



NIGHT OF A
THOUSAND
GOWNS



*A Debutante's Guide
To The Evening*

March 28, 1987

*Waldorf-Astoria Grand Ballroom
New York, New York*

**PROCEEDS FROM *NIGHT OF A THOUSAND GOWNS* WILL BE
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NIGHT OF A THOUSAND GOWNS

106 1/4 Lexington Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016



Dear Lovely People,

We are delighted to announce a charity ball, the first ever of its kind, to benefit our national gay community. "Night of a Thousand Gowns" will occur in the Waldorf's historic Grand Ballroom, the very place where royalty, heads of state and industry, celebrities, and many a debutante have danced the night away for over half a century.

No charity ball held there can equal this festive event. We expect three thousand queens, kings, dukes, duchesses, princesses, princes, and other lovely people from throughout the United States and Canada, all resplendent in gowns and tuxedos, to make their debuts.

A full orchestra will play for those who wish to dance. You, your escort, and your entourage will be announced to society as you descend the grand staircase. Champagne and drinks will flow all night, and you may nibble away from a royally stocked buffet.

The ball will honor drag and impersonators who have added both color and grass-roots political clout to our movement. Special to the occasion will be a salute to the Imperial Courts of North America and, for the first time, the Coronation of Emperor I and Empress I of New York City.

The evening will be one of grandeur, splendor, and storybook fantasy in the most famous ballroom in the country. Do keep in mind that your attendance and the attendance of your friends will assist the gay community on a national level as well as your local city and state. All proceeds will benefit the "Benefactors" listed elsewhere.

Dreams are made of nights like this. And this will be a night to help many more dreams come true. We would be most pleased to have you make your debut at "Night of a Thousand Gowns."

The Empress Nicole

Vivian Shapiro
George Dudley
Cotillion Co-Chairs

Attire

Ladies ☀ Extremely formal is the desired style. Gowns can be long and as elegant as you desire. Tiaras, family jewels, and furs will compliment your ensemble. Imagination and creativity are also appropriate for the occasion.

Gentlemen ☀ Nothing could be handsomer than white tie and tails. Black tie or "tuxedo" is also suitable. Of course, anyone who wishes may appear in dress uniform with full regiments. Swords are optional (but dueling is prohibited).

Corsages ☀ Eye-catching corsages may be pinned wherever they most become you and can be ordered from our official florist.

Escorts

Unescorted debutantes are heartily welcome, although if you arrive unescorted, you are certainly not required to depart that way. A gentleman who has no one to escort is similarly encouraged to attend, as he will surely find many a lady eager to add his name to her dance card.

Conversely, a debutante may have more than one escort or even an entourage. Under no circumstances should you be less polite to one escort than to another.

It is proper for escorts to mingle with other debutantes. Your escort should help you check your coat, see that you get drinks, and dance the first and last dances with you (and you should allow these cherished tasks). Your escort is otherwise responsible for dancing with other debutantes, entertaining old married couples, and avoiding being sick on the premises.

Arrivals

Unlike many elegant affairs, it is never appropriate to arrive late to a formal ball or cotillion. The proceedings at the top of the evening are a resplendent display of imperial protocol. After your limousine, horse-drawn carriage, or taxi sweeps up to the full-block front of the Waldorf Astoria's entrance on posh Park Avenue, you will proceed with friends and other guests through ornate lobbies to the Grand Ballroom's cloakroom and special elevators.

Your Formal Introduction

Formal introductions will take place until midnight only. In chambers adjoining the ballroom, you will complete a card of introduction, and the Cotillion Hosts will reserve your place on the presentation roster. The moment of your debut can be unbearably exciting. When your name and that of your escort are announced, you will be spotlit at the top of the grand staircase. You will immediately descend the steps to the first landing, where (to a count of three) you should bow or curtsey in recognition of the Royal Box. Continue your descent onto the ballroom floor. Taking medium steps and walking from the hip (*not* the knee), cross the room to the refreshment tables for a much deserved glass of champagne.

Because there will be no rehearsal, try to practice your formal entrance on any suitably grand or sweeping staircase. You may wish to utilize the steps of your local museum, library, or courthouse.

The Art of Conversation

You quite simply must be spontaneous: not too personal, complimentary, a good listener, and a frequent asker of questions. If these instructions overwhelm you, or if you tend to be conversationally shy, don't worry. There will be plenty of others who do not have this problem, and you will easily fall into place with people who will talk to you. If you remember to interject an occasional, "Oh, how interesting," you'll soon gain a reputation as a fascinating conversationalist. The clever debutante will remark on the cleverness of others, while the witty debutante will note the wit of others. Charming, perceptive, and intelligent debutantes will do likewise.

If you are in the unfortunate position of being stuck with a conversational hog, a plain "Excuse me" in a normal tone is sufficient to propel you to another part of the room.

Eavesdropping and gossip should be employed skillfully.

Conversing with servants is permissible, and behaving courteously toward them is compulsory.

Ballroom Etiquette Greeting Royalty and Celebrities

If you are not royalty, do not be intimidated. They can be astonishingly warm individuals. You may bow or curtsey to any royal (or non-royal) personage you wish, as long as you don't grovel. Genuflecting is considered old-fashioned, and salaaming quite ridiculous. Speaking with the famous can be giddy fun. They are usually required to speak with other nobles, and having a real conversation with someone who leads a less restricted life will probably be a welcome change of pace for them.

If you are royalty, you already know it is not proper to "pull rank" or otherwise act superior (regardless of what you do in the privacy of your own palace). You should never refer to yourself by your title, although you may privately encourage your friends to let your status be known.

Dance Cards

An official Dance Card will be provided. This personal "diary" for the evening will keep you on top of your ballroom obligations and, when it's all over, will be a memento to be treasured for years to come. List your dance partners or have them personally sign your card. Don't forget to reserve a few spaces for "That Someone Special." Dance cards serve many useful purposes. If you want to avoid certain persons, you can secretly consult your card and say, "Sorry, I'm completely booked until four a.m.!" You should not, of course, immediately hop onto the dance floor with the next charming suitor (but you *can* slip off to the punch bowl together).

Cutting

You are quite defenseless to intervene if an admirer cuts in while you are dancing. The suitor will tap the left shoulder of your partner, who must then relinquish you for the duration of that dance. Others, however, may cut in, and if this occurs frequently, the dizziness you experience can be exhilarating. You can encourage such activity by delivering soft looks to desired partners. And remember, flirtation is an end and not a means.

The Imperial Court System

What do Jackie V and X of Reno, Sissy Spaceout of San Francisco, and Empress Chuchu of San Fernando Valley have in common? All are members of one of the gay community's oldest and largest charities, the Imperial Court System. What this system is has as many answers as people its services touch: to a child in California, it is a new pair of shoes from the San Diego Court's Children's Shoe Drive; to a person with AIDS in Idaho, it is the entire Idaho AIDS Foundation initiated by the Boise Court; to the members of the over fifty courts in the U.S. and Canada, it is a way to make both personal connections and community contributions; to the National Gay Rights Lobby—and to literally hundreds of smaller organizations nationwide—the Courts are the most effective fund-raisers in the gay community; for many straight politicians, the Courts have proven to be an important entrance to a considerable political voting bloc. The Court System of the Americas is a twenty-year-old humanitarian foundation of dedicated men and women. There are over 50 local courts with a total of 10,000 members throughout the United States and Canada. Its empresses and emperors, dukes and duchesses, and leagues of uncommon courtiers not only provide channels of self-esteem within the gay community; they reach out beyond that circle to the elderly, the handicapped, the hungry, and the homeless. The Courts and their glittering guests will dazzle Manhattan at "Night of a Thousand Gowns."

A Special Message From the Emperor and Empress To Their Beloved Peons, Peasants, and Serfs

"We, the Emperor and Empress, are highly aware of the poverty, meagerness, and utter despair that surrounds your humble lives. With this in mind, we have a lovely idea as to how you can come up with the \$250 donation for The Grand Cotillion. Just save \$25.00 a week, store it away in your potato bin, and in just ten weeks, you'll be Cinderella at The Grand Ball."

The Astor Room Cabaret

The elegant Astor Room will host a cabaret throughout the evening. For your pleasure, glittering impersonators, comedians and entertainers from all regions, will dazzle you with their talents. Information for those wishing to perform may be had by writing the Cabaret Chairman care of NIGHT OF A THOUSAND GOWNS.

Official Photographs

You may pose for a full-color souvenir photograph in a specially-created setting. A nominal donation will be required.

Music

THE BILL HARRINGTON ORCHESTRA

OFFICIAL FLORIST

Sutton East Gardens
1159 York Avenue
New York (212) 838-4585

OFFICIAL LIMOUSINE SERVICE

Murray Limousines
(718) 723-2622
Advance Reservations Necessary

OFFICIAL HOTEL AND TRAVEL AGENT

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Reservations World
1-800-221-6574

OFFICIAL NIGHTCLUB

Tracks
531 West 19th Street
New York, N.Y. 10011