



One of Henry Schickerling's dazzling couture designs. The SA-born designer has two new outfits prepared for opera star Renée Fleming.

Opera diva to dress for success in SA

DIANE DE BEER

ONE OF the most celebrated classical singers of our time, soprano Renée Fleming will be performing in South Africa – in Pretoria on Saturday night, Durban (tonight) and Cape Town (September 1).

This is not her first time in this country as she was a contestant in one of the earlier Pretoria-based Unisa international classical singing competitions. She came second but that was before her current stunning career.

More recently she appeared on screens all around the country as part of the opera series at Cinema Nouveau. She features in the New York Metropolitan Opera's Live in HD series for movie theatres and television, which has been very popular locally among opera fans.

Still these are not her only South African connections. In her local concerts, she will be performing in gowns designed by a former South African couturier now living and working successfully in New York.

Those who can remember as far back as the 1970s and early 1980s and were vaguely interested in local fashion will recognise the name

Henry Schickerling.

He left for an international career in the mid-1980s and for the past decade he has been establishing his own line Tosca Couture in the US.

A passionate opera follower, he can also be heard on local radio (RSG) on Sunday nights talking opera and further establishing his operatic designs for another Metropolitan star, mezzo soprano Susan Graham.

For the local concerts, Schickerling has designed two spectacular gowns for the US diva, one which she will wear onstage at the start of her performance, and the other, after the interval. It's a coup for this fashion veteran with strong South African ties.

He describes her as one of the best dressed women in the US.

"She wears clothes by designers like Dior, Karl Lagerfeld, Christian Lacroix, Vivien Westwood, Oscar de la Renta and Bill Blass", says the designer. He also praises the diva as one of his easiest clients. "Because she's used to fitting costumes, she knows exactly what she wants and is easy to please," he says.

If your company is called Tosca Couture, how could Ms Fleming resist?

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