

Smitherman & Barnwell Stir Excitement at The Pierre and Leave an Indelible Mark on Fashion

The imaginative and illustrious flower girl dress designs of Smitherman & Barnwell stole the show at The Bridal Event held at The Pierre on Saturday, February 26th, 2005. The event, presented by LM Productions, was *the* place for some of the best in New York's bridal industry to exhibit products that are sure to make any wedding a memorable event.

Pampered Tots opened the first of two fashion shows with their Pink Stars and Sugar Collection, which featured dresses exclusively designed by Smitherman & Barnwell. As Sinatra's "The Way You Look Tonight" floated around the room, beautiful little girls made their way down the runway in stunning fashions. The range of color and originality of each of the dresses caused many excited whispers. However, it was the Butterfly Dress, with a white sleeveless top, pink bottom and two detachable pink butterflies delicately placed on the lower back of this beautiful dress that stunned audience members. This particular dress managed to set fire to the imagination of Elsa Batista, of New York. "That dress is very cute," said Ms. Batista, "You could build a whole wedding theme around it. You could let butterflies go after the wedding ceremony or something like that. There are so many things you could do."

By the time the second show began, it was impossible not to feel the excitement and electricity throughout the crowd, which had grown in such number that it was standing room only. As Andrea Bocelli and Sarah Brightman's enchanting song "Con Te Partirò" or "Time to Say Goodbye" played, charming young models took to the runway in dresses and gowns from Smitherman & Barnwell's chic Cucina collection. The innovation and freshness of design captured the crowd; even the names of the dresses caused a reaction from the audience. In response to the Tiramisu gown, whose shimmering fabric has various shades of brown, a father sitting with his daughter, a bride-to-be, exclaimed, "Tiramisu, what a brilliant name for a pretty dress!" However, the dresses were not the only pieces with fabulous names. Vondra Barnwell-Williams, Smitherman & Barnwell's designer, has created a line of signature hangers to accompany the dresses. Each hanger has hand painted designs and sweet names like, Tiara, Ballet Slippers and Ladybug, just to name a few.

Following the Cucina collection, Smitherman & Barnwell's Kakkio collection hit the runway. The Koi dress, a part of the Kakkio collection, was a white linen number with a green sash around the waist, that caused one woman to turn to people she'd befriended earlier in the day while waiting for the show to begin. "See now these dresses remind me of when my daughter was little," she said, "they're just adorable." More often than not, the audience celebrated Smitherman & Barnwell's designs with applause that lasted long after the models had left the runway.

The highlights of the show abounded both on the stage and off. The Summer in Paris dress, on display at the Smitherman & Barnwell table, drew the attention of many who stopped to admire the dainty red print designs and light green material of the dress and touch its soft fabric. The dress gave life to the memory of Paris for some and the dream of Paris

for others. Either way, one look at it and you were left with the image of a little girl skipping alongside the glistening water of Siene on a summer afternoon.

The tasteful, sophisticated elegance of Smitherman & Barnwell's designs are what make them everlasting. In a world that is always rushing to get to the next step, to grow up too fast, Vondra Barnwell-Williams has found a way to stop time and celebrate what it means to be a little girl. Perhaps Kenda Nunez, who works in Manhattan, said it best. "I don't like seeing little girls dressed up like adults, you know, but in those dresses even the traditional ones, they were still childlike – In those [dresses], they were children. I like that."

-written by Natasha Reilly

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