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28th May 2013 90p



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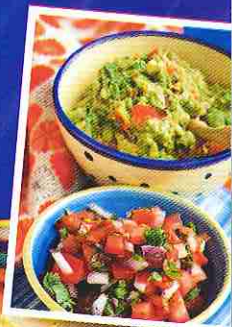
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Arlene Phillips
*'I'm Excited About
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'What Do I Feel Like At 70? Ready To Fly!'

Celebrating a milestone birthday this week isn't going to slow Arlene Phillips down. She invites Woman's Weekly along to experience 24 hectic hours in her life. By Nick McGrath

Wake me up and then it's go, go, go...

I normally wake up at around 7.30am, moan and groan for a bit and get on my exercise bike and try to read yesterday's newspapers at the same time as I'm pedalling away. I'll say good morning to my partner, Angus [Arlene's been with set designer Angus Ion — Abi's father and 11 years her junior — for 23 years] and then it's two double espressos, a glass of water and I'll open the fridge to conjure up my breakfast, which is usually a few grapes washed down with some lovely blood orange juice. Then I'll probably yell up to my youngest daughter, Abi — who still lives at home and

alternates between working as a florist and a spa receptionist — to get up.

Before tackling the day's first e-mails, I straighten the pillows, make sure there are no pots and pans lying by the sink, then I'm out of the house by 9.30am. If I'm rehearsing, I'll get changed into my casual tracksuit, check I've got the day's music and be in the rehearsal studio by 10am.

Later this year, I'll be off to the States to choreograph *The Wizard Of Oz* and *We Will Rock You*.

Legs elevenses

By mid-morning, I'm peckish and I'll stave off hunger with — odd as it sounds — some chicory and cherry tomatoes, rather than dive into the nearest packet of crisps (which is really what I'd rather do!).

I'll grab another espresso and in the rehearsal break I usually make some calls and probably tweet an update to my followers, while I'm talking to my agent or one of my daughters. I'm definitely one of those mothers who's always on the phone going, "Are you all right, darling? Everything all right?" I see Alana a lot, especially if I'm doing a photo shoot, as she does my hair and make-up. The one thing I try not to do is sit still or relax: if I do that, before I know it, I'll be tempted to

close my eyes. I love to keep busy, physically and mentally.

Lunch on the run

I nearly always have a lunchtime meeting, and there's always someone to talk to about future projects I'm planning — I'm currently working on a Brazilian-themed show which I'm hoping will happen later this year — so lunch is mostly on the run. I usually grab something on the way to a meeting, unless I'm attending a charity event or an awards function, which happens two or three times a week. Occasionally, I'll hook up with friends, too. Last week I met up with a group of women over

from the States for a reunion. They're friends from my time over there and their children went to the same school as my daughters.

Afternoon delight

Afternoons are spent either rehearsing or — more often than not — travelling between TV studios or photo shoots (on Friday I was filming a cookery programme). I'm often zigzagging around in the back of a car, driving my drivers crazy with my back-seat instructions. I'm sure they arrive at the door, see me and think, 'Oh no, it's her again.' I don't like to waste time, so I'll use the journeys to

catch up on more work. I'll have my computer and phone with me in the car, but I still rely on a notebook and pen, as the constant flurry of digital information sometimes fails to lodge in my memory. If I've written something down, I'll always remember it. If I'm in need of inspiration, I might visit a gallery. Last week, I went to the Tate Modern to see the Roy Lichtenstein exhibition.

Night fever

If I've got an evening event, I'll be home for 6.30pm and then spend the next 30 minutes

panicking about how I'm going to transform from the casual look into full-on glamour puss. Abi's normally home from work and she'll do her best to persuade me to stop fretting about whether the dress I'm planning to wear will fit me or not! Then I'm out of the door — I can't bear being late. If it's not an official function, Angus and I might go to the theatre or a dance show. I try to have one night a week when I can catch up with work at home. I'm almost always multitasking: the one exception to the rule this year has been watching *Broadchurch*, which I found totally compelling.

Lights out

I love my sleep and I aim to be asleep by midnight, after either reading an autobiography or perhaps the reviews section of *The Observer*. Then it's lights out, eyes shut. I'm a very restless sleeper and often wake two or three times after particularly vivid dreams. I take some deep breaths, do some breathing exercises and try not to tell myself that I have to go back to sleep, because I know if I do that, I'll stay awake! Nine times out of 10 I'll wake full of ideas, unless it's a Sunday, when I'll take great pleasure in doing absolutely nothing.



With daughters Alana, 33 (left), and Abi, 22, and (below) partner, Angus



'The one thing I try not to do is sit still or relax'

70 Years Young

'I've never hidden my age, — I've never even tried to. For me, there seems to be no point, and I'm excited about turning 70. Age is something you can't change. How should I feel at 70? I don't know. I do know I feel like I'm still ready to run. Ready to fly. Ready to dance. And I'm certainly working as many hours as I've always done.'

I'm throwing a huge party somewhere special on my actual birthday, with lots of people coming from the many different periods of my life: *Strictly Come Dancing*, to pop videos and my days working in America and in the West End, right through to people I'm working with on my current shows — *Midnight Tango* and *The Wizard Of Oz*. I'll

definitely be throwing some shapes on the dance floor and, providing I'm wearing some comfortable shoes, I might well be the last one there. It's going to be a lot of fun.

As for the future, I've always taken things day by day. I never think ahead. I'm as busy as I've ever been and if the offers keep coming and I want to take them, I'll keep taking them. My age may be changing, but my will is as strong as it's ever been!

Known as one of the show's most rigorous judges, Arlene was on the *Strictly* panel from 2004 to 2009



Photos: BBC, Giorgio Armani/LFI, Rex