

For Immediate Release

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DAME SHIRLEY BASSEY: 50 YEARS OF GLITTERING GOWNS

A Gala Charity Auction at Christie's in association with Swarovski

Thursday 18 September 2003



"I feel very proud knowing I wore these gorgeous gowns... I've had great success from [them] - I love them all..."

- Dame Shirley Bassey

London – Christie's in association with Swarovski, the world's leading manufacturer of cut crystal, is delighted to announce the gala charity auction of glittering gowns from the collection of Dame Shirley Bassey. Celebrating 50 years in show business this year, Dame Shirley's spectacular gowns, which span her entire career, reflect the enormous contribution she has made to the world of fashion and entertainment.

Proceeds from this unique charity auction will go towards the Dame Shirley Bassey Scholarship at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff and the Noah's Ark Children's Hospital Appeal. The auction is expected to realize in excess of £50,000.

Dame Shirley Bassey's association with Swarovski began in the mid 1950s with her first Swarovski crystal-adorned dress designed by Douglas Darnell. Known affectionately as The Diamond Dress by Dame Shirley, this stunning creation will be offered as the final lot in the Christie's sale. Since then Swarovski crystals have been an integral part of Dame Shirley's stage wardrobe, adding glitter, glamour and sparkle to the gowns which are trademarks of her now legendary performances.

"I am thrilled my collection of gowns, so lovingly hand made and designed by Douglas Darnell will help raise money for two deserving causes so close to my heart," said Dame Shirley Bassey. "Parting with these beautiful gowns will be an emotional experience as they have brought me great success in my career and have been loved and admired by so many. I hope the new owners take as much pleasure from them as I have over the last 50 years."

Nadja Swarovski, Vice President, Swarovski said: "This exciting collection of crystal-encrusted gowns that spans Dame Shirley Bassey's dazzling career adds another chapter to the story of Swarovski's involvement with the world of show business glamour. Ever since my great great grandfather set up the company in 1895, Swarovski has supplied crystal jewellery stones to stars of stage, screen, cabaret and couture, in fact everyone who wanted to shine. So it is another privilege for our crystal to have been chosen by Dame Shirley to express her personal power, glamour and exuberant talent. It is also a wonderful opportunity to be working together with Christie's and Dame Shirley on such a noble event in order to raise money for the Dame Shirley Bassey Scholarship and the Noah's Ark Appeal."

Jussi Pylkkänen, Christie's Deputy Chairman comments: "It is a tremendous tribute to Dame Shirley that after fifty years at the pinnacle of the music industry she has taken the momentous decision to sell her famous dress collection. It is an honour for Christie's to be able to organise such a unique event on her behalf. The sale marks the first occasion in fifty years that this extraordinary collection has been shown publicly. The exhibition, like the auction, promises to be a dazzling event and we look forward to raising a significant sum for the charities concerned."

Dame Shirley Bassey D.B.E.

Dame Shirley Bassey is truly one of the greats of the entertainment business whose unwavering global appeal spans five decades and as many generations. With what is arguably one of the most magnificent voices in the history of popular music, tremendous glamour and overwhelming charm, Dame Shirley has been thrilling fans and amassing new ones for 50 years. In 1964 her belting rendition of the James Bond theme song Goldfinger became a worldwide hit, selling more than a million copies in the U.S. alone. This was followed by Diamonds Are Forever and Moonraker which helped establish her as a household name on every continent and the only artist to have recorded three Bond theme songs. In 2000, Dame Shirley was awarded a DBE and in April this year, the French Government honoured her with a Legion d'Honneur in recognition of her successful career.

The Gowns

The fifty breathtaking gowns to be offered at Christie's span Dame Shirley's entire career and almost all have been created by her preferred designer Douglas Darnell. The majority of the gowns are lavishly decorated with the magnificent sparkling crystals of Swarovski.

The earliest dress in the sale is the diamond dress dating from 1955, a dazzling sleeveless stage gown encrusted with literally thousands of Swarovski aurora borealis crystals and a wonderful flowing train elaborately trimmed with ostrich feathers; it weighs an incredible 6 kg.

In January 1963 Dame Shirley was invited to Washington to sing for President John F. Kennedy at the celebration of his inauguration. The shimmering stage ensemble she wore on this illustrious occasion will be included in the sale as is the chic chiffon dress she wore to the post performance party to meet the President. The former, a pink gauze bias cut gown encrusted with candy pink iridescent sequins and matching voluminous sleeveless stage coat, also featured on several album covers released during the 1970s.

Another striking creation is a dramatic black velvet gown embellished with a stunning three-dimensional orchid made from Swarovski crystals of varying sizes. This gown is one of Dame Shirley's favourites, and has been worn by her on numerous occasions since the 1950s.

Further highlights include the sensational gold and silver sequinned and beaded gown Dame Shirley most associates with her first international hit, Goldfinger, the theme song to the 1964 James Bond film. Another much cherished creation is a fabulous catsuit of natural-coloured chiffon lavishly embellished with Swarovski aquamarine, topaz and aurora borealis

crystals, complete with matching coat-dress – Dame Shirley wore this ensemble during her 60th Birthday Concert at Althorp Park in 1997.

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Images available on request
General Information: 020.7839.9060
Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com

NOTE TO EDITORS

Viewing:

The sale will be on view at Christie's, 8 King Street, London SW1 on:

Saturday 13 September: 2pm – 5pm
Sunday 14 September: 2pm – 5pm
Monday 15 September: 10am – 4.30pm
Tuesday 16 September: 10am – 8pm
Wednesday 17 September: 10am – 4.30pm

Auction: Thursday 18 September: 8.15pm (approximately)

Catalogue: A fully illustrated colour catalogue is available priced at £25/\$40

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SWAROVSKI

A selection of the gowns from the Dame Shirley Bassey Collection will be displayed in the Swarovski store in Knightsbridge prior to the auction on 18 September.

For more than a hundred years Swarovski, the Austrian family company based in Wattens in the Tyrol, has been the world's leading manufacturer of cut crystal. Crystal jewellery stones and crystalline semi-finished goods for the fashion, jewellery and lighting industries are as much a part of the company's product range as gift articles and collectibles fashioned from faceted crystal. Swarovski's artistic and design abilities are evident in Daniel Swarovski Paris and Swarovski Jewellery, the company's accessory and jewellery ranges. Since 1995 visitors have been able to enjoy the ultimate crystal experience at the Swarovski Crystal Worlds. The Swarovski group also includes Tyrolit, which produces grinding tools and abrasives, Swarovski Optik, the company's optics division, with its precision optics for hunting and nature observation, and Signity, which cuts natural and synthetic precious stones. Discover the magic of crystal at www.swarovski.com

THE CHARITIES

The Dame Shirley Bassey Scholarship

The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is dedicated to providing vocational training for the music and drama professions. In honour of Dame Shirley's extraordinary contribution to music, she was made an Honorary Fellow of the College in 1993. Dame Shirley will establish The Dame Shirley Bassey Scholarship, which will be awarded each year to young people of outstanding talent who seek to train at the Cardiff-based College.
www.rwcmd.ac.uk

The Noah's Ark Appeal

The Noah's Ark Appeal was launched in 2000 to build Phase One of the first ever Children's Hospital in Wales and reached its initial target of £5 million at the beginning of 2003. Building on the site in Cardiff is now underway and Wales will no longer be the only country in Europe without a dedicated hospital for very sick children. But the Appeal is in need of a further £1.5 million to equip the hospital. Dame Shirley Bassey is generously providing her support with the sale of her collection of spectacular stage gowns.
www.noahs-ark-appeal.org

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