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### *Sleigh Bells and Wedding Bells!*

It is my pleasure to congratulate Prince William and Kate Middleton on their engagement, and I wish them all happiness. Of course, I welcome Kate as one who will be able to promote British fashion worldwide - and no doubt with great style.

According to WWD, Bruce Oldfield is tipped to design the wedding gown as he did for Lady Di.



I loved the blue dress she wore for her engagement announcement but, as she is so slim, Kate could have created more of an hourglass figure had it had a fuller skirt. Think of Liz Hurley. She has a similar silhouette but knows how to look



curvy. And as we have been known to say in the States: 'What the Lord hath forgotten, we can always stuff with cotton.' There is a truism here. Underpinnings are more and more a part of dress construction. Some of the soft dresses currently on trend come with shaping in place under the fitted bodices.

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Returning to Kate, I have been considering the labels that she might wear successfully and promote aboard. Burberry is certainly one, and maybe Barbour, since that company has recently reinvented itself with a range of outerwear that can go from the country into the city. Some of their jackets would look good with skinny jeans or a legging with a high-heeled boot. Over the knee boots are the best investment piece for the next few years.



For day and evening wear there's Amanda Wakeley and even Vivienne Westwood who does shape so well. As Kate has dark hair and can therefore take colour, she could also look at Matthew Williamson or Jonathan Sanders.



One of my clients pointed out that she sees only the darker pieces of designer ranges here in the UK, whereas in other parts of Europe, the same designer will offer gorgeous colours and fabric textures. This I know and understand. By and large, the British don't like to be noticed, and so don't wear colour. Celebrities and the royals, however, are required to stand out and to be photographed, and so will opt for stronger colours and strong clear shapes.

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I make a plea for adding colour to your outfits. It's true that there are certain brands such as Hobbs who do feature strong colours. You just need to be aware that, unless you have a dark skin, these colours can be overwhelming, but do consider a pattern can help you deflect attention from a part of the body you are unhappy with, or soften boring 'blocks' of black, grey or brown. This season there are plenty of plaids, checks and animal prints which are just perfect for adding an element of interest.



By all means add a little colour to your skin, but here I am talking about lip-gloss and blusher; beware of fake tans which can so easily make you look artificial.

I also must touch again on lengths. They are so important. A dress that is too long at the hem or the sleeves can be very aging. Shorten the dress; add a belt and a complementary shade of tights and you can go instantly from frumpy to very stylish. If you wear leggings, consider the length of your tunic or top. Unless you have a marvellous highly toned body, the top should thigh length or hit you at the widest part of your hip.



Incidentally, Gap is offering some great cardigans, slightly fitted, that go perfectly with either a legging or a skirt to the knee.

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My favourite men's accessory gift has to be the snood as it is fashion forward and will keep the neck very warm. What I really like is that it can be pulled over the head too, which is perfect for more snowy days ahead.



I wish you all a very happy holiday and hope you have enjoyed my tips and inspirations and I will look forward to a New Year with the great style that will come with it.

Love you!

*Patrick Swan*

*PS – Remember – 20% off for all returning shopping clients!*