

## In the closet with

### The waltz king's sense of style is in perfect harmony

Words and styling by Tricia Welch

André, 65, is the world's most successful violinist and the bestselling classical musician of all time. He owns the biggest private orchestra in the world, has sold over 40 albums and DVDs and received more than 400 Platinum and 171 Gold Awards. Known as the waltz king, André has been married for 40 years to Marjorie. The couple have two sons.

**How would you describe your style?** My style reflects who I am inside and how I feel. It's the real me. I never follow other people's ideas about fashion. I'm an individual in all things. You can see it in my home – there are witty touches and surprises everywhere. That's the reason behind my success. I'm not playing to anyone's tune, only my own.

**Which colours suit you best?** I love colour – bright scarlet-red, pink, blues, greens. I have a feminine side to me and I'm not afraid to express that in my choice of colour and patterns.

**When did you first become interested in fashion?** I've always been interested. At school, my mother bought my shirts but I taught myself to use her sewing machine and altered them to fit me better. I remember adding ruffles. I was 15, the time of the Beatles and collarless suits, but I wanted to look like Mozart.

**How long have you been designing the costumes for your Johann Strauss orchestra?**

From the beginning. Before that I remember a critic saying he loved the music – it was so joyous – but it was such a pity the orchestra was all in black and looked like nuns. I agreed. As soon as I started making money, I began designing exquisite ball gowns in beautiful fabrics for the musicians so they would look fabulous.

**Why is it so important to you to be involved with every aspect of a concert performance?**

Because every aspect is important. I see the design of everything in my mind – I imagine the lighting, the set, the staging, the costumes – and this has to be perfect. But all this is still secondary to the music, yet when these details are right, the performance is the best it can be.

**What do you feel most comfortable in when playing the violin?** My tails are made especially so I can move, so they are not restricting. I also no longer play with a cushion under

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my neck – the violin is directly under my chin. It isn't comfortable, it hurts, but I play better.

**What is your favourite fashion era?**

For men, the medieval period. Clothes were looser, more flowing so you could be free. I love the legging-type hose, the open-neck tunics, the flowing sleeves. There was nothing constricting.

**What do you think of today's fashion for men?** It is a catastrophe. It is so boring.

I have a blue suit that I sometimes wear to meetings but it is terrible. It isn't me. I don't know why I wear it.

**Do you enjoy dressing up?** No, not at all. I like the finished result but not the changing – too much fuss and time. Once I choose an outfit from my closet and I'm happy with it, I'll often wear it a second or third day because I'm too lazy to choose again. I may look like a man who spends a lot of time on his appearance but that's not true at all. Marjorie is always coaxing me to change my outfits when she's fed up of seeing me in the same things.

**Do you have a lot made to measure, both personally and professionally?** I design most of my shoes because I have different size feet. Seriously, it's a whole size difference. I don't like shoelaces – too much work – especially at airports when you have to take them off. So I design slippers, in collaboration with shoemaker Ruud Wolter in

André on the steps of his home (a castle near Maastricht) with his priceless 1732 Stradivarius violin. He wears a white jacket from K-Atelier, a shirt by Stefano Ricci, trousers by Re.Bell and shoes by Wolters Orthopedie

