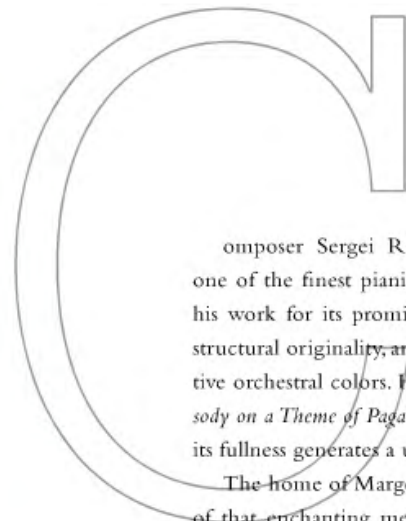




orchestrated simplicity

Story and Photography by Nancy McGregor



omposer Sergei Rachmaninoff was celebrated as one of the finest pianist of his day. Critics applauded his work for its prominent lyricism, significant scope, structural originality, and a tonal palette of rich distinctive orchestral colors. His eighteenth *Variation of Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* is a very simple melody but its fullness generates a universal recognition of beauty.

The home of Marge and Norm Agin is reminiscent of that enchanting melody and has that same quality of originality. Set amid 24 acres in Palmetto Bluff, the structure, rambling with its own harmony, is perfectly in tune with the natural world that surrounds it. Built in 2008, this Lowcountry style house with its exposed rafters beneath the roof overhang, was designed to bring the outdoors in. Over the last few years, it almost seems as if nature has leaned in more closely just to hear parts of its song a little better.

The Agins are world travelers with an eye for the sights, sounds, and patterns that they bring back home again in textiles, sculptures, books, and artwork. The couple's winding trail has been long, and has wended from California to a stop in Colorado—where their love of western art was born—to the Lowcountry.





THE LOWCOUNTRY is famous for long, tree-lined roads, one of which leads to this home in Palmetto Bluff. This 20,000 acre development has set a benchmark for success in preserving, protecting, and conserving the exquisite landscape, environment, and the surrounding maritime forest. It's a place of unique features, including the people who choose to live there along with the homes they build.

The home's interior designer, Dean Huntley, worked with architect Wayne Windham and builder Robert Tanner from the outset of the project. Dean says it was like the West came riding into the Lowcountry. It fell to her to gather the art, sculpture, carvings, and the stories attached to each, and carefully place them so the blend made sense. The team all worked together in the design and layout, which meant the interior design wasn't an afterthought laid over the bones and bare walls of the house. Instead, the finished look of the interior was "built in" from the outset.



Their combined efforts resulted in a house that won the 2009 Aurora Awards for Best in Show, Best in the State and Best Custom Home over \$3 million. It also garnered the Best in American Living Award that year as the Best in the Region, and Best One of a Kind Custom Home Over 6,500 Square Feet.

The scope of the house includes 6 bedrooms and 7.5 bathrooms, plus a single story guesthouse with three bedrooms and a mini-kitchen. Above the four-car garage is a small apartment that contains another bedroom and small kitchen.

Yet, Norm Agin is correct when he calls it an uncomplicated house. He sums up the feeling by modestly saying, "We use the porches a lot." Marge, a renowned photographic artist, says that this is the way she sees the world. It's a home that always makes room for their dogs and was built as much for their comfort as any of the family of friends who visit for their Black Labradors are family, after all. In fact, special bins for their ubiquitous tennis balls are carefully stationed on the porches.

Over all, the house's comfortable simplicity feels refined and "lived-in" at the same time. The Agins have collected paintings, sculptures and mixed media images of dogs and horses (Marge was once an avid rider) from artists the world over. And Marge's personal photographic work adorns the walls of many a room including the windowed gallery corridor leading to her office. Interminable days were spent agonizing over the precise lighting and proper placement of all these pieces so that the collections would fit naturally with the movement of the home. Nothing is stark, jarring, or out of place. Nothing demands to be looked at while each component actively does its part to create the ever-flowing harmony.





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The arrival to the home is
as unpretentious as the
rest of the property.

An unpaved road crunches along a quiet meadow offering glimpses of the house through the trees. Peeping through the lush front gardens, the front porch opens into a simple entry adored with a finely carved wooden saddle to the great room where a wall of windows illustrates the natural world and bathes the room in light. Nature remains a big part of living in this special place, so the walls don't seek to enclose and hide. Instead, they embrace and protect.

The well-appointed kitchen, done in cream tones with a diamond tile backsplash, is a chef's playground with a walk-in wine room. Cabinets warble with wavy glass while a natural wood floor never minds a scratch from a dog's paw.

The warm wood flooring extends to the first floor master suite, with separate "his and her" matching bathrooms. Her ensuite is fitted with a contemporary claw-footed tub perfectly situated to overlook the back garden with its heat-resistant plants.

Upstairs, a guest suite with a small game room contains a sitting room nee library that overlooks the main floor and provides yet another astounding view of the naturalized garden.

The garden itself tempts with a fire pit, a bubbling water feature, and a comfy seating area. There is something else, however, that isn't found in most backyards. Marge Agin has a train yard. Three remote controlled trains busily patrol the extensive tracks through two covered wooden bridges and over several suspension bridges weaving through the flowers and trees. The trains, an unexpected delight, come complete with horns and lighted headlamps.

Around the side yard, past another fountain and a free-standing guesthouse a bench sits beside a tranquil marsh. In that spot, soft music again seems to fill the air and there, near one of the paths, is a full-size, verdigris "Corinthian Bell" wind chime whose job is simply to catch the sea breeze and add the final notes to complete this home's orchestrated simplicity.



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