Autumn Instrumental Program Synopsis

Yuba college symphonic band. Jeffery Morse

Conductor Jennifer Aldridge.

I read the introduction about Maestro Aldridge and was surprised at a couple of things. One; this last summer she attained her Masters Degree in Music Conducting. I didn’t even know that you could get a Masters Degree in conducting so I was pleasantly surprised. Further to find he to be of a young and vibrant demeanor was also nice, it made my job a little more pleasant as for the next two hour I was to pretty much watch every move she made. She amazed me even further when I looked at her influences and artist that she has performed along side of they began.. James Galloway, ok well he is a professional flutist and that would be someone with a flutist background might use as a role model. Next in the list was John Williams. For me this is a pinnacle as I would love to one day do some movie scores myself. The list continues with the Boston brass, ok again I might expect that, and the it began to turn. The next listing was earth wind and fire. Ok how is this possible? She’s so young and I don’t even think that they are even alive anymore. However, the last listing is the one that dropped my jaw –System of a down. How in the world did she play with them, the downs Alternative in your face dark grunge rock- is so set apart from anything that would require any instrument in a symphony or brass section, much less a conductor. I am not a fan of system of a down I find their music to dark for my tastes and the topics to crude and anti—everything, and have know idea how they could have been on this list; it made me curios.

**Fanfare.** Tuning began about 7:30 then the 1srt chair came out and the band began to tune, three time pitches were given and the tuning was complete. I did notice that when she came out many of the audience mistakenly applauded thinking she was Mrs. Aldridge.

The conductor came on stage, She went directly to her podium, no explanation was offered. She done the preparatory gesture, it was hard from me to see anything other than the get ready pose. She cued the Drums with her left hand and the music is on it’s way. I noticed right away a pattern I had only seen very little of, like an S up and down. My instructor once in a while done a little of this when using the One pattern so I figured she must have been doing that. During the song I noticed that Mrs. Aldridge used her left hand a lot, but always reverted back to just the baton, I thought that this was a very good way to make sure that the availability of using the left hand to add dynamics was always there. During this song I notices several other unique conducting skills that I have not even thought of, here’s a list. She used her left hand to cue. She used her left had to point at specific sections when cueing. She opened her left had to cue cymbals. Some of the stuff that she did that I did recognize was the use of both hands for dynamics, although hers were much more extravagant. She mirrored with her left hand also to show dynamic changes, however both hand were in that strange S pattern. She did this pattern throughout the song which made it difficult to tell what real pattern she was doing. My instructor does something like this but only on occasion, while with this conductor it was her default style. After the song the conductor explained the night of music ahead and the piece they just done.

In the following I will be less detailed as to limit the size of this paper.

**Simple Gifts for Shaker**s. I moved to get a better look at the conductor. She continued to use that S shaped style, I think I Picked out a meter of cut time. At the first crescendo she slowly raised her left hand, and didn’t change the dynamics on the baton at all. Then an open hand to a to a down hand to bring in the wood winds. Next major thing was a brass crescendo for this she didn’t use her left hand but done a big twist with her baton In a forte movement. I also noticed that her staccatos were very little and sharp, very accurate.

The next movement was very legato. Still her main style was the S style that I know dub the “Flying S”. Meter seemed to be the cut time still, I’m not really listening to the music to find meter but looking at the conductor. The next dynamic was a big hush with her left hand and then a big end.

The was a tempo change in this next movement. The meter seemed to have changed as well to a 4/4 time and I think I could see some of that pattern through the flying S. In this movement another change I can now clearly see rhythmic breathing motions. On the sustained areas of this song I also noticed her opening her left hand, to add to this she began to show dynamics much more on the baton in the size of her pattern. I also noticed that she used an open left hand with wiggling fingers to cue the snare drum. At one point the conductor employed parallel mirroring, which in the flying S was an odd site.

New song Was a **Phillip Sousa song. Manhattan Beach**. The meter was a march in cut time. The conductor done some extravagant motions here; in parallel mirrored motion she threw her arms left, on one big crescendo and them right with another in perfect time and I thought it really added dynamic. In some of the staccato’s she drew her elbow back and made stabbing motions with the baton. On another occasion she put finger to her lips to hush the brass who were to loud for that part. In this song she also done nothing, I mean there were parts in the song where she just stood still, baton not moving or anything.

**Fields of clover**. Legato from the conductor, in a 3 pattern. She used a regular mirror pattern to hold the legato, cued the snare with her left fingers, there was a sub. piano that she showed by instantly going smaller. Her big movements for Crescendo were text book here just like we learned them. After that Mrs. Aldridge done some more unique stuff, she brought her elbow back, pulled her arm next to her body, and in a small tight motion lead the score from there for at least three or four measures. And then another new one, she raised her left hand as if to give the OK sign and cued the bells by opening and closing her finger and thumb and then dropped her had across her torso holding her stomach, for a second I wandered if she had stomach pain.

Next was the John Williams peace. **The March from the movie 1941**. From her I’m going to almost just list the things to save space. The conductor cued woodwinds with her left; used mirroring on and off. User her index finger to point and cue the brass; Dynamics were very noticeable, she ended with the staccato ending that I was supposed to do in my latest video and didn’t. One thing she was doing here I noticed was the flying S started to be a dance move for her. Her body began to move in like fashion, alternating between her body and the baton. I found this amazing as she was conducting in stiletto heals. Next the **First Suite for a Band**. Meter was 2 by this time I concluded that the flying S was making it almost impossible for me to distinguish pattern. Moment one I seen her communicate and ok sign with someone in the band. She open and closed her left hand to show tempo. Her piano was very small and exact, and she held up two fingers to signal the woodwinds. In the last movement she leaned forward to quiet the band then stood straight and tall for forte, also here her pattern was lower for piano and higher in the air for forte. The release was very good.

For the Jazz section I’m going to continue in the simplified style I started but, I will also condense it all songs in one paragraph. She adjusted her music stand to waist high, she conducted with her hands. When the was a solo part the conductor stepped aside to allow the soloist to be the center of attention. The conductor mirrored regular and in parallel while swaying with her body. At one point she hushed the band with two hand downward together. She held some sustains with left hand held out palm up. At one point while hushing with her left she pointed with her right, on another she pointed with both hands. She signaled a pause with two clinched fists. The conductor also conducted the audience by turning and clapping to signal applause from them. Most of the songs she began by counting off herself in this jazz section save one, the third to last she signaled by inhaling a big breath, this song was conducted more like the symphonic band also. She flapped her hand separately drawing her fingers back and then extending them to signal the count. At one point the band fell apart, they lost the song, she gave a look toward the drummer and they soon grabbed the temp. On the end of the second to the last song she held her finger up to her stomach hiding them from the audience and counted down 4-3-2-1 with her fingers for the end. All in all she was less strict in the jazz. Also I guess once you know what you’re doing you can use stylistic motions that are otherwise a big no no. I loved watching a professional at work. On another note I found the music especially good in the symphonic band. I enjoyed the mixture of tones and enjoyed seeing my classmates performing. The work and dedication that went into this is staggering. I love the French horn and the sounds the brass mixing. I was amazed that there were no strings that must be a different type of symphony. I guess I have a lot to learn