

Big Ideas



Small Buildings

**GREEN**

Thames & Hudson

# symphony in cedar

Garden Pavilion

Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2003

Paul Raff Studio with Sasquatch Designlab

It could be a stage for operatic events, or a camp shelter, the ceiling's gently bowed shape recalling both acoustical engineering and the sweep of tented canvas. It is, in fact, a pavilion set in an urban garden, inspired, says architect Paul Raff, by both the centuries-old tradition of the Japanese tea house and 'common local construction techniques and materials'.

'I was also mindful of the architectural vernacular of garden elements such as fences and trellises, especially their permeability,' continues Raff. 'They sort of breathe.' It is the way the building sits subtly integrated with, and yet apart from, the natural environment that invites comparisons with the Japanese model. And it is the simple but highly functional design that reveals a home-grown, but by no means garden-variety, tendency. Raff and the team at Sasquatch Design went to great pains to determine the precise angle of the sun at the summer solstice so that the doubly curved bris-de-soleil (roof structure) would sit perpendicular to its path.

The roof, which opens wide at the front to allow musical performances to take place on the extended deck, is also tilted along the north-south axis to screen

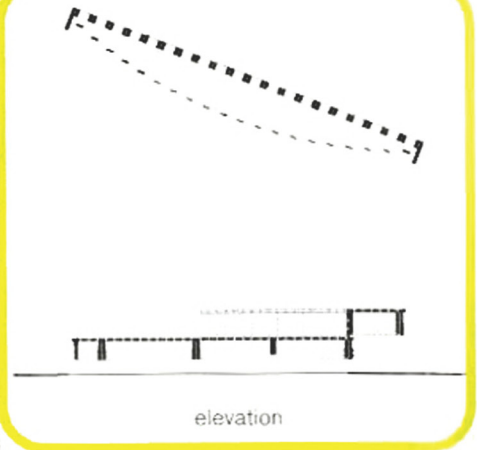
the sun at its strongest point. The latticework design allows filtered light to penetrate, so that even in cooler months this is still a sunny aspect from which to view the house and garden, and it does indeed breathe. The walls are built in two layers, with the interior layer tilting backward to make for comfortable backrests to the built-in benches. The two walls on the outer layer slant southwards with the tilt of the roof. Together the layers create a pleasant pattern of light and shadow, but also provide the necessary overall rigidity that eliminates the need for unsightly ties or cross-braces.

Such precision – each slat measures 5 by 10 centimetres and is set 10 centimetres apart – belies the natural harmony and appeal of the structure: the effortless blend of untreated cedar with the garden greenery, the rhythm of the lattice design (repeated endlessly in a mirrored tabletop), the criss-cross of shadows. The client, a teacher with an interest in music, wanted to make better use of her garden space. Now a path leads from the traditional 1930s house along the 38-metre rectangular plot to this shelter in the woods, a place for private reflection, outdoor dining, music recitals, a view from a different angle.





The owner of a house with a long, narrow garden added this modern wooden gazebo for musical performances and private reflection. The angles of the roof and walls were carefully calculated, so that the structure provides optimum shade in summer and natural light all year round.





'My research had to do with ways architecture can enable better access to nature,' says Raff, 'especially the sky.'