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HISTORICAL FOOTNOTES

▶ CLASSICAL PROGRESSION IN SANTA MONICA


CUSTOM HOMES IN LOS Angeles generally fall into one of two categories: ill-advised replicas of Tuscan villas and French châteaux, or sleek minimalist designs that honor the city's strong midcentury-modern heritage. Classical Progression is one of those rare design firms that finds a way to integrate antique elements into modern concepts.

Classical Progression is a family-operated design-and-build firm founded by Kevin J. Cozen, a native Angeleno with a strong appreciation for the city's rich residential design legacy. His signature

is incorporating architectural antiques—materials and objects reclaimed from abandoned barns, residences or hotels—that add intrigue to modern structures.

“All of my homes are progressive in their design,” says Cozen, whose idea of a Spanish Mission-style house is more akin to a chef's deconstructionist presentation of a retro dish, with elements of the original style rearranged in a modern context. “It would be exciting for today, with its own heart and soul.”

One of Cozen's greatest influences is John Lautner,



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← The Smith residence, amid rolling vineyards in Malibu, a Classical Progression project

the midcentury-modern master inspired by Southern California's natural environment. Cozen also admires Frank Lloyd Wright, who mentored Lautner and other architects who have shaped L.A.: "Their architecture is strong, it's secure and it's exciting—modern and progressive but not cold or uninviting."

Many of the organic designs pioneered by Lautner were made possible through innovative use of concrete, Cozen's favored material. "People think of it as cold, like the freeway overpasses, but as explored by Lautner, there's no limit to its shape," he says. "It's strong, organic and is very difficult to work with, which makes it special." The technique of imprinting poured-in-place concrete with the natural grain of wood is another Cozen signature.

Cozen's love of reclaimed materials—and his ability to playfully juxtapose them—is well represented at a house he designed in the Hollywood Hills, where guests enter a courtyard through massive, weatherworn wooden doors purportedly reclaimed from a thousand-year-old South American prison. On the other side of the courtyard, however, a pivoting steel and



nce upon a time there was a chair

Not a big chair, not a small chair. Just a chair. The problem was it no longer fit in. Mother said, "That chair has got to go!" Father said, "But that chair belonged to my mother. I can't part with it." And so it went. The poor lonely chair lived in a corner gathering dust.

One day mother had enough and she said, "If that chair isn't gone by tomorrow, then you go!"

Father fretted. What to do? Sister fretted, what to do? Along came wise Aunt Jane who said, "I have the best idea! **LET'S DONATE THE CHAIR TO COUNCIL THRIFT. The chair will be bought by a nice person and it will have a nice new life in a nice new home. Plus, it will help NCJW/LA to provide services for at-risk women, children and families!**"



Father was relieved. Sister was relieved. And mom, well, she went out and bought a nice new chair.

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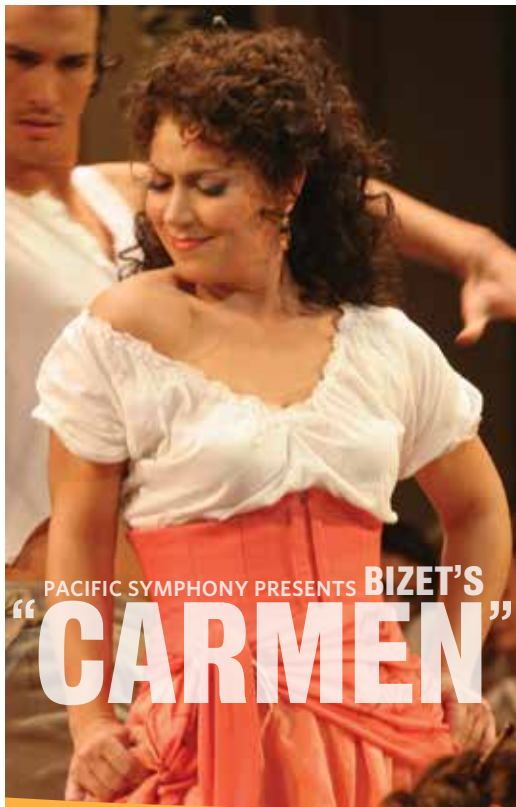
glass door (see photo, p. 2) signals one's arrival at a distinctly contemporary structure.

The kitchen in that home is a modern space, despite being cordoned off by a 10-foot reclaimed barn door and floored with beautifully imperfect planks of Douglas fir salvaged from the roofs of Beverly Hills homes from the 1920s. The kitchen's centerpiece is a particularly stylish butcher-block counter that Cozen found at Paris' legendary flea market, Marché aux Puces de St.-Ouen. The cabinets were custom-matched to the piece.

Encouraged by a client who loves to entertain, Cozen devised a circuitous journey to the dinner table.

After enjoying a glass of Champagne in the living room, guests traverse a glass-bottom bridge supported by reclaimed wood beams into the dining room. An enormous, rustic table is illuminated by two 150-year-old crystal chandeliers—salvaged from the ballroom of a Newport, Rhode Island, estate—whimsically hung from either side of a vintage scale mounted on the ceiling.

In Malibu, the designer created an ultramodern home divided into three structures



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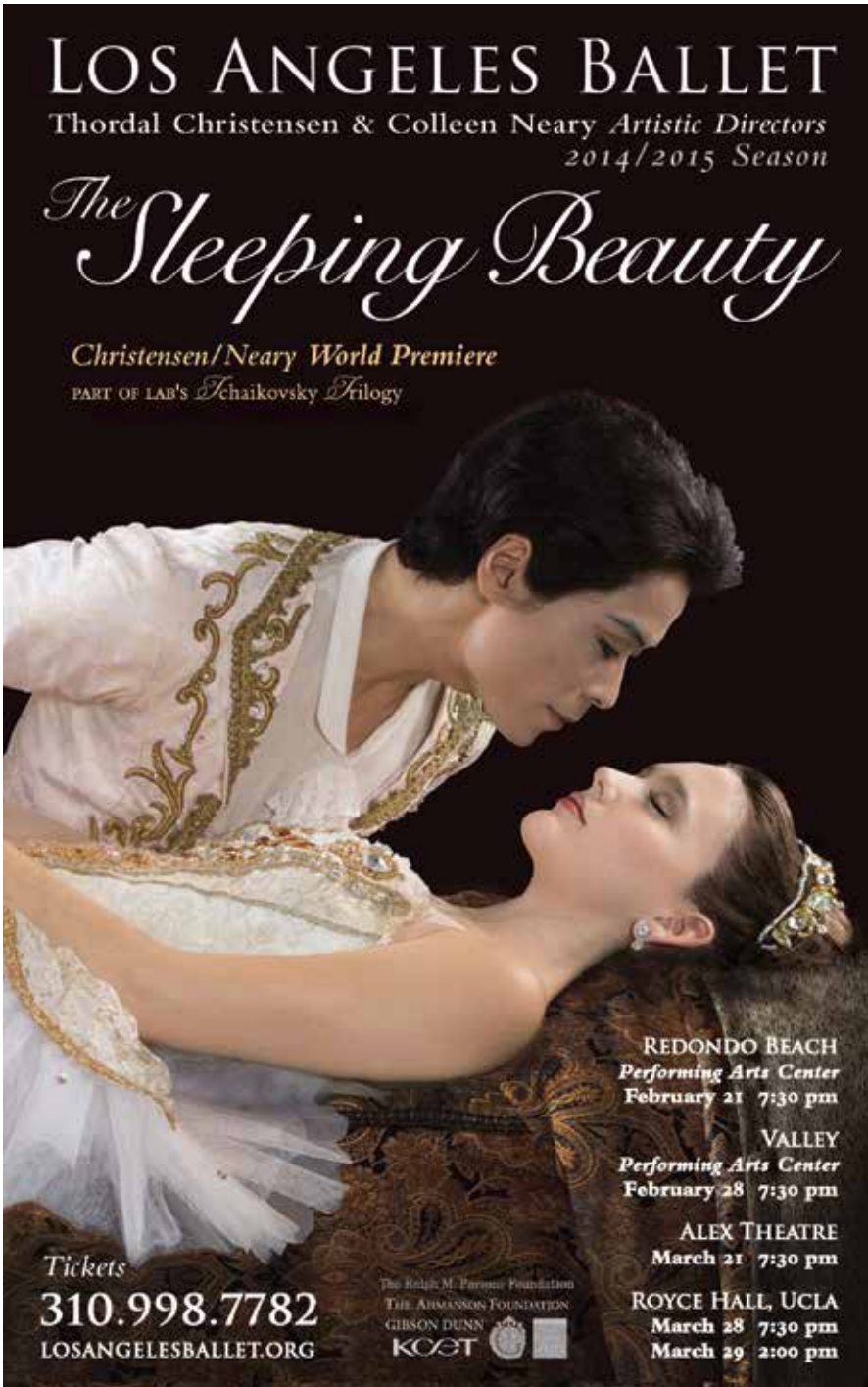
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amid rolling vineyards. Much of the common area is laid out along a single gracefully curved glass wall through which magnificent ocean views are captured. One of the home's most memorable interior spaces is a Lautner-esque living room with a prominent stone-clad fireplace and floor-to-ceiling windows that wrap around a sharp corner.

Lautner and peers Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler are often viewed as authoring a quintessentially L.A. style. Their bold imprints are found from Malibu to Silver Lake and, of course, in Palm Springs, and represent the antithesis of the tract housing emerging during that same era. "Living here all my life, I've absorbed the architecture around me, both good and bad," says Cozen, who keeps the legacy of modernism relevant.

"It's impossible to do only your own thing with so many influences around you," says the 56-year-old designer, whose remnants of long-forsaken buildings breathe classical energy into his modern homes. —Roger Grody

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