



DESIGN

— STAIRCASE STATEMENT —

Stylish redesign of a Woodbridge home pivots around a spectacular, architectural staircase

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PHOTOGRAPHY: LARRY ARNAL



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Designer Nathalie Tremblay created a contemporary kitchen. “But I think it’s friendly and comfortable,” she says. “We could have gone much more modern, but we balanced it with Shaker-style cabinets and the result is pretty timeless.”

THE DRAMATIC, GENTLY CURVING STAIRCASE that dominates the foyer of Rick and Mirella Malatesta’s Woodbridge home has always been the star of the show. It was one of the main reasons they bought the house 27 years ago, 10 days before bringing home their first son. And her “Scarlett O’Hara staircase” was the main thing Mirella still loved about the house nearly three decades later, after the rearing of her two children had taken its toll on the four-bedroom, two-storey, brick home

From the outside, the tidy suburban house with its two-car garage and tasteful plantings would be at home in any upscale suburb. Inside, the owners had dabbled at renovations over the years—a new family room here, new carpeting there—but the home desperately needed an update. Torn between making a fresh start in a new house or renovating, the couple turned to interior designer Nathalie Tremblay from Atelier Cachet for help. ☞






Horizontal slate tiles add interest and texture to the walls of the Malatestas' dining room and living room. "Because I'm using so many neutrals, I like to bring in stone for the texture," says Tremblay.

"They were set up with 1980s builder home interiors," says Tremblay. "Everything was beige: the tiles, the cupboards. And they wanted to start a new beginning, to change their lifestyle."

With the help of Tremblay, the Malatestas decided to love it, not list it. Next step? Major renovations, including a complete makeover of the main floor, which involved gutting rooms and moving walls. Upstairs needed bathroom work and other fixes. The couple

wanted an interior that would be sophisticated and modern, but still comfortable enough to entertain family and friends.

"My daughter and her friends are here constantly. We have family and friends over almost every weekend," says Mirella, who has a stuffed pantry in the basement to prove it. The couple essentially gave Tremblay carte blanche to work her magic.

The results are stunning, starting, of course, with the staircase. 





A walk-in closet was relocated and walls were moved to accommodate a generous master bath, with a marble walk-in shower and soaker tub. The Philippe Starck Ghost chair came later. "I'd always wanted one," says Rick. "I've finally got the perfect room for it."

A gleaming horizontal sweep of stainless steel frames the dark, floating steps; it's a complete change from the original pale stain with its traditional spindles. Tremblay knows the couple and knows their style. She orders custom furniture though Chair Source, Rick's high-end Woodbridge furniture store, so she took care to dovetail her signature clean, modern design to incorporate their flare for glamour.

"I know they like drama," says Tremblay. "And when you come in, the first thing you see is the

staircase, so we wanted that to be very striking."

The space had its challenges. To the right of the staircase, walls were moved to open up an enormous, contemporary kitchen where a formal dining room and tiny, dated kitchen had once stood. The new room is dominated by a 13-foot-long island, topped with "Organic White" Caesars stone. There are bar stools at one end, a sink, built-in microwave and cabinetry at the other.

"There are actually two pieces there," says Tremblay, describing the island. "The one piece



floats over top of the other. You can't really do one flat, 13-foot-long island. You'll get a seam in it and it would look like a long runway."

Marble flooring (that goes through most of the main floor) and a Carrara marble backsplash in small, geometric shapes add sophistication. Two side-by-side stainless fridges help balance the space - and indulge Mirella's love of cooking, while Shaker-style cabinets add texture. At one end, there's a built-in, vertical wine storage; at the other, a gleaming,

glassed-in china cabinet. A lace effect on the back of lobby chairs (Lisa Taylor Collection exclusive to Chair Source) add contrast.

It turns out no one even misses the old, formal dining room, and now, the award-winning kitchen (2010 Canadian Decorators Association Kitchen Gold award) is Rick's favourite space.

"I spend pretty much all of my time here," says Rick. "It's nice and central. You've got the t.v. You can have a snack or coffee. It's a comfortable place to be." ☞

The Malatestas were happy to follow their designer's lead on their new interiors: "We stayed out of her hair," says Rick. "If you get too opinionated, it's hard for a designer to do their thing. And they're the expert. You have to give them their space to do their job."



Cool, neutral greys set a soothing tone throughout the house.

Turn to the left and the kitchen flows into a bright, airy dining area. On one side, glass patio doors open onto the family's beloved backyard swimming pool. Beyond the dining space is a comfortable family room, Mirella's favourite. Most doorways were widened - some retro-fitted with pocket doors - so that the rooms flow easily into the foyer.

On the second floor, an ensuite master bathroom was completely redesigned, with

floating cabinets, built-in storage for linen, a generous bath and enormous, marble shower.

The end result, Rick and Mirella agree, is more than a makeover for their home. It helped usher in a new phase in their lives.

"We feel like she took our house and turned it into a home," Mirella says of Tremblay.

"That's my main goal," the designer says. "A renovation is not like changing an outfit. It changes your life. It changes you inside." ❧