

HAMPTONS



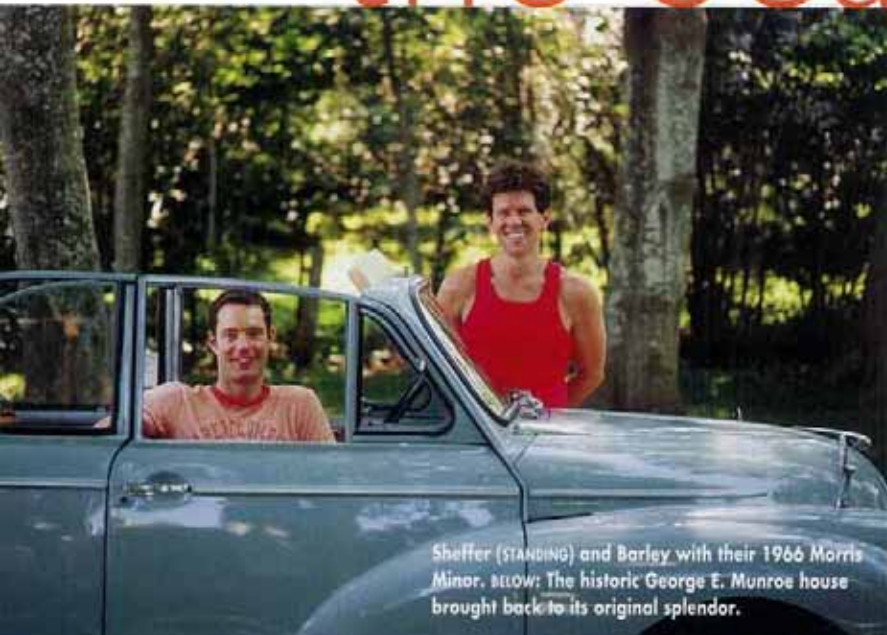
EXCLUSIVE! **Hunky**
RICHARD GERE
ON LIFE AFTER
CHICAGO AND THE
TEACHINGS OF TIBET
MEANWHILE,
SANTE D'ORAZIO
CAPTURES GERE'S
SIZZLING GOOD LOOKS

GORGEOUS HOMES
AND SUBLIME GARDENS

NAUGHTY, NIFTY, AND
OH-SO-NASTY GOSSIP

HOT, HOT, HOT!

Symphony by the Sea



Sheffer (STANDING) and Barley with their 1966 Morris Minor. BELOW: The historic George E. Munroe house brought back to its original splendor.



The charming, exacting vision of architecture firm Sawyer/Benson combined with an exquisite shingle-style East Hampton mansion results in a harmonious abode for the Eos Orchestra's artistic director, Jonathan Sheffer, and his partner, Christopher Barley, M.D.

by Tess Ghilaga
photographs by Elliott Kaufman

"The past should be present with the present," Jonathan Sheffer declares. As artistic director of the Eos Orchestra, he unites forgotten works of music with theatrical elements in concert halls throughout the country. Sheffer imports that same credo into his historic East Hampton manse, which he shares with his partner, Christopher Barley, M.D. The resulting score: A harmony of nineteenth- and twentieth-century architecture and design worthy of a raucous standing ovation.

Built in 1888 by I.H. Green Jr., one of the East End's premier architects of the period, the George E. Munroe house takes its name from the original owner, a New York doctor and former second president of the Maidstone Club. "The house scared a lot of people because it was in such bad shape," says Brian Sawyer, of Sawyer/Benson, the architect and landscape architect Sheffer commissioned when he purchased the home in 1998. "But Jonathan recognized how great it was; he picked one of the most beautiful examples of shingle-style architecture out there."

The fast and focused renovation took only five

Taking naps and reading a good book take place in the sunroom.





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TOP: A good game of chess often makes up the weekend agenda. **BELOW LEFT:** The sun-drenched loft-like master bedroom and gourmet kitchen, **RIGHT.**

The mantel showcases a French chinoiserie painting and antique weights.



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The sitting area, in "the Dorm," features a patchwork zebra rug from Jeffrey Bilhuber. An Edwardian storyboard print of Alice in Wonderland. **BELOW:** Sheffer's Mason & Hamlin baby grand piano.



months. "The last few days were a beehive of activity," Sheffer recalls, referring to the final day, when at least 50 workers were rolling out the lawn and managed to finish the job that night.

Staying true to the original aesthetic, the couple modernized the house without changing its character. "I tried to keep it as much of a beach house as possible," the musician says. "The nature of the architecture speaks to the seaside quality of the house." That meant bringing the home up to speed, while keeping some less than perfect elements that give it so much charm, such as the old windows, the egg-shaped doorknobs, and even the Dutch doors that barely line up. They also tackled the design missteps of the previous owners: painting over black wallpaper in the dining room, ripping out linoleum, and restoring a back porch that, over time, had morphed into an enclosed room.

Sheffer set his sights on a beautiful, plain, and comfortable décor. "I'm very busy in my head," the composer/conductor explains, "so I don't want my surroundings to be too busy." Sheffer enlisted the



A lush, verdant spot on the grounds.

four tiny maids' quarters resulted in the loft-like master bedroom.

The surrounding property also underwent a reconstruction. "The grounds were like Grey Gardens," Barley recalls, referring to the infamous estate in East Hampton once owned by Jackie O.'s dawn-at-the-heels cousins. Today, with the overgrowth and trees cleared away, the meticulously groomed property offers an abundance of leisure activities: an arrow-shaped swimming pool, a white Hansel and Gretel-style cottage that functions as a weight room, and a tennis court. A horse barn, also designed by Green and moved to the rear of the property, will soon serve as Sheffer's

private space for composing and practicing his music.

The home also stands as a sanctuary for Barley. "When I'm out here, it's a retreat for me," the busy doctor says, who is active in the politics of healthcare and is a member of the Citta Organization, which builds hospitals in third world countries. "I like to check in there and not leave the grounds."

Formality may not be the low-key couple's cup of tea. But for one

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assistance of interior designer Marianne Larsen, whom he collaborated with on his New York residence. "I like earth tones and things very neutral," says Sheffer. "I think people should be the color." The home is filled with mid-century antiques, upholstered furniture, Pottery Barn pieces, flea markets finds, Tibetan rugs, and scores of lighting (he has a thing for lamps) that all seem to buck tradition and trends. "A chair or lamp sings to me and I have to put it in the house," Sheffer says. "There is no processing, it's just instinctive."

A collection of photography and artwork serves purely for decorative purposes, which includes the works of Ross Bleckner, Eric Freeman, and Anthony Goicolea. "The art is usually bought at a benefit or an auction, so it goes to a good cause," Barley says.

They reconfigured the upstairs by tearing down walls, allowing for four guest bedrooms (each with working fireplaces). The largest guest room, dubbed "the Dorm," with two double beds and a sitting area, accommodates families and some free-spirited singles. Combining

very special occasion they took extreme measures. While waiting on a visit to the home from former President Clinton and the First Lady, the duo hired gardeners to spruce up the lawn with a treatment. But instead, the verdant grass turned an unsightly brown. With some quick thinking, an emergency paint job turned the lawn back to its rich emerald hue. "I was afraid Hillary's shoes would turn green," Barley reminisces. "But they didn't." Too bad. For if they did, then she'd surely squirrel them away—a memento from her visit to this beautiful seaside home. ⚙️

The annual Eos Orchestra benefit takes place on August 16 in North Haven. The cocktail reception will feature a performance of Saint-Saëns' two-piano masterwork "Carnival of the Animals" with members of the Eos Orchestra and a surprise narrator. For more information call 212-691-6415.