

# CAPITOL FILE

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HOME RULE: EMINENT DOMAIN

## A Conservatory of One's Own

A Victorian-era residence in Georgetown comes alive with a custom conservatory and interiors.

BY ROBERT PAHNKE



### A Conservatory Of One's Own

Bifold doors open to the Marston & Langer conservatory added to Pamela and Richard Hinds' Georgetown home.

Photographs By  
STACY ZARIN-GOLDBERG

WASHINGTON, DC, is a hub of architectural and home-design excellence. Whether your project involves saving a historic building, boosting the eco-quotient of your house, or expanding your square footage, the resources are myriad and close at hand.

For attorney Richard Hinds and his wife, Pamela, expansion of their four-story Georgetown townhouse was the order of the day, with the goal of gaining a dining area where it would be, for all intents and purposes, eternal spring. "We'd been thinking about adding a conservatory for some time," Richard says. "While we like to eat dinner outside, the time frame for being able to do that without sweltering or freezing is only a few months in the spring and fall. We thought it would be great to have a garden room we could use all year." The conservatory would also add horizontal living space to their otherwise vertical house.

After extensive consultations with architect George Stavropoulos, the couple launched a yearlong project to incorporate a glass-encased conservatory on the ground level and to dig below the house to add a media room. The project ended up involving a general contractor (Richard took on this capacity), an interior designer, a landscape architect, and a glass-

building specialist as well.

It was during the exploratory phase that the Hindses learned that most companies specializing in conservatories are based in England, where these structures are popular additions to houses. Among those builders was Marston & Langinger, which builds conservatories and orangeries in the UK and ships them worldwide. “I found that Marston & Langinger provided the most flexibility because their work is all custom,” Richard says. “They took George’s ideas and came up with detailed construction plans using their own custom-designed windows, doors, and materials.” The owners were pleased with the company’s specification of mahogany for all wooden components as well as double-glazed windows with true divided lights.

Stavropoulos approved the final conservatory design, and Marston & Langinger coordinated the shipment and six-week installation of their glassed-in room with its bifold French doors. Looking back on his role as general contractor, Richard says, “I soon learned that I had undertaken quite a lot, but when all was said and done, I was able to get the project done and done right, so mission accomplished.”

Pamela was enthusiastic about the technology employed by Marston & Langinger, which included “a state-of-the-art skylight with doubleglazed, tinted, self-cleaning glass that, combined with the electrically operated shades, minimizes the heat in the summer,” she says. During the renovation, she and her husband added a bonus feature: a secondary door that leads to the new lower level.

“I really like that concealed door,” says Robert Pahnke, principal of Robert Pahnke Interiors, who worked with the Hindses to select Paris Ceramics limestone flooring, as well as lighting and furnishings from various sources, including Lewis Mittman. “I design to suit clients’ needs,” says Pahnke, who pronounced the conservatory “magical.” He added, “We wanted to keep it very simple and bring the outside in and the inside out.” With all the glass overlooking the raised garden designed by DCA Landscape Architects, it was easy to get the feeling of being outdoors. A fountain designed by the landscape architects and built by Corinthian Stoneworks & Design underscores the serenity along the back of the residence, which the owners say is now a much-used space.

For interior walls, “art makes any project,” according to Pahnke, who enjoys selecting artwork with clients. In this case, the Hindses already had quite an art collection, including portraits by Richard’s mother, the late Patricia Tate, whose painting of Walter Gropius, originator of the Bauhaus school of design, is in the National Portrait Gallery’s collection. The couple sometimes rotate art between their Georgetown and Annapolis homes, bringing a painting by Washington Color School artist Jacob Kainen from their home in Annapolis to hang above the loveseat in the new conservatory, for instance. Tate’s portraits in the adjoining dining room are in full view from every angle. A Gideon Tomaschoff hangs above a George III fiddleback mahogany breakfast table (circa 1790) and the George III mahogany library armchairs (circa 1770).

“Pam and I both like Robert’s interior design and choice of furniture, fabrics, and paint colors,” Richard says. “They keep the light, airy feel we wanted in the conservatory, [and they] blend well with the English antique chairs and table that we purchased for the conservatory before it was built.” Like many Georgetown townhouses in which the original flow of the floor plan is not always optimal, the location of the Hindses’ kitchen and dining room on the ground level meant that after dining, guests had to retreat upstairs to the living room and library. Now the conservatory provides an adjoining space in which to entertain after a meal, with overflow capacity—weather permitting—in the brick-walled garden. “Before, the dining room was dark [and cramped],” Pahnke notes. “Now there’s an explosion of space.”

Chic, modern, and bright, the conservatory redefined the Hinds residence and transformed the way they live in a home they’ve enjoyed for 25 years. Richard says, “Our friends love the open feel from the conservatory to the garden... it’s a great space to entertain.” ★

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