

Getting to know you

By David Gordon Duke



Vancouver audiences were introduced to two strong new musical personalities courtesy of the VSO this week: violinist Rachel Barton Pine and conductor Giancarlo Guerrero.

Pine was soloist in Saint-Saëns' *Third Violin Concerto*, a piece that's the epitome of a "well made" concerto tailored for a particular soloist—in this case the Spanish violinist Pablo de Sarasate. Sarasate was known for brilliance and agility, not for an especially large tone. Pine's got brilliance, agility and tone, plus a big helping of presence, all of which combined to make a memorable performance.

Saint-Saëns' orchestration will make any soloist with the requisite technique sound flashy enough. Pine knocks out effect after effect with precision, but can also create moods of quiet subtlety—witness the passage that underpins violin harmonics with clarinet at the close of the lovely pastoral slow movement.

While Guerrero was a sympathetic accompanist in the concerto, he was even better leading Respighi's *Botticelli Triptych* for large chamber orchestra. Respighi's neo-Renaissance confection may be sugary, but it's sophisticated as well: heard live, it's enchanting, with all the more shimmer in the Orpheum's new, improved acoustic. Conducting *sans* baton, Guerrero was crisp and controlled but always prepared to add a dash of appropriate sentiment.