



# VIOLA

## Conflicts

by Annette Caruthers

Every now and then I bring up an issue I think may be controversial. So far I have not had the negative reaction I imagined, so I'm doing it again with this article: What belongs in the province of the school orchestra/strings teachers and what belongs to the private teachers? How can we coordinate better for the students' benefit?

I have personally dealt with issues of teachers not agreeing on how to set students up for best tone and progress (meaning how to hold bow and instrument, how to make motions needed, etc.), or introducing techniques the other teacher thinks the student isn't ready for, as well as blaming the other teacher for problems a student may have.

Ex: someone who was a brand new student in my studio, never having had private lessons before, and the teacher at school was criticizing me for the student's lack of knowledge in several areas.

Ex: two students I have currently to whom I recently introduced basic shifting, and the teacher at school is teaching it in a completely different way and expecting them to be able to play school music with lots of upper positions. One student was in tears trying to do what the school teacher expected.

I think we could all be helped by having someone or multiple people, networking on this type of issue because it will become more common as school teachers are being required to meet national standards with their orchestras and are feeling the pressure to teach everything at school. I'm sure they'd love it if every student had private

lessons, as it would make their jobs easier... and their orchestras sound better...but it won't happen anytime soon, and in the meantime we're all struggling to compromise when there's not agreement between teachers on how to go about things. Not every student learns at the same rate, and schools can only offer so many orchestras, which contributes to the issue, for sure!!

Another issue is what to do with students who have made great progress in private lessons and don't "fit in" with a school group made mostly of students with no private help. The youth symphonies tend to get these students, and then the school orchestras suffer as the best ones drop out of the school program. When I was a student, the youth symphony in my city required students to remain in their school orchestra. Is this something we all want to discuss?

Another recent problem for me: pit orchestras for musicals in the high schools are frequently scheduled on a very demanding schedule, without working up to the added playing time, which interferes with the student's ability to practice anything else, often interferes with the student's making it to lessons, and can lead to injuries. How to resolve this with private lessons? I am happy to help students with their orchestra music, even pit orchestra music; but there does have to be time for them to work on music chosen specifically to address techniques the students need for their own progress, and some students need to be recording for applications of various types, which they are not able to do on top of the musical's

demands. How can schools and private teachers work out a schedule that will work for everyone? Maybe an exception could be made for seniors in the fall so they are not expected to play in the musical right then?

These are just the issues I've had lately, and I bet others can come up with many more. I remember a presentation by Claudette Laureano a few years back that really got some discussion going during the Fall Workshop, much of it concerning parts without bowings marked, or private teachers not wanting to help in lessons with school music they felt was not on the student's level, but as a group we have not established a regular forum for these issues or any way to work them out. I'd love to see a liaison willing to tackle private teacher/school teacher issues, or a committee of 2 or 3 involved teachers. What does anyone else think? You can email me at [annettemusician@gmail.com](mailto:annettemusician@gmail.com) or send comments to *String Notes* editor Faith Farr, [faith@farrpublications.com](mailto:faith@farrpublications.com).

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