

In the closet with Alison Balsom

The Brit Award winner loves classical pieces and neutral colours

Words and styling by Tricia Welch



“I need a lot of evening wear. For award ceremonies I always wear Armani”

Alison, 32, was recently crowned Female Artist of the Year at the Classical Brit Awards. Alison took up the trumpet aged seven at primary school and is now a visiting professor of trumpet to the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Currently single, she lives in London with her son Charlie, aged 18 months.

How do you describe your style?

Classic and simple. I like clean lines.

What colours, shapes and styles suit you best?

I love neutrals – black, white and lots of cream – and quite structured, mannish outfits. They make me feel empowered.

Who is your style icon? Elle Macpherson. She’s my heroine because she’s a working mother.

Which celebrity’s wardrobe would you most like to own? Jemima Khan’s.

Do you have a beauty secret? I’m constantly travelling so my skin gets dry and Crème de la Mer is a saviour.

How do you dress on “fat” days?

Lots of black and or jersey, which is very forgiving.

Do you have a stylist?

I love to work with Marina Olivati. She’s like sunshine to have around.

What is your current favourite outfit?

White jeans, a double belt and a camel cashmere Cavalli jumper with YSL camel heels.

Is there an “old favourite” that you turn to in a wardrobe crisis?

A lovely black and white dress from River Island.

What is the oldest item in your wardrobe? A Biba minidress that my mum gave to me.

Have you ever made a fashion faux pas? I think the most public one was the dress I wore to perform at the Brits 2009. It wasn’t elegant enough and I felt uncomfortable.

What is the most crushing remark anyone has made about your clothes?

My brother said I looked like a raw sausage in a light pink silk corset and trousers combo. I changed after that.

Do you own more day wear than evening wear?

Evening wear might tip the balance as I need a lot for concerts. At the moment my favourite evening dress is a red satin gown by Belville Sassoon. But for award ceremonies I always wear Armani.

Do you have a favourite LBD?

No. My equivalent is a little white dress by Karen Millen – it’s very Grace Kelly.

Do you own anything vintage?

Dresses from my mum who’s got a great sense of style, plus some staggeringly beautiful scarves that belonged to my grandparents.

What are your favourite designer and high-street shops? Armani and American Apparel.

What is the most expensive item in your wardrobe?

A black Cavalli couture evening dress for £4,000.

What is your best fashion bargain?

A pair of perfectly simple gold Jimmy Choos that I found in a sale.

Is your underwear frilly or sporty, matching or mismatched?

Matching underwear is one of the small pleasures in life.

How many handbags do you own?

Less than 10.

Do you wear silver or gold jewellery?

I love both.

Do you wear diamonds?

Yes. I alternate between huge Marc Jacobs and Jil Sander sunnies. They have to compete for my love every day.

What is your fashion must-have for this season?

YSL stilettos.

Do you have a fashion address book secret?

Bicester Village... shh!

What article of clothing would you save from a burning house?

My mum’s Biba minidress. ☺

Alison’s latest work Italian Concertos is out now on EMI Classics.



Facing page: Alison looks sensational in her favourite concert dress, a red satin gown by Belville Sassoon. The musician has more evening wear than day wear. "I need a lot for concerts," she says

This page, clockwise, from top left: Alison loves these "staggeringly beautiful" vintage scarves which belonged to her grandparents

Alison likes to scour jumble sales for bargain bags, such as this small snakeskin one. The sunglasses are Topshop and Marc Jacobs

"My style is classic and simple," says Alison. "I like clean lines." Here she wears a soft grey Ralph Lauren shirt with Roberto Cavalli white jeans

Alison has won three Classical Brit Awards in total, including 2011's Female Artist of the Year. The awards are seen here with a selection of her favourite shoes. The silver lace-ups are from Selfridges, the black strappy heels are by Armani and the gold dancing shoes are by Topline

Instead of an LBD, Alison has a little white dress from Karen Millen – "It's very Grace Kelly,"

she says. The black and white spot dress is by Armani. The monochrome Chanel-style jersey dress, a bargain from River Island, is an old favourite she turns to in a wardrobe crisis

Alison's favourite everyday outfit is her white Cavalli jeans worn with a Cavalli double belt and beige YSL court heels

One of Alison's trumpets pictured with her favourite pieces of jewellery. The pearl ring is by jewellery designer Zoe Harding, Alison's cousin, while the earrings and pearls were bought in New York