

WHIRL



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**SEMIANNUAL
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GUIDE**

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AUGUST 2009



August 2009

WHIRLED Style /STYLE FILE



Giving Back

Bonnie Walker helps others' style shine.

By Leslie Hoffman | Photography by Megan Wylie

Bonnie Walker's signature is the monogrammed dance floor.

Style is a broad topic: It is not limited to fashion, or decor, or music or art. It encompasses everything about a person. The poet Wallace Stevens wrote, "Style is not something applied. It is something that permeates. It is of the nature of that in which it is found, whether the poem, the manner of a god, the bearing of a man. It is not a dress." Surely Stevens meant that style is greater than the sum of its parts. When we asked event planner Bonnie Walker to be a "Style File" for us, we entered into this discussion of style. Walker has more than 25 years of experience producing events that create whole new worlds for the evening, the weekend, the after-party. Her artistic eye and supreme attention to detail is expressed in the weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, anniversary parties, and non-profit fundraisers and galas that she designs in Western Pennsylvania, New York, Aspen, and other cities around the country through her companies Bonnie Walker Events and studio e entertainment. Walker's own style lies in bringing out that of others: One of her signatures is a hand-painted dance floor, often embellished with a monogram. Another signature incorporates the name of the



guest of honor throughout the event. When the guests leave the party, she wants them to say, “Suzy’s party was so great,” or, “The LHAS gala was so wonderful,” not, “that was a Bonnie event.” Walker is modest. “I love to be in the background; I love to disappear at events. I love to not exist at the events,” she says, wearing her own staple black and white.



The hand-painted dance floor is another of Walker’s event signatures.

How do you define style?

Wherever I go, the No. 1 thing is that the client and myself, we have to be comfortable. I’m comfortable when I’m making the person that I’m with comfortable. Every event is different, every person’s style is different, and every city is different.

You are wearing your mother’s pearls in this picture. What kind of advice do you give your clients about making their style personal?

I tell my clients to wear something that’s meaningful to them. Grab something of your grandmother’s: Take her hanky, and we can sew it into the wedding dress, or take her wedding dress or even some material from it, and we can incorporate it into the huppa.

How else do you help your clients express their own style?

I always say, take your loved one, your child, your husband, your boyfriend, and start from the beginning of the event. Look at each other and say, look what we made. This is for everyone; this isn’t just for us. And I promise you, 25 years later, you will never forget that night. That’s what style is.

Your events are so detail-oriented. How do you keep track of everything?

I love pressure. Pressure excites me. I have a pen and paper next to my bed, and in the middle of the night, I wake up and jot down ideas, things that I want to create. I want to come up with new, great ideas for the client. I love bringing out their style.

You’re originally from Washington, D.C., and you have a Washingtonian’s interest in politics. Would you talk to me a little bit about the style that President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama are imparting to the country?

We all respect the President, and of course they’re both brilliant people, but they want everybody to feel comfortable in their home, even though the White House is the most famous home in the world.

Do you think the President and the First Lady and their style are influencing the way people are planning their events and special occasions?

I think it’s what’s going on with the whole world today. People are really starting to open their eyes and see what their parents and grandparents have always taught us. It’s about how we treat other people.

What did your own parents teach you?

Simplicity. My mother always said to me: “Accessorize, accessorize, accessorize.” Buy quality things that you could have worn 10 years ago and that you can wear 10 years from now, things that are classic.

What are some new things in the events industry that you’re excited about?

I like mixing new with old. I’d rather take something that’s old, that’s meaningful, and that has a story and a history than bringing out something new. Mixing it is fabulous. When it comes to weddings, I love, love, love bringing all types of pictures from the families: the great grandparents, the parents, all of their wedding pictures. And then we display them at the entry, or you can use them for centerpieces.

What style advice would you give our readers?

Style doesn’t have to be clothes or accessories, it doesn’t have to be shoes or purses, or jewelry. Style is your personality. Style is what’s in your heart. Style is what’s in yourself. And that’s what you have to bring out.

Bonnie Walker Events, 320 Fort Duquesne Blvd., Downtown. 412.572.5227. 445 Park Ave., 9th floor, New York. 212.829.5659. *studio e entertainment*, 320 Fort Duquesne Blvd., Downtown. 412.572.5090.

Bonnie's ...

Hair stylist

She gets her locks lightened at *MCN Salon* by owner Jim McNamara.

MCN Salon, 412.441.5151.



Signature spec

Alain Wikli. Find a pair like Bonnie's at Neovision.

Neovision at *SouthSide Works*, 412.481.1103.



Event this month

Ladies Hospital Aid Society Gala, August 22 at the Westin Convention Center Pittsburgh.

LHAS, 412.648.6106.

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