



**Singing harmoniously:** The Annandale house, which was renovated by architect Christopher Polly. He rejuvenated the front half, gutted the next quarter and demolished the last. Photos: Brett Boardman

# Homes that hit the right notes



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From the Drawing Board

**S**ome buildings immediately speak of the connection between music and architecture, reminding us that good spaces, like music, have a rhythm, harmony and lyricism of their own; that characteristics that please the eye can also please the ear; and that the same language – rhythm, harmony, texture, proportion and dynamics – can apply to both.

A modest little house in inner-city Annandale, owned by Georgina and Stuart Cosgriff and recently renovated by Sydney architect Christopher Polly, is the catalyst for such musings this week.

The Cosgriffs bought the single-storey, two-bedroom, brick workman's cottage five years ago, describing it as a "friendly house" with spaces they loved, including the garden – featuring a towering jacaranda, hibiscus and frangipani.

But, when the family grew from two to four (and now five), they approached Polly to help

accommodate their changing needs and resolve some of the home's less charming features.

The site was an east-sloping elastic strap, 6.5 metres wide and 54 metres long, bordered north and south by neighbouring properties, the street to the west and Johnstons Creek to the east. Council planning provisions, a one in 100-year floodplain issue on the lower-creek portion of the site and central location of the jacaranda prevented any major addition to the home's footprint.

The house itself was dark. It had no connection to the garden and a "creepy" 1.9-metre high undercroft.

Not wanting a huge house, the couple asked for an extra bedroom, a study, an open-plan kitchen and a bathroom less visible to neighbours.

Polly's solution was deceptively simple: rejuvenate the front half of the house, gut the next quarter, demolish the last quarter and rear wall, excavate the undercroft and stretch the house modestly into the garden. With limited opportunity to

insert new openings to the south or north, he used a rear wall of operable glass to open both levels to greenery and light, kinked the new roof up to draw light in from the north and east, inserted strip windows where possible downstairs and north- and south-facing skylights upstairs.

The upper level was used to accommodate three bedrooms, a flexible nursery-come-study, living room and bathroom. New living, dining, kitchen, second bathroom and laundry spaces were placed downstairs – with the addition tightly planned and adding only 20 square metres to the overall footprint.

All spaces upstairs were lined in a sequence to the south of the hallway and new stairs, in keeping with the original front rooms and maximising views of the garden, cross ventilation and light and retaining the house's natural "rhythm".

"When planning the circulation, I kept the stairs on the northern side, with all bedrooms and new spaces on the southern side to maintain the same rhythm," Polly said.

Outside, a "single note" of charcoal grey was used to mark the new addition, with the colour used on all materials – allowing the new house to sing harmoniously with the old.

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