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A HEAVY ENGLISH CHANDELIER lit by candles is the first clue: Designers Mallory Marshall and James Light are out to bring majesty and romance to the dining room. "I'm on a crusade to put the dining room back into people's lives," Marshall says. "It just isn't used enough." For Marshall, the cozy comfort of the kitchen is fine, but families also deserve time "to focus on one another and on the meal, with no distractions," she says. To that end, the designers worked to establish a formal dignity that's worlds away from the kitchen. Their tools included antique and reproduction English furnishings, including Queen Anne-style dining chairs, an ornate mirror, a Victorian terrarium reincarnated as an end table, and a 19th-century wing chair. Creamy-hued monochromatic fabrics update the look. Underfoot, Marshall and Light enriched plain wood floors with an old-world grid pattern after hand-sanding and glazing them. To increase drama, they visually elongated the windows by hanging curtains from the ceiling, more than a foot above the windows, and extending them all the way to the floor, more than a foot below the sills. Walls painted a soft green envelop the room with cool serenity, making it an "island of calm," Marshall says. The clean palette, as well as a contemporary sculpture on a burl-walnut pedestal, keeps the area approachable and current, and enhances its updated grandeur. "Dining rooms should be welcoming and embracing," says Marshall. "Every meal should be a state occasion, because in your own home, you are head of state."





The calm ambience continues into the library, which features yet more white fabrics on classic furnishings like an antique wing chair and a pair of sleek tufted tub chairs. Walls are painted an icy blue-gray with accents of "silver lining" white, and floors are lightened with a pale white carpet remnant.

But the real design feat was adding architectural interest to a boxy room that had none. Marshall and Light made the windows inviting with a sparkling-white window seat, and embellished the walls with wainscoting and moldings. And, to make the space a library in more than name, they even built in floor-to-ceiling bookcases. No fireplace existed, but they created the sense of one with a nonfunctional hearth topped with a mantel, which they then built around. Topped with a large mirror, the faux fireplace serves as an architectural focal point. It also provides balance for the new bookshelves, and its mirror brightens the room with reflected light. Black accessories and dark wood finishes contrast with the pale walls and upholstery for a crisp dark/light palette. Crewel side panels over linen Roman shades repeat the light brown hue of the mantel for visual flow. A stone-top, neoclassical desk combines streamlined shape with modern function: Its legs are drilled to conceal electrical cords from the Tizio lamp—or even a laptop.

**Portland Symphony Showhouse (Portland, Maine)**  
**Interior designers:** Mallory Marshall and James Light  
**Photographer:** Eric Roth  
**Regional editor:** Estelle Bond Goralnick

For more information, see the Buying Guide on page 140.



This is a room for listening, writing, reflecting.

—INTERIOR DESIGNER MALLORY MARSHALL