxophonist practicing behind the elevator to the sophisticated, urbane world traveler, Larry has traveled an amazing road, and both Berklee and international music education is far the better for it. We owe him a lot and wish him all the best.

Lee Eliot Berk
President Emeritus
As higher education goes, Berklee is a relatively new college. And during its first era, when our music school was small and just beginning to grow, there was a core group of musicians who left an indelible mark on the institution. These pioneers were teachers, performers, administrators, and innovators. They did it all. And if there is one individual who embodies all those talents at Berklee, it is Larry Monroe, who over his long career was first a teacher, and then the primary creator of the performance program. Without a doubt, the emphasis on real-life performing experience that is such an important part of the Berklee experience is very much due to Larry’s leadership and vision. Next, he led the effort to create the Berklee International Network, forming a community of Berklee-like music schools around the world. Alongside his leadership responsibilities, Larry also served in any number of important working groups that have helped guide Berklee to becoming the major institution that it is today. For me personally, working alongside Larry at Berklee over the years was always a learning experience and an inspiration.

Gary Burton ’62

I remember when I first met Larry Monroe. I was at Berklee for about two days, and I went to his office for something. As soon as I introduced myself, he commented on an audition tape I sent in. I don’t know why, but he thought it was pretty good. I soon found out that he, too, was a saxophone player, and a friendship was born.

Regardless of the types of problems I had—musically, negotiating the politics of academia, or personal—Larry was there for me, with that million-dollar smile. I didn’t stay at school very long, but whenever I came back to visit, the trip wasn’t complete
without a stop at Larry’s office. A few years later, we were able to spend time together in Perugia, Italy, where Berklee was starting the first of its very successful outreach programs.

I’m happy for Larry that he’s retiring and will now have time to spend doing things he wants to do, and not having to deal with brats like me anymore. But the experience for every future student at Berklee will be lessened because of his absence.

Thank you, Larry, for your guidance and wisdom over the years.

Branford Marsalis ‘80

We have gone a long way working together, you and I, and our friends from the Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music: Yehuda, Guri, Amikam, and Harry. It turned out to be the beginning of a wonderful relationship (like in the movies). You and us, Berklee and Rimon. You guided us, listened to us, helped us find our own way of doing things, and followed us through Rimon’s “growing up”—evolving into an institution. You have always been there for us, encouraging, sharing from your enormous experience of years of teaching, running programs, and being exposed to so many different schools in different cultures all over the world. You shared with us the dilemmas and changes Berklee went though over the years and gave us sound advice.

The joint work turned very fast into that wonderful friendship, including dear Rita and my Nadav, Greek vacations, Rita’s paella dinners, and dinners on the beach in Tel Aviv. Long talks about the need to listen and be able to adapt academic programs to developing interests, learning to listen to student and teacher, life experiences, different cultures you had come to know, politics, and so many other topics of mutual interest. It is all part of that deep and long relationship.
that we cherish and expect to continue. At Rimon you have always been an inspiration for us in your humble way of doing and accomplishing things. See you at Rimon very soon.

Lots of love,

Orlee and Nadav, Yehuda, Guri, Amikam, and Harry
Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music, Tel Aviv, Israel

Larry Monroe was the person in charge of the Berklee at Umbria Jazz Clinics for 27 years, from the first year of this exceptional collaboration between the Umbria Jazz festival and Berklee College of Music. During all these years we learned to appreciate his humanity and his great professionalism. The City of Perugia also gave him a certificate of appreciation for all his work with the clinics. Thank you, Larry!

Carlo Pagnotta
President
Umbria Jazz Clinics

and

Artistic Director
Umbria Jazz Festivals
Perugia-Orvieto
We all meet people in our lives who made an impact on us. I suspect Larry Monroe’s impact on many people, who befriended him or just had the chance to work with him, was one of the strongest in their lives. At least this is my case.

For the past 21 years, I have gathered memories of Larry to last a lifetime; Boston, Blagoevgrad, Italy, Japan, old men, black box, mountain house, Andros, Valencia, to mention only a few.

From my position at the Philippos Nakas Conservatory, a member school of the Berklee International Network that Larry created and developed, I was able to live and possess all this valuable capital in the form of facts and memories.

Larry is by nature innovative, decisive, and a pioneer in many ways, due to his clear thinking and vision for the global impact of music. He has put his whole life into this vision, working day and night (literally!). If you are able to follow him and his energy for more than three consecutive days and nights, you have some chance with him.

Thank you, Larry, for your inspiration, commitment, and help. Thank you for being a friend to me in so many meaningful ways.

Congratulations for your decision to continue serving your passion for music from a different level.

To the next Mykonos cup!

**Leonidas Arniakos**
Managing Director
Philippos Nakas Conservatory
Program

Night People
L. Monroe
Arr. L. Monroe

Wait and See
J. Kelly
Arr. L. Monroe

Mitigating Factors
L. Monroe
Arr. L. Monroe

Suite For Jazz Orchestra, Mvt. II
Conducted by T. Pease
T. Pease
Arr. T. Pease

Autumnessence
L. Monroe
Arr. L. Monroe

Things That Go Bump in the Night
L. Monroe
Arr. L. Monroe

Cannon
L. Monroe
Arr. L. Monroe

Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most
T. Wolf/F. Landesman
Arr. L. Monroe

The Man I Love
G. Gershwin/I. Gershwin
Arr. L. Monroe

‘S Wonderful
Featuring D. McElroy
G. Gershwin/I. Gershwin
Arr. L. Monroe
Change Partners
*Featuring D. McElroy*

I. Berlin
*Arr. L. Monroe*

So in Love
*Featuring D. McElroy*

C. Porter
*Arr. L. Monroe*

Recuerdo

L. Monroe
*Arr. L. Monroe*

**Musicians**

**Trumpet**

Jerry Cecco
Ken Cervenka
Charlie Lewis
Scott de Ogburn
Jeff Stout
George Zonce

**Trombone**

Jeff Galindo
Robert Krahn
Bob Pilkington

**Alto Saxophone**

Donald Harrison, *special guest*
Larry Monroe
Jim Odgren

**Tenor Saxophone**

Greg Badolato
Dino Govoni
Daryl Lowery
Bill Pierce
Baritone Saxophone

Ben Whiting, *special guest*

Piano

Consuelo Candelaria-Barry
Tony Germain
Russ Hoffman
Matthew Nicholl

Organ

Dennis Montgomery III

Bass

Dave Clark
Danny Morris
John Repucci
Oscar Stagnaro

Guitar

Larry Baione
Mick Goodrick
Jim Kelly
Rick Peckham
Mark White

Drums

Kenwood Dennard
John Ramsay
Ron Savage

Percussion

Eguie Castrillo
Larry Monroe’s *Recuerdo*

Producer
Larry Monroe
Series Producers
Tom Riley and Rob Rose

**Program Credits**
Writer/Editor
Bob Blumenthal
Designer
Kevin Levesque
Photographs
Berklee and Monroe archives

Performance Center Crew
Cathy Horn, Brad Berger, Jennifer DeCicco, Reggie Lofton, Kevin Grady, Lindsay Yost, Ed Libertore, Stephanie Planchart, Krystal Pegram

I have had the pleasure to work for Berklee's three presidents—Lawrence Berk, Lee Eliot Berk, and Roger Brown—and I thank them for the opportunity to be a part of Berklee's growth and development over the past 42 years. I can honestly say that I never presented them with an idea that truly mattered to me for which I did not receive their full support. For this I will be forever grateful—Larry Monroe

**Very special thanks** to the many Berklee musicians who performed alongside Larry Monroe throughout his career, and who have generously given their time and musicianship to honor Larry at tonight’s concert. Our heartfelt thanks to Larry for all his invaluable contributions to making Berklee the best music college in the world, and for personally enriching all of our lives along the way.—*Tom Riley and Rob Rose*

You can read more reminiscences about Larry Monroe, or contribute your own at Berklee.edu/morroeblog