

TUSCANY MEETS WEST ANDIES

BY SIOBHAN FITZPATRICK AUSTIN
PHOTOS BY ROB DOWNEY



The Yamaha grand piano situated in front of 12 foot floor-to-ceiling glass windows takes center stage during Anita Astrachan's famous parties.

This Vero Shores home reflects the owner's eclectic tastes and love of entertaining

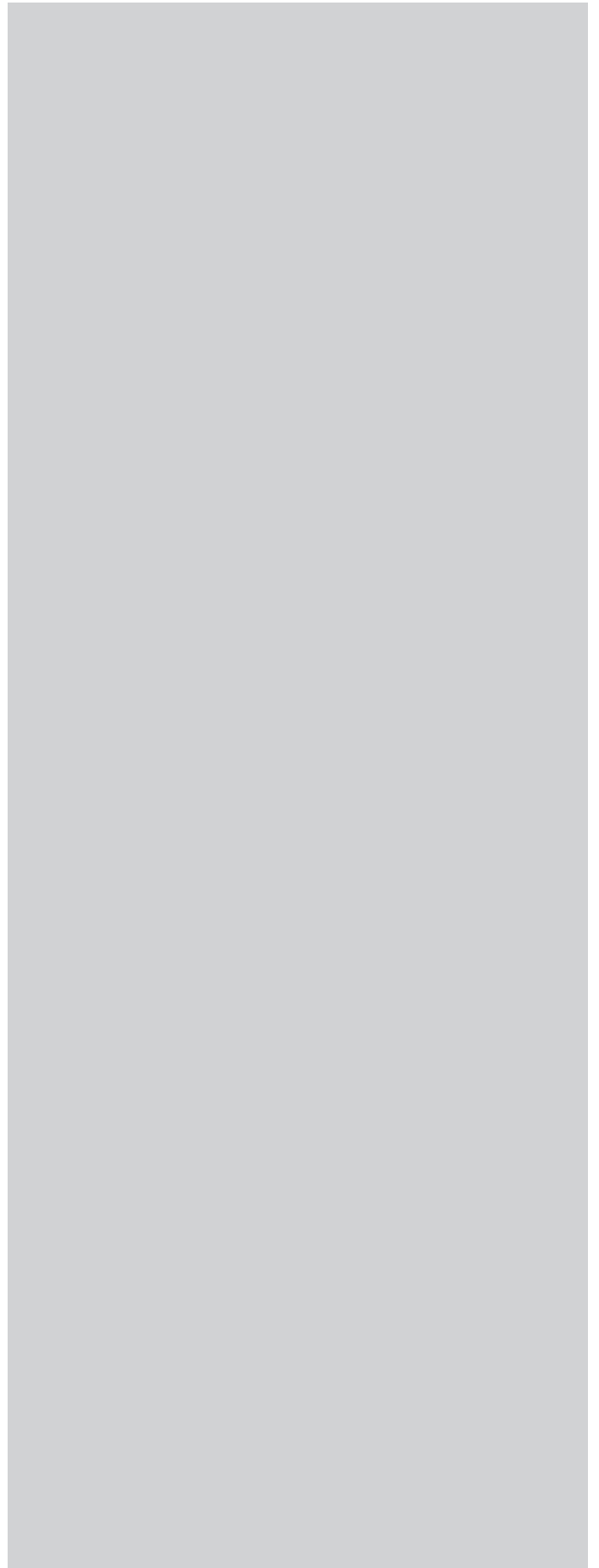


When Anita Astrachan saw her home in Vero Shores, she was immediately captivated by the marble staircase, cathedral ceilings, and arched windows in the family room, and of course, the flowing Spanish Moss in the back yard.

The first time Anita Astrachan saw her home in Vero Shores on the barrier island, it was the verdant backyard with flowing Spanish moss that captivated her. She says it reminded her of a poem she loved: *Evangeline A Tale of Acadie* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. *Near to the bank of the river, o'ershadowed by oaks, from whose branches Garlands of Spanish moss and of mystic mistletoe flaunted.* >>



The kitchen is intimate,
but well equipped for
the best of chefs.



"What appealed to me was that there was a serenity that I liked very much, and the Spanish moss," says Astrachan.

That and the cathedral ceilings in the living room with large arched windows that illuminated light onto a grand wrap-around marble staircase. "For me, a staircase is representative of a real home, which I did not have growing up in Brooklyn," Astrachan said. "There, I slept on a bed in the kitchen."

After growing up in such tight quarters, Astrachan developed a taste for much larger homes, those with 6,000 or more square feet like the one she moved from in the Moorings a year ago. Astrachan decided to "downsize" to a more intimate 4,000 square feet after she realized that so much house was too much for one person and three toy poodles. "At my house in the Moorings, when you went from the bedroom to the kitchen you needed roller skates," she said with a laugh.

DIFFERENT DIRECTION

While Astrachan's house in the Moorings was decidedly modern, she wanted to go in a different direction with her current home, which can best be described as Tuscan villa meets British West Indies. "I've always been ultramodern until I saw this house," she said. "Contemporary doesn't last. I've done the chrome, that look. Fortunately, Sotheby's [International Realty] understood that."

Dark brown Palm Frond shaped ceiling fans hanging from 25-foot cathedral ceilings in the living room are complemented by batik and woven cane furniture



>> Anita Astrachan with her three favorite furry friends, Beau, Lexi and Chloe.





Anita's upstairs party room also has a distinct British West Indies flare with its dark furniture including woven cane barstools — and requisite pool table.



Anita installed the modern tube-shaped elevator which somehow meshes perfectly with the rest of the family room.

throughout the four-bedroom, five-and-a-half-bathroom home, while plantation shutters help create a British West Indies feeling. Walls in a lightly burnished bronze color that enhance the robust hues of the burnt sienna ceilings in the master bedroom and guest bathroom, in addition to the first and second-floor outdoor stone terraces, inspire an Italian countryside feel. And Astrachan's marble bath would fit nicely in a regal European villa.

But there's also something decidedly eclectic about her home décor. In the living room is a table from Bangkok juxtaposed between two faux zebra-skin-covered armchairs catty-corner to a deep, taupe-colored leather couch. The funky brown-tinted, glass-encased elevator to the second floor — installed for her bad knee — somehow meshes perfectly with the contrasting marble staircase across from it.

Adjacent to the living room is an open kitchen which, like the living room, has floor-to-ceiling glass doors on one side that open up onto the first-floor terrace, which is complete with a mini kitchen and an inviting salt water pool. "Whenever I entertain I push the doors back into the wall so the party can flow from inside to out," she says.

And Astrachan loves to entertain. "I'm referred to as

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The master bedroom evokes
Tuscany with its lightly
burnished bronze walls and
burnt sienna colored ceiling.



Perle Mesta of Vero Beach,” she says, referring to the late U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg who was *the* party maker in New York City during the 1930s, 40s and 50s.

LOVE OF THEATER

The people she enjoys entertaining most are those in the theater, with whom she feels very much at home, having been an actor and drama teacher in New York, where she lived until she was 49. The party she is most famous for is Riverside Theatre’s end-of-season wrap party. This year the theme was South Pacific, the final show of the 2013-2014 season, and Astrachan’s house could not have been more perfect. Guests entered the home through 10-foot-high mahogany doors that open onto an expansive entryway decorated with black and white Chinese arm chairs that complement a stark-white leather couch and a Yamaha grand piano — all set against a backdrop of 12-foot floor-to-ceiling windows with a view of the pool. Throughout the evening, Riverside’s musical director, Ben Clifton, played many a tune as members of the cast sang songs from the show.

Astrachan, 76, became involved with Riverside Theatre six years ago, after her husband died. “I spent a year in mourning, and I knew I was in trouble because I couldn’t stop crying. My brother, who’s a psychiatrist, told me to get involved with something, to volunteer. But when I thought of volunteering I thought of a candy striper and I didn’t want to do that,” she says.

But as fate would have it, on that particular day when Astrachan was talking with her brother, there was an article in the *Press Journal* about volunteer opportunities on the Treasure Coast. “I went down the list and read them to my brother. When I read Riverside Theatre he told me to stop. >>



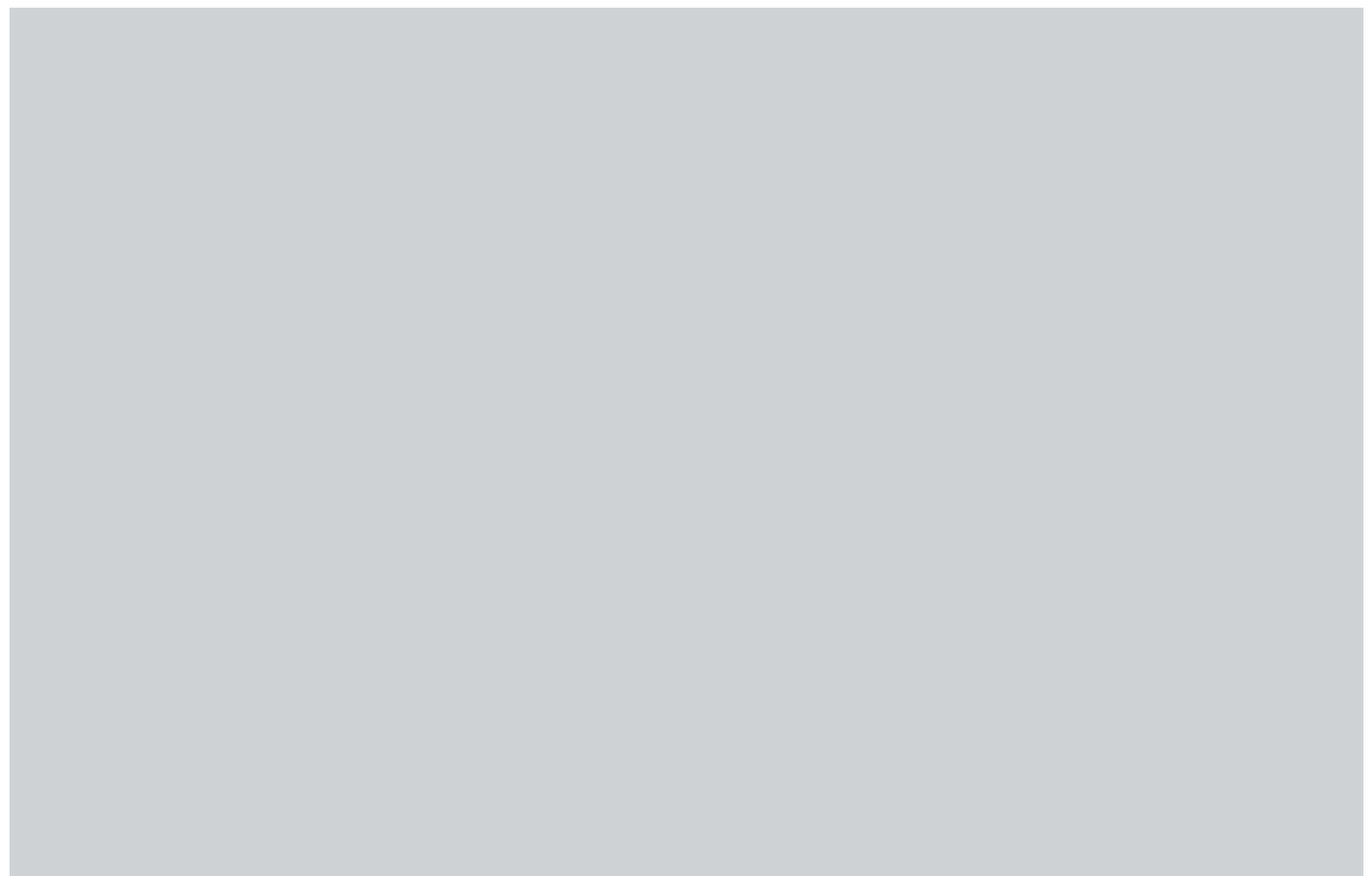
BENJAMIN HAGER

Anita is most famous for, Riverside Theatre’s end-of-season wrap party, above. This year the theme was South Pacific, the final show of the 2013-2014 season.

FULL
PAGE AD



The outdoor patio, which is adjacent to the stone terrace, is the perfect place to unwind.





The salt water pool is a great way to cool down on a hot day!



Guests enter Anita's house through impressive ten-feet high mahogany doors.

'It's perfect for you,' he said. 'You've been involved with theatre all of your life.' So I called the next day and asked if they have any volunteer opportunities."

OPENING DOORS

It didn't take long for her to go from answering phones one afternoon a week to proofreading five days a week. Eventually she was asked if she wanted to donate \$10,000 yearly and become a Patron Producer.

"Life has been very good to me," she said. "It's time for me to give back. I don't have any heirs."

Last year, Astrachan was asked to be on Riverside's board of directors, which is involved in choosing the shows to produce. "It was one of the most happy days of my life," she said, beaming. "Their decision was unanimous, and I was told that was the first time that had ever happened."

As a former teacher, Astrachan said she was passionate about getting high school students involved in the theater. For the past few years she has paid for students from Vero Beach High School, St. Edward's High School, Indian River Charter High School and Sebastian High School to attend various Riverside productions, including a "talk back" after the show where the actors answer the students' questions. But there are a few requirements as part of Astrachan's endeavor is to teach students life skills. To this end, she asks the principals of the schools to give the students an assignment, and in addition, she visits the schools herself and instructs the students on how to properly dress for the theater and what not to bring [cell phones, for starters] — and it works.

"The way the kids behave in the theater is not to be believed," she said. "It makes me so joyous. I drive home from those matinees and I cry. But don't worry. I cheer up quickly. I love my little home." *R*



The front of Anita beautiful home in Vero Shores.