

In the closet with

# Arlene Phillips

The choreographer loves to be a star turn in sequins and costume jewellery

Words and styling by Tricia Welch

“I love Topshop but feel uncomfortable in there, so my daughter goes for me”

Arlene, 67, became a TV star as a judge on *Strictly Come Dancing* and *So You Think You Can Dance*. A multiple Olivier Award winner for her stage work, she was the director and choreographer behind the Hot Gossip dance troupe in the 70s, and has also designed a range of costume jewellery. She

has two daughters, Alana and Abi, and lives with her partner, Angus Lon, in London.

**How do you describe your style?** Easy on, easy off.

**What colours, shapes and styles suit you best?** I used to be an all-black woman, but colour has

sprung into my life and I'm embracing red, hot pink and vibrant blue. I go for shapes that enhance my upper body and fall gracefully over my lower half.

**Which celebrity's wardrobe would you most like to own?** Cat Deeley's. She has the most amazing clothes but because she's so tall and slim, they probably wouldn't suit me.

**Do you have a beauty secret?** Alana, my daughter, who's a make-up artist. In 15 minutes she can work her magic on me and I leave the house with a spring in my step.

**How do you dress on "fat" days?** I wear a dress from my collection for Marisota. It has sleeves that finish at the elbow, clings over the boobs, then falls like a waterfall over my body. It's the most flattering shape.

**Do you have a stylist?** Not officially, but if I need help, my daughter shops for me. I love Topshop but feel uncomfortable in there, so Alana goes along instead.

**What is your current favourite outfit?** A purple coat from Monsoon.

**What is the one item of clothing you couldn't live without?** A pair of Repetto shoes from Selfridges – they look like ordinary low-heeled lace-ups but they bend like dancing shoes, so they're perfect for rehearsing in.

**Do you clear out your wardrobe each season?** I clear out and offer things to family and friends first, then the rest goes to charity.

**Have you ever made a fashion faux pas?** A green leather Claude Montana jacket with huge shoulders – it was the most money I'd spent on anything and I hardly ever wore it.

**What is your most successful party outfit?** A knee-length, sequin, tunic-style Matthew Williamson dress that I have in three colours – it's the perfect shape for me.

**Do you have a favourite LBD?** A dress I designed for Marisota – it's so comfortable and flattering.

**Do you own any vintage clothing?** I'm an avid collector. I used to buy expensive pieces but not now – I like to wear them without feeling precious.

**What are your favourite designer and high-street shops?** Stella McCartney and Topshop.

**What is the most expensive item in your wardrobe?** A Stella McCartney sequin dress I bought earlier this year for the *Strictly* tour and have worn several times since on the red carpet. I'm not one of those people who only wear a special dress once.

**What is your sexiest outfit?** A black leather jacket over a red tailored dress, both by Alice Temperley. It's the combination of hard edged over softness that works so well.

**Is your underwear frilly or sporty, matching or mismatched?** Always matching. I'm a fan of Agent Provocateur and Coco de Mer, but I'll often put my Spanx on top!

**How many handbags do you own?** I'm ashamed to say a wardrobe full.

**Do you have more shoes than clothes?** No. I don't have a lot of shoes – I like wearing the ones I do have over and over again.

**Do you have a fashion address book secret?** Shrimpton Couture, an online Canadian vintage shop.

**What article of clothing would you save from a burning house?** A nightdress that was my mother's. 





**Facing page: Arlene's favourite vintage red and black dress from Pop Boutique**

**This page, clockwise, from top left: One of Arlene's vintage finds, this tartan jacket is teamed with the gold necklace and watch she wears every day**

**She designed her favourite LBD for Marisota – "It's so comfortable and flattering," she says**

**Arlene wears a sequin dress by her favourite designer, Stella McCartney. Her So You Think You Can Dance co-judge Louise Redknapp told her it would be the ideal style for her – "I bought it for the Strictly tour and have**

**worn it several times since on the red carpet," she says**

**Arlene says she loves sparkly costume jewellery for evening, especially pieces she created herself. "I designed them so they are light, to avoid spoiling the line of an outfit," she says**

**"I don't have a lot of shoes – I like wearing the ones I do have over and over again," says Arlene. These sparkly Gina heels are seen here with two faux diamond necklaces from Arlene's collection of jewellery for QVC**

**"Colour has sprung into my life and I'm embracing red, hot pink and vibrant blue," says Arlene. This stripy cardigan, bought**

**from a vintage shop in Glasgow, is a perfect example**

**The choreographer confesses that she has a wardrobe full of handbags: this classic black mock croc style is by Aspinal of London**

**Arlene Phillips fashion jewellery is available exclusively from QVC. Prices from £20-£60. See [www.qvcuk.com](http://www.qvcuk.com) for details**

**She was photographed at The Bloomsbury Hotel, 16-22 Great Russell Street, London (020 7347 1000). A special festive package is available from £189 for two people, excluding VAT – see [www.doylecollection.com/packages](http://www.doylecollection.com/packages)**