

# A FINE day at the office

The classic adventures of WEIU-FM's broadcast music specialist  
 Story by Christy Melvin Staff writer Photos by Anna Betzelberger



Above and Below: Elaine Fine make adjustments on the sound board while introducing music in the studio of WEIU-FM.



The room is filled with the soft sounds of classical music as Elaine Fine switches the CD in the player at the radio board of WEIU-FM. Fine works from a table with broadcasting equipment on it. The rest of the control room is comprised of a single chair and a filing cabinet filled with classical CDs.

It is in this plain room that Fine, broadcast music specialist, spends her mornings. She has been the classical programming director at the station for more than 10 years and is on the air from about 7:30 a.m. until noon.

The station was closed for about six months during construction of the radio station rooms in Buzzard Building. Fine worked for WEIU-TV doing fund raising and press releases.

Fine said everyone at the station should be moved back into Buzzard this month. She said her office is finished except for some furniture that has not yet arrived.

A big part of Fine's job at the station is training student operators to work there. "It's great when they show up. We get students from every department, and I like it when the students are really interested in the music and working at the station," she said.

Fine's love of music is nothing new, as she has been around musicians all her life. Both her mother and father, June and Burton Fine, are musicians. Her mother plays the flute and her father is a violinist with the Boston Symphony.

"I learned at a young age to listen critically and to listen well," Fine said, crediting her father as a big influence on her work.

Fine's parents sent her to violin lessons when she was seven. At 14, she began playing the flute, which she continued until about four years ago when she took up the violin again.

After graduating high school, Fine moved from her hometown of Boston to New York to attend the Juilliard School and further her education by majoring in

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-Elaine Fine

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music performance, she said.

"After I applied, I had to audition with my (flute)," said Fine. "I knew one of the judges because he was my mother's music teacher, so I figured out what he was about. I was a very calculating child."

Fine said she studied a tape of the judge playing his instrument, which she studied. While she played the same song at the audition, she put a little something extra wherever she thought he had. Her tactics must have paid off because she was accepted to the school without really being aware of how competitive the school was. In 1995, the school accepted only 842 students.

Following her graduation in 1980, Fine said she gave away all her possessions except for a box of music. She went to live in Graz, Austria, to play with an orchestra there.

From Graz, she moved on to a competition in Budapest, but ended up in the small town of Schladming in the middle of the Austrian Alps. There she taught flute and recorder lessons and began playing the violin again. She left Schladming when she realized she would be playing for the funerals of "war veterans," who were Nazis.

"I'm Jewish," she said. "It was a personal and moral problem."

Fine then went to Vienna, where she and a friend played music on the street for money. "That was really fun," said Fine. "I also ended up practicing the recorder and working."

In 1981, Fine received a telegram from a friend in Hong Kong telling her there was a job opening at an orchestra there and to come immediately, said Fine.

"(Hong Kong) was pretty crazy," said Fine. "It was a very big, very commercial city with a mixture of the

East and West, old and new, rich and poor."

Fine said she caught some kind of virus while she was in Hong Kong. She was ill when she auditioned for a job, and she was not hired. She was in need of money, and her visa was set to expire at any time. At a party, she met a music critic for the South China Morning Post, Keith Anderson.

"He was living with friends who just had a new baby," she said. "The school the wife taught music for was desperately in need of a replacement for a few months while she was on maternity leave."

Fine got the job, and now Keith Anderson's son runs a record company that sends WEIU-FM free CDs of new recordings every month.

"My experiences bleed into my life now," said Fine. "When I saw Keith's name on the CD, I wrote to him to see if it was the same one I knew in Hong Kong. He wrote back saying he was."

From Hong Kong, Fine returned to Boston and met her husband, Michael Leddy. The two married in 1985. When he was hired by Eastern's English department one year later, they moved to Charleston and she began volunteering at WEIU-FM.

"When I started volunteering at the station, I was pregnant with my daughter," she said. "I told them I would continue working at the station if they would start paying me, which they did."

Fine said she used to bring her two children, Rachel and Ben, to work with her when they were babies.

Now the Fine household is filled with musicians. Rachel, now 10, has started to take violin lessons and Ben, now 7, is taking cello lessons. Fine's husband also plays jazz and classical music on guitar.

After she settled down with her new family and new job, Fine said she switched instruments again to pick up the violin and eventually the viola.

"That is something I never thought I would have the courage to do," said

Fine. "It's like getting married all over again."

Fine took violin lessons again from Tom LeVeck of Mattoon and learned the viola on her own. LeVeck played with the Dallas Symphony and the U.S. Military String Quartet before playing in the St. Louis Symphony for 21 years. LeVeck also studied at Juilliard.

In addition to her job at the radio station, her time with her children and her three-hour practice each day, Fine also makes time to practice and perform with the LeVeck String Quartet she is involved in.

"We play about 20 to 30 weddings and receptions a year, and we do concerts," said Fine. "It's really the most amazing thing that has happened to me."

The LeVeck String Quartet is made up of Thomas LeVeck, first violinist and Fine's violin teacher; Terry Coulton; second violinist, Susan Anderson, cellist; and Fine on the viola.

Fine also finds the time to write for music publications, including: American Record Guide, a publication for classical music recordings for which she writes reviews and Maud Powell Signature, a magazine dedicated to women in music, for which she has written profiles about women.

In addition, she is now writing music for a WEIU-TV television documentary about Eva Kar, a surviving twin who was experimented on by Dr. Joseph Mengele at Auschwitz in Germany.

Fine Also speaks about once a month at her children's school, Mark Twain Elementary School, for the Masterpiece Program. The program consists of four or five speakers who teach students of all grades about fine art.

"We talk about famous artists and their works," said Fine. "It ties together with the other crazy things I do."