

You can just feel the *magic* as you see the lights and cautiously, with awe, finally step through the entranceway of the designer showroom. The ballgowns, Latin fashions, evening wear and practice apparel are luxurious, delightful, and can be overwhelming with ruffles, movement, angles and designs, crystals, pearls, flowers, fringe, brilliant colors (or soft), fabrics of elegance and some to “make a statement.”

You may have just walked into the designer showroom, but where does your journey start? It is helpful to have thought about what you want before you get there. I usually take a couple of days to make notes and make some decisions about my preferences of color, fabric type, dress design and decoration. You can find many ideas from websites, magazine advertisements, or dancewear booths at major ballroom events.

Three questions you need to ask: 1) what style of dance is the dress for, 2) is it practice wear, a studio/community showcase, or major competition, and 3) what is my budget? Remember to take your notes. Even if elements change, you have something to work from.

Next comes the “I” or “me” part of the project. This tends to be a reality check because a hindrance to the magic can be having a Cinderella concept, expecting to force your way into misguided expectations. The magic can’t happen if you’re trying to be someone else. The focus, the dream, needs to be with you in mind. When you deal with the reality of shape/size, color/crystal coordination, and mirror movement (what you see/what the audience sees) you are halfway there.

Now you can watch the designer take the helm and begin the creative process. Take a deep breath, pay attention, and be ready for change “outside the box”. Those notes you made can be your guideline but not the final product. You came for advice, and this is what the designer does for a living. They train, they know their products and exercise their perception and talents daily, all because they are here to please you. The advice to “pay attention” is to initiate new senses and prospects. It is also to help you guard against those who are pushing for the sale, their only objective being to make you part of their score.

An effective designer may not be a ballroom dancer, but they go to events and watch. They want to be sure they are up on the current styles, what colors and designs stand out against the crowd, how the dresses move on the dance floor and what their product looks like under the lights. They watch for movement, the comfort and confidence of the customer in the dress, and how the judges and the audience are impacted.

It will be your dress to wear, and you will pay for it. **You** must like it, your dance partner or instructor will be watching you so their preference might be important, and considering the cost, you will more than likely be wearing it again. During the selection or designing process be sure to ask questions, make suggestions, then be confident as you take ownership of this new look.

Now you can pause, relax, and realize the *magic* happened somewhere in the process!

Staying at the Imperial Hotel for the Blackpool Dance Festival 2019, I visited the Chrisanne-Clover Display multiple times. A new International Standard dance dress has been designed especially for me working with several resources of fabrics and crystals. With much patience and focus, they have gone through the process described above and in the proper time, the new creation will be revealed! Special thanks to the entire Chrisanne-Clover Design Team, and to Tobi. If you want to have your own dress designed too, you can contact the team at couture@chrisanne-clover.com or visit the website at www.chrisanne-clover.com/couture Martha Harper