



UT SAN DIEGO

Coastal

SAN DIEGO HOMES

A FRESH ANGLE

RETRACTABLE DIAGONAL WALL ADDS NEW DIMENSION
TO LA JOLLA HOME'S INDOOR-OUTDOOR SPACE

MARCH 2013



HARMONIOUS BLEND

RANCHO SANTA FE HOME CRAFTED TO CELEBRATE ARTISTS' LOVE OF MUSIC, ART AND FAMILY

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SPECIAL TO THE U-T

In the early evening, Irina and Michael Tseitlin like to unwind by strolling down the long, shaded driveway that leads to their 1.5-acre estate. The trees and greenery that obscure their home inspired the name, Villa Verde.

The Tseitlins bought the original 4,500-square-foot Rancho Santa Fe house in 2000, and in 2007, they contracted architect Drew Hubbell to perform a major renovation. The expansion increased the home's size to 8,000 square feet, which includes eight bedrooms and seven baths.

"We designed the house with our grandchildren in mind," Michael explained. "We wanted them to have a comfortable space where they could play."

The Tseitlins also have five grand pianos throughout the house: the living room, the den, the teaching studio and one in each of the two guest

suites on the lower level.

"Because of our profession, we have many artists who come to stay with us," he said. "When they practice together, it sounds like a music conservatory."

Michael was born into a family of musicians. His father, Alexander Tseitlin, was a composer and conductor at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. His mother, Valentina Abokumova Tseitlin, was a prima ballerina with the Bolshoi Ballet, who later served as choreographer for the San Diego Ballet.

After graduating from the Moscow Conservatory, Michael worked for the Bolshoi Theater Orchestra and was a first violinist with the Composer's Union String Quartet. He married Irina Koshevaya, also an internationally renowned concert violinist. And in 1975, they arrived in Southern California after fleeing the Soviet Union with \$50 and the clothes on their



The living room also serves as a music room and is used for small recitals (above). The double bench once belonged to Arthur Rubinstein. The guest bathroom (left) demonstrates Michael and Irina Tseitlin's love for juxtaposing old and new. The door dates to 18th-century China. **EDUARDO CONTRERAS • U-T photos**

SEE **RANCHO SANTA FE • 24**

Rancho Santa Fe

CONTINUED FROM 22

back.

Fifteen year later, Michael started what has become the prestigious California Institute of Music. Graduates include David Chan, professor at Juilliard and concertmaster at the Metropolitan Opera, and Igor Gruppman, concertmaster of the Rotterdam Philharmonic.

Villa Verde's interior celebrates art and music, bringing together the Old World with today. Works of Rembrandt, Albrecht Dürer, Marc Chagall, Alexander Burganov, Sam Leach and Nikolai Shurygin are displayed near Michael's contemporary symbolism paintings. Adding to the cultural richness are antiquities such as an ancient Luristan sword dated from 586 to 330 B.C. and an Antonius and Hieronymus Amati violin from 1663, which was once in the collection of Prince Felix Yusupov of Russia.

"Certain things reflect our Russian tastes," Michael said. "We don't like open spaces, which are so popular here in Southern California. We wanted smaller rooms and love the coziness, for example, of our dining room where you can close the door so you don't bother others."

Visitors enter through a grand foyer where a medal, presented to Irina by the Polish government for recording and performing music of Karol Syzmanowski, is inlaid in granite. It is surrounded by Brazilian cherry and Santos mahogany hardwood floors that flow through the entire home. A medal from Cremona, Italy - Antonio Stradivari's hometown - is inlaid in the floor nearby.

The entry presents a view of a crystal-stained glass skylight interplaying with a crystal chandelier with water cascading over Michael's mural, "Conception." The art is surrounded by 16-foot-tall granite slabs.

The foyer also features a portrait of Irina that hangs over an 18th-century sewing table as well as two eroded pier supports from Thailand, which Michael describes as "beautiful, abstract art." Eighteenth-century Chinese doors with an arch topped by a 15th-century Belgian wood carving



The Italian ebony-stained maple kitchen cabinets contrast with the Brazilian cherry and Santos mahogany hardwood floor. "Our sons thought it would be cool," Michael said of the dark wood. "Others warned us that we would either love it or hate it. We decided to take a chance and we love it."

and a mural painted by Michael mark the entry to a powder room.

The foyer leads into the living room, which also serves as a music room for private concerts where guests gather around a grand piano with a double bench once belonging to Arthur Rubinstein.

"This room is inspirational, which is why we keep it simple," Irina said. "Michael drafts compositions here, then I give my suggestions. It's a very collaborative room."

The kitchen is lined with stained Italian maple cabinets illuminated on the inside with subtle LED lights. "The ebony color with old bronze trim was a hot topic of discussion among Irina, me and our friends," Michael said. "Our sons thought it would be cool. Others warned us that we would either love it or hate it. We decided to take a chance and we love it."

The breakfast table and a bench in family room are sculpted out of iron wood from Bali.

"I love this room," Irina said of the family room, "because it has my favorite painting of Michael's - 'Opera Scene.'"

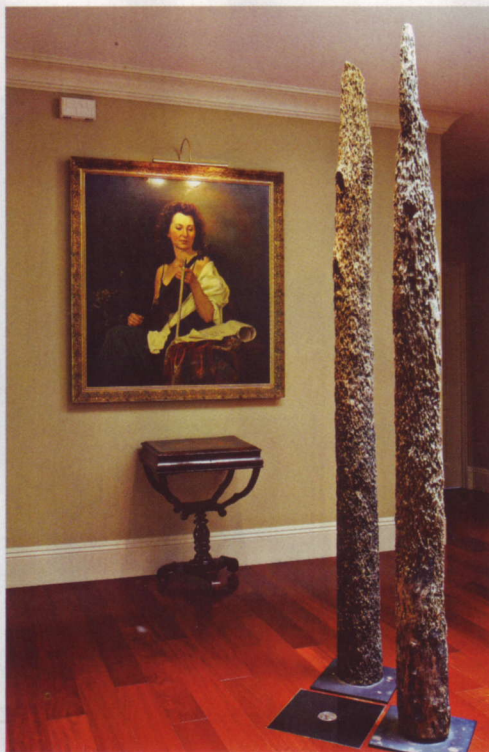
Michael does most of his work in his den, furnished with a desk and grand piano, and surrounded by framed mementos and artifacts, including an indulgence by Pope Paolo

V (1615), a sonnet dedicated to Olympia Borghesi on the occasion of her becoming a nun (1698), letters from Arturo Toscanini, Max Bruch and Lev Tolstoy and programs from the Tseitlins' concerts.

Hubbell was recruited to trans-

form the lower level from an unfinished basement into two independent suites, each with two bedrooms, two baths and a locked door for privacy. One has a kitchen and the other is

SEE RANCHO SANTA FE • 26



The foyer includes a portrait of Irina and two eroded pier pillars from Thailand, which Michael calls "beautiful, abstract art."

EDUARDO CONTRERAS •

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The gold and rust painting over the staircase titled "2010" is Michael's "spontaneous reflection of the year 2010." His large white work is titled "Wheat." The family room also includes a bust of Irina by Alexander Burganov to the right of the staircase and an ironwood bench from Bali.

Rancho Santa Fe

CONTINUED FROM 24

plumbed for one in the future.

"Michael and Irina talked about how so many homes in Rancho Santa Fe and Fairbanks Ranch have giant entry ways that they are not comfortable with," Hubbell said. "Our part included creating an entry way to the lower level and landscaping, which we did with Chuck Lang of Solana Beach who does beautiful work."

"The thing that fascinated me most was the amazing artwork they had in the house and around the property," Hubbell said. "The granite sculpture in the front entry – it was museum quality, in my opinion."

The guest suites were built for the Tseitlins' two sons, also internationally renowned violin virtuosos, Alexander (Sasha) and Paul (Pasha) and their young families. Each room is accented with vintage Russian black lacquer wooden Palekh paintings.

A library of books that has been in the Tseitlin family since the 17th century was secreted out of Russia several years ago. It is adjacent to

the wine cellar, where Michael enjoys playing chess with his sons and two granddaughters.

A few steps away, Michael's art studio boasts 18-foot-high ceilings and two oversized easels.

"I like to paint there while listening to chamber music, especially Schubert," he said.

Glancing outdoors, Irina remarked that nature is her favorite room.

"We have almond, walnut and macadamia nut trees," she said. "We also grow passion fruit, oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit, avocado, plums, strawberry guava, pineapple guava and rare Mexican fruit. There's always something in the garden that we can eat." The Tseitlins are vegetarians.

A gazebo, affectionately referred to as the Russian Tea Room, serves as a

hospitality suite where the Tseitlins enjoy a cup of Russian coffee or tea with friends. It doubles as a playhouse for the grandchildren.

It is apparent that this is a home where children make memories. The yard includes a large wooden swing set and, nestled in the tall grass, a collection of six sculptures of young friends by Alexander Burganov titled "Walk in the Garden."

"He is quite famous now," Michael said. "His outdoor monumental statues are standing in Munich, Germany; Liege, Belgium; in front of the Moscow Art Theater and Vakhtangov Theater in Moscow and Georgetown University in Washington."

Ceramic spheres in the garden represent Michael's artistic vision and philosophy of the spherical interconnection of the universe.

"Irina is my true love and inspiration," he said. "All my music and art are inspired only by her. I consider the most important blessings God gave me – my wife, my children and my adopted country – the United States."

Lillian Cox is an Encinitas-based writer who has been covering North County for the Union-Tribune since 2002.



A fountain sculpture by Michael Ramos of Santa Barbara is at the rear of the Tseitlin residence, which is 8,000 square feet and includes eight bedrooms and seven baths. EDUARDO CONTRERAS • U-T photos