

# Creating the eclectic city/country look

By Corinne Abett  
staff writer

A country home bordering on the rustic, in Franklin Village, was turned into an art collector's dream by Birmingham interior designers Jane Levy Mettler and Joel Stephen Mettler. They work under the professional name of Mettler Interiors.

The ranch style home on five acres went through several renovations and additions before the present owners acquired it.

Like many Franklin settings, in the past it had attracted horse owners and the interior reflected that interest.

**BUT THE PRESENT** owners are more art than animal, more house than horse-oriented, so one of the first projects was to replace the rough sawn cedar siding in many of the rooms with wet plaster.

The cedar was left in the family room because it lent itself to the friendly, casual atmosphere and in the kitchen because it could be worked into the white and natural wood decor.

The exterior cedar paneling was painted a weathered gray and a Japanese garden was put in at the front entrance.

**THERE ARE** no windows in the house, only sliding door walls which, across the back of the long ranch, open to the pool and the several acres of rolling landscape.

The door walls in the dining room at the front frame the Japanese garden, which this spring was full of white and apricot azaleas in full bloom.

Because of the wonderful light, the open feeling and the use of space and the indoor/outdoor relationships, Mettler's comment, "I think of it as California or desert contemporary," seemed highly appropriate.

Both interior designers expressed their pleasure at working with clients who have impeccable taste in fine art.

**THIS MADE THE** eclectic atmosphere of the living room work beautifully. There is a huge Jules Olitsky painting on one wall, a fine, large M.L.

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ton Avery over the black slate fireplace, African sculpture and some excellent examples of oriental porcelain in the living room. The matching custom couches, covered in an attractive and durable taupe fabric, work well with two Miles van der Rohe chairs.

Fortunately the designers were able to match the dark brown, burgundy tile in the foyer so it could be carried into the living room and dining room.

**THE LIVING** room rug, made especially for this room by Edward Fields, is a sculptured, natural cashmere color, all wool with a velvety lushness to its contrasting textures. A Jacobean highboy gives a warm, old world feeling to the contemporary ambience of the living room. Just beyond in the broad patio area is an old, well-maintained apple tree, reminiscent of the former life of the land.

The mixture of choice pieces from different periods and cultures combined with contemporary continues in the dining room where the glass-topped table, designed by the Mettlers, on a steel base is paired with Chippendale chairs and an oriental screen and rug.

**SAVING THE OWNERS** are very conscious of the landscape, Mettler noted the presence of a cutting garden of annuals just outside the kitchen door, a vegetable garden out of sight at the far end of the property and the landscaping to shelter the side of the pool away from the house. There are



The dining room provides a perfect meeting place for an assortment of periods and styles that blend as smoothly as the lines of the ceramic tile floor. Here Chippendale-style chairs and contemporary

table of high-gloss lacquer with steel base, designed by the Mettlers, seem completely at home with Oriental and modern art, highlighted by the natural beauty of the Japanese garden outside.

large, colorful hanging baskets of fuschias in a row between the house and pool.

Particularly pleasing to the designers is the continuing change and vitality of the living room.

"The house almost has a life of its own," said Levy Mettler, "it is constantly changing."

**SHE WAS REFERRING** to new art

acquisitions and the shifting of those already in the collection.

It is a sophisticated country home, designed to showcase an outstanding art collection, but flexible and alive because of the wide interests of the owners. It is a good example of how excellent pieces from various periods can keep company, play off each other and still maintain a strong individuality.

Staff photos by Mindy Saunders



The custom-made sculptured rug becomes one more work of contemporary art in the living room which was once paneled with rough cedar. Now

it has, as Jane Levy Mettler said, "a life of its own."



Living room from another view illustrates the close tie between the indoors and the landscaped patio and pool area beyond. The

soft, warm taupe shades of the matching sofas and sculptured rug set the scene for the brilliant colors of the modern art and Oriental porcelains.

## Sibelius symphony gets star treatment

review

By Avigdor Zarnop  
special writer

Meadow Brook Festival season is on us again. The program last Thursday and Sunday was the first of several attractive events scheduled for this season.

The conductor in this opening event was Slatan Ehrlich, whose ties with the Detroit Symphony are strong, despite the 10 years that have passed since he was music director.

In this program, Maestro Ehrlich presented two large-scale masterpieces — the Brahms Double Concerto for Violin and Cello and the Symphony No. 2 by Sibelius.

The opening selection on the Sunday program was a new composition by Dr. James Hartway, titled "Monuments." This piece replaced the Prelude to "Die Meistersinger" by Wagner, on Thursday's program. While my natural inclination would be to prefer the popular Meistersinger I did attend the Sunday performance, feeling that expanding one's horizons is sometimes more important than the immediate gratification of a well-tested piece.

**"MONUMENTS,"** INDEED, was a significant selection for the occasion — it was commissioned by Stuart Hyde for the 20th anniversary of the Meadow Brook Festival. It is written for a large orchestra

and percussion. The style of the short piece reflects a turning away from the avant-garde style and reverting to a more tonal and traditional form, which can be termed Neo-Romanticism.

Indeed, I found this piece very listenable, with some impressive sound effects and rhythmic variety. But I found the thematic variety severely limited, with an over-concentration on the major third interval. Composer Hartway, who went on stage following the performance, is an associate professor of music at Wayne State University. At least one of his other compositions "Cityscapes," was performed by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra two seasons ago.

**BETWEEN THE TWO** major compositions, the Brahms concerto is definitely the superior work, but the Sibelius symphony elicited a much better performance, which could be attributed to Maestro Ehrlich's Scandinavian background.

The soloists in the Brahms work were concertmaster Gordon Staples, violin, and Italo Babin, cello. Babin, principal cellist with the orchestra provided the composition with its most significant dimension. From the beginning, with the challenging cello cadenza, to the very end, his playing was full of expressive richness, without taking the familiar music for granted.

**THE PERFORMANCE** of Staples was correct, with some occasional displays of ingenuity, as in the recapitulation of the main theme in the first movement. The orchestral sound had an overall balance, but thematic clarity was occasionally compromised.

It was, overall, an adequate performance, but this composition is capable of generating a greater impact, if not taken for granted.

Whatever deficiency was present in the Brahms performance, was made up for in the Sibelius Second Symphony, the most popular among his seven symphonies.

**THE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE**, characterized by colorful articulation and great attention to detail, truly enhanced the dimension of this work.

Many previous routine versions have convinced me that this is a reasonably good composition. This performance revealed it to be not merely a good work, but a profound one.

This is precisely the kind of exposure that a composer of the stature of Sibelius needs. To be sure, Sibelius was no Brahms, but there is much more in his music than meets the casual ear.

This performance, which did justice to the frequently underrated music, should remain a memorable one for a long time to come.



Pianist Russell Sherman will be the guest artist at the Meadow Brook Music Festival concerts with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at 8 p.m. this evening and Sunday. Gastano Delago will conduct both concerts, which will include the Liszt Piano Concerto No. 2 in A and three works by Ravel.