

# Anne Gefell



EILEEN BARROSO

**WHO SHE IS:** Academic Department Administrator, Music

**YEARS AT COLUMBIA:** 16

**WHAT SHE DOES:** Anne Gefell manages the Department of Music's office and its staff of four in Dodge Hall. On any given day, she handles payroll, talks with prospective students and their parents, troubleshoots technology issues in the classrooms, investigates leaks and other building problems, and interviews candidates for staff and work-study positions in the department. As the academic year winds down, Gefell is already busy preparing next year's budgets, pre-registration and courses, and monitoring the faculty hiring processes.

Gefell is also a part of the seven-member steering committee of academic department administrators of Arts & Sciences at the University. And she manages the Alice M. Ditson Fund, a grant program that supports performances and recordings of works by American composers, and sits on the advisory board of the department's journal, *Current Musicology*. Founded in 1965, it is the oldest musicology journal run by graduate students in the country.

**BEST PART OF THE JOB:** Gefell grew up around music and the arts. Her mother was a singer and music teacher who also played the violin, and Gefell sang, played the harp and piano, and acted in high school plays. "This is a wonderful opportunity to support dedicated students of music, and it's broadened my appreciation of the arts," she said.

**ROAD TO COLUMBIA:** Gefell, 56, grew up in Rochester, N.Y. and received a B.A. honors degree in social behavior at Queens University in Ontario in 1978. She worked in social services and then environmental research along the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, where her parents owned a cottage. In 1978, Gefell co-founded Save the River, an organization that protects the Upper

St. Lawrence River, and served on its board for 11 years. After moving to New York City in 1985, she reinvented herself as an administrative assistant at law firms and investment banks. In 1995, she joined Columbia's Center for Oral History and two years later became the music department's graduate student coordinator. She has been the department's academic administrator since 2007.

**MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT:** In September 2001, Gefell was asked to participate in Professor Ian Bent's Sonic Glossary project—an online resource that explains music through voice, photos, graphics and song. Gefell was to read a part in Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire: The Melodramas* in the Computer Music Center's recording studio in Prentis Hall. Days after the terrorist attacks, the show went on. Gefell initially felt "disrespectful for doing something fun," she confessed. "But it turned out to be cathartic. We needed to continue on, and this was an opportunity to create art and support one another."

**IN HER SPARE TIME:** Gefell, who has taken graduate courses in American Studies at Columbia and lives in Morningside Heights, sings soprano in two community choirs and helps coordinate the Red Harlem Readers, a literary group that performs every Sunday at Indian Café on Broadway and 108th Street.

Her family still owns that cottage on the St. Lawrence, which the avid swimmer visits frequently with her five siblings and their spouses and 14 nieces and nephews. In the 1980s, she rowed 150 miles down the river to draw awareness to its damaged ecosystem. In a related project, she created an oral history project and photo essay—*River Recollections: Portraits of Life Along the St. Lawrence River in the 20th Century*—that was exhibited at MoMA P.S. 1 and was later published by Cornell University.

—By Meghan Berry