



ON THE LINE

Arts patron Nancy Zeckendorf brings a ballerina's precision to her Santa Fe home

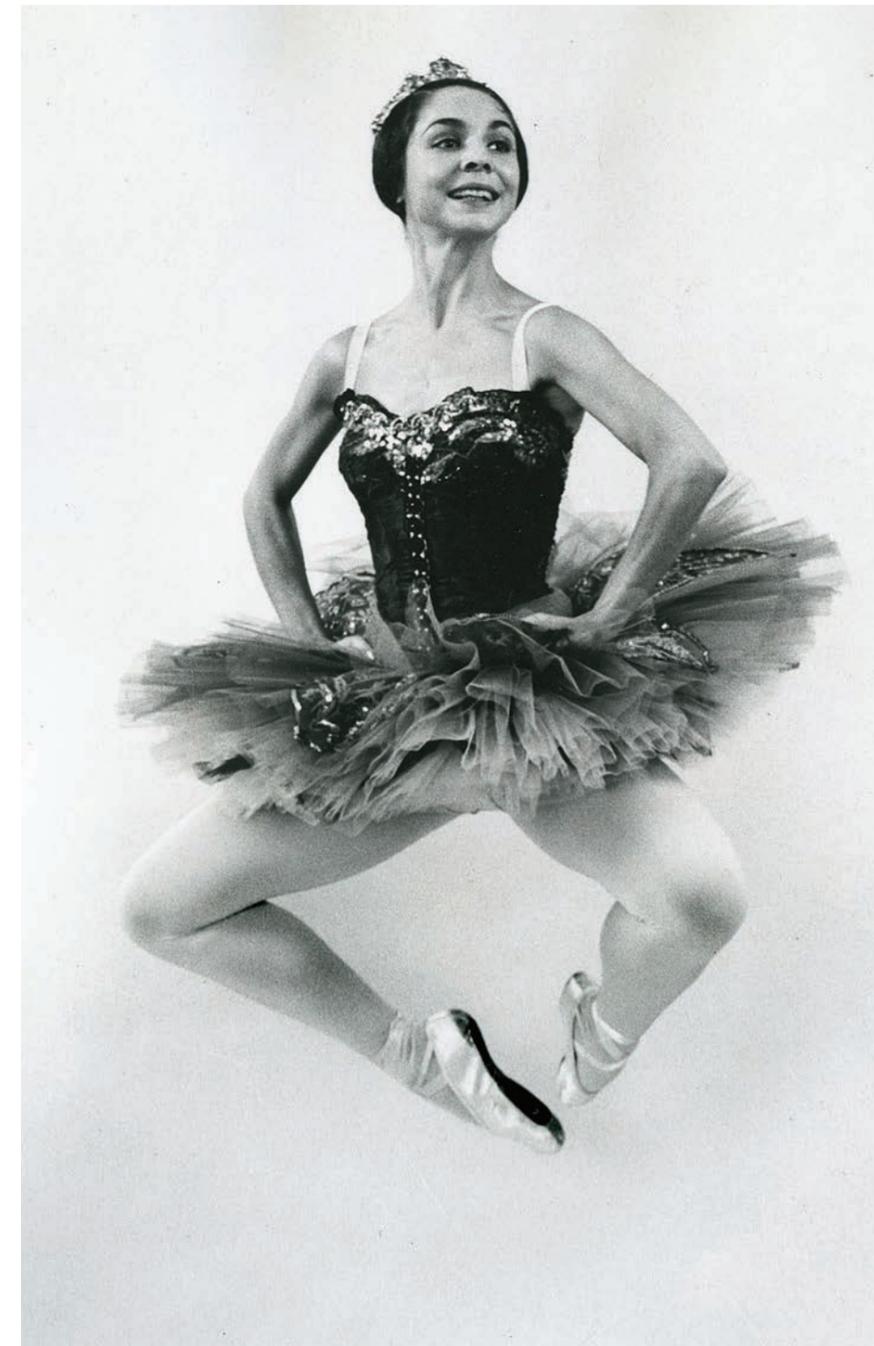
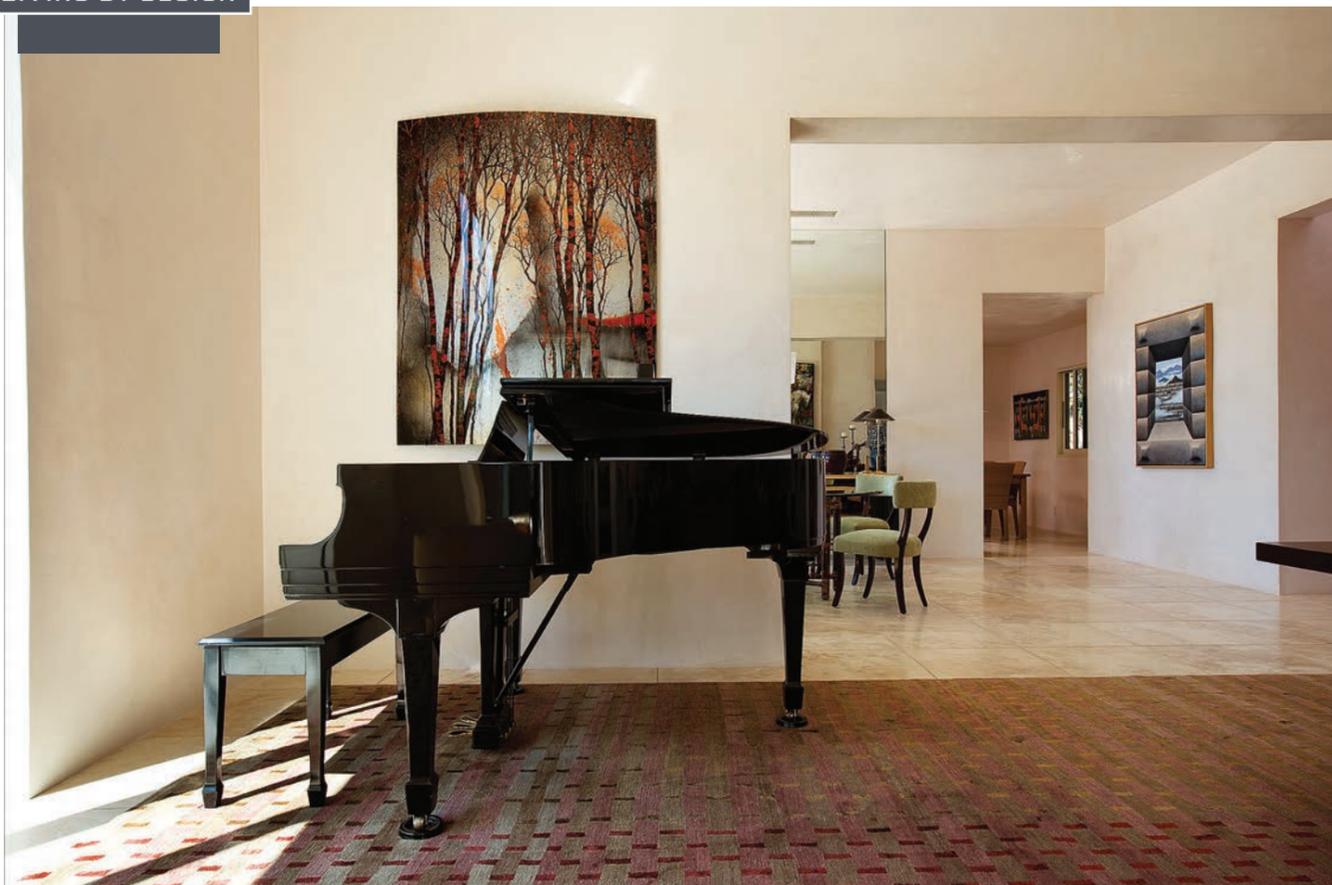
Traditional Santa Fe style was never a natural fit with Nancy Zeckendorf's design aesthetic, although she loved it as part of the newness of the city she first encountered in the 1960s and again in the '80s. A former principal ballerina with the Metropolitan Opera company and Santa Fe Opera, Zeckendorf is at home in dance studios—large, spare spaces with high ceilings and straight lines. She appreciates precise visual statements and efficient movement through space with minimal distraction. "Ballet is structured; modern dance is more organic," she reflects, sitting at the kitchen table in her Los Miradores condo, which she recently remodeled before moving in.

Zeckendorf's history with Los Miradores goes back to the beginning of the tree-filled, Pueblo-style gated community near St. John's College. It was conceived and built in stages between 1983 and 1991 by her late husband, William Zeckendorf Jr., and was the prominent New York developer's first project in Santa Fe. Bill enlisted his wife as a design consultant, and she soon became its project manager. She enjoyed the work. It engaged her sense for discipline and detail.

With an eye to the Texas second-home market, the units of the community incorporated architectural and design elements of Santa Fe style: low profile, stuccoed exteriors, vigas, *latillas*, kiva fireplaces, rounded corners, Saltillo-tiled floors. Nancy and Bill lived in three of the units before Bill went on to develop the Sierra del Norte luxury subdivision in the early 1990s in the foothills east of town. There the Zeckendorfs built and lived in two



Inside, Nancy Zeckendorf's Los Miradores home shows little trace of its former life as a traditional Santa Fe-style condo. Organic elements were removed and rounded edges made ruler-straight.



homes until Bill's death in February 2014. The couple's first foothills home had high ceilings with white-painted, rounded beams, and their Sierra del Norte house had flat ceilings and more clean-cut lines.

After Bill's passing, Nancy decided she no longer wanted a 6,000-square-foot home, and Los Miradores appealed. "It's such a charming, quiet, private place, and beautifully looked after," she says. It was

perfect, except that it was Santa Fe style, and everything about the interior needed to change. "Can we really make this contemporary?" she asked Santa Fe-based interior designer Joan Lombardi, long-time friend and onetime fellow ballet student in New York. "Yes," replied Lombardi. "We start with the floors."

They worked with David Campbell to replace the Saltillo with large, square

tiles of pale tan travertine throughout the home. The tile's light color continues into limestone counters and almost all interior walls, doors, and cabinetry, creating an uninterrupted flow. Most interior doors were removed, the ceilings lifted, and doorframes enlarged to reinforce an open, airy feeling. New, larger windows frame views of courtyards landscaped in contemporary Japanese style. *Bancos*, *nichos*, and *kivas* were removed, and rounded edges made ruler-straight.

Zeckendorf says, "I'm not a collector, except of good friends." A few select artworks punctuate the home with color and texture. In the living room hangs a large Rimi Yang painting of a little girl in red shoes on a horse, its theme echoed in a Chinese Tang Dynasty wooden horse that once belonged to Zeckendorf's friend, actress Joan Fontaine. Two black leather Le Corbusier chairs perfectly suit the linear aesthetic of the pale-hued office. Walking through it into her bedroom, Zeckendorf stops in front of a floor-to-ceiling poster on the wall beside her bed. "This makes me very, very happy," she says. It's a black and white promotional poster from the Metropolitan Opera with a long list of performers' names, including her maiden name, Nancy King. "When I see it, every name reminds me of someone special."

Dance and music were Zeckendorf's first loves. She grew up in the small northwestern Pennsylvania town of Tidioute, where her father owned and ran a lumber company and her mother kept the family home "clean and uncluttered; she had very good taste," Zeckendorf says. From there she went to New York City to study at the Juilliard School of Music and the Metropolitan Opera Ballet School. Among her instructors were Anthony Tudor, Agnes de Mille, and Martha Graham.

In 1961 Nancy was in Santa Fe for the

Nancy King was a principal dancer with the Metropolitan Opera Company and the Santa Fe Opera. Opposite: Furnishings, including a carpet to set the palette, were reconfigured from Zeckendorf's prior Santa Fe home by interior designer Joan Lombardi; contemporary Japanese aesthetic of the outdoor living area.



Bill and Nancy Zeckendorf were married in 1963. Opposite: Restored and renovated through a multimillion-dollar capital campaign spearheaded by Nancy Zeckendorf, The Lensic Performing Arts Center in downtown Santa Fe was transformed into a vital, state-of-the-art, multipurpose cultural facility.

first of two summers as principal dancer with the Santa Fe Opera. While here she happened to meet Bill Zeckendorf's mother and his stepfather, music critic Irving Kolodin. Back in New York, Nancy got a call from Bill's mother, who said she had extra tickets for the opening of the Bolshoi Ballet and wanted Nancy to attend with her son. They were married

in 1963. Soon afterward Nancy retired from dancing and launched a life of dedicated fundraising for the arts that started with a long association with the American Ballet Theatre.

In Santa Fe, as Bill was developing Los Miradores, Sierra del Norte, the Eldorado Hotel, and other projects, Nancy was immersed in support for the Santa Fe

Opera, serving for many years as chair of the committee organizing the Opera's annual fundraising gala. She served on the board until 1995 and was instrumental in helping raise \$21 million for the new opera house completed in 1998.

Not long after she'd stepped back from active involvement with the Opera, Bill told her there was another important fundraising project in need. He was arranging a deal for the restoration and renovation of the 1930s-era Lensic Theater in downtown Santa Fe, aiming to transform the rundown theater into a state-of-the-art performing arts center. It would require some \$9 million. "Bill knew how to get it going," Zeckendorf says. "Then he turned to me and said, 'You have to raise the money. No one else can do it.' It became a labor of love." It was also a grassroots effort, with most of the money coming from local donations. "Everyone had a place in their heart for The Lensic," she says. The renovated space opened in 2001.

During the early years of the couple's involvement in Santa Fe, they split their time between New Mexico and New York. In New York City they lived for a number of years in a penthouse apartment designed for Bill's father by the internationally acclaimed architect I. M. Pei, who worked for the elder Zeckendorf. The space was open and light, with white tile floors and no interior doors. In the upstate town of Chautauqua, the Zeckendorfs spent eight years in a highly contemporary house with a glass-lined living room. "I like to move," Zeckendorf says. "I enjoy starting all over. It's a chance to reassess."

With each move in Santa Fe, her austere design edged out any traces of traditional Pueblo style. "Every time I've moved, I've straightened the walls more," she jokes. Her taste for restraint is also reflected in her New York City condominium in Museum Tower, adjacent to the Museum of Modern Art. Remodeled by architect Birch Coffey, it was reconfigured to create a more pleasing flow and efficient use of space. Pale floors again establish a spacious, impeccable look.

While she loves New York City, espe-

cially for ballet and theater, Santa Fe is Zeckendorf's full-time home these days. She spends a week or so in New York a few times a year, but most mornings wakes to deep blue skies outside the bedroom patio doors of her Los Miradores condo. Typically she'll do yoga, take a walk, sip tea, and eat breakfast with *The New York Times* and *Santa Fe New Mexican* before heading to The Lensic to catch up on paperwork. Back home in the afternoon, she settles in with a book. She is fascinated by classical history; a recent read was Mary Beard's *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome*.

Reflecting on development in Santa Fe, Zeckendorf says she would love to see more opportunities for people to live, work, and shop downtown, as well as more pedestrian-focused streets. She likes The Railyard, where contemporary architecture and art abound. "I think the architectural gate has to open a little. I don't see taller buildings, and I'm not talking Frank Gehry here, but maybe more architectural expressions that would still fit in." However, she has no desire to see Santa Fe dramatically change. "I love it here," she says. "Santa Fe is the most wonderful place in the world to live, with all the culture, the people, the beautiful weather. This is my home."

It's a sentiment Bill shared and which informed his development projects, and for their significant contributions to the community, in 2011 the couple was named Santa Fe Living Treasures. This fall Bill's memoir, *Developing My Life*, is scheduled for release. In conjunction, Zeckendorf will speak in Santa Fe and New York about her husband's life and career.

Founding director and chair of The Lensic Performing Arts Center board, Zeckendorf continues her efforts in financial support for the nonprofit. Her main goal is to establish a larger endowment to lessen the need for ongoing fundraising. "I only do one thing at a time," she says. "I worked on the American Ballet Theatre, then the Santa Fe Opera, and now The Lensic. It's part of the dancer mentality—you have to be focused and committed." ❁

COURTESY OF NANCY ZECKENDORF

