

Music

Unit

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Unit 12

Music

A wedding, like life's other special moments, is enhanced by special music interspersed throughout the celebration. From the seating of the first guest to the newlyweds' getaway, music fills the day. As a wedding planner, clients will rely on your expertise to guide them in selecting the soundtrack to their wedding day. Music should always enhance and never overshadow the point of the wedding—the commitment of the couple. When selecting music and other entertainment, each stage of the wedding day should be considered: the ceremony, the cocktail hour, and the reception.

Ceremony Music

Unless the bride and groom are music aficionados, they will often turn to their wedding consultant for recommendations of music to be played during the ceremony. It is your job to assist the couple in selecting music to punctuate significant moments during the ceremony, from the bride's entrance to the recessional. The music that you choose for the wedding will set the overall tone and atmosphere for the wedding. It is therefore essential that you take the time to consider the style of music that you wish to have played at your wedding. Most couples tend to choose softer and subtle music to be played prior to, and during, the ceremony and leave the upbeat tunes for the reception dance floor!

You will need to firstly decide upon whether you wish to have live or recorded music and in what form. There are a number of different choices ranging from string quartets, and soloists through to live bands, DJs and simple CD recordings or MP3 players. You may wish to select one, or a variety of these, however at the end of the day choose the music that best suits your clients' personal style and budget.

The following guide may be of assistance:

Dramatic

- Bagpipes
- Choir
- String quartets.

Formal

- Classical singers
- Harpists
- Organists
- Pianists
- String quartets
- Trumpeters
- Violinists

Fun

- Bands
- DJs
- Guitarists
- Jazz Ensembles
- Jukebox
- Pianists
- Pop ensembles
- Saxophone quartets
- Singers
- Vocal ensembles

Romantic

- Classical guitarists
- Flautists
- Harpists
- Pianists
- Singers
- String quartets
- Violinists

Questions To Ask from the Entertainer

It's a good idea to prepare some questions to ask your entertainer before you meet with them.

The list below may be of assistance to you.

- Do they have a demo CD of recent work? Demo CD's are a great way to get an idea of the band / DJs / entertainer's style and repertoire. There is one down side and that is that demo CDs often contain only brief examples of the entertainer's work – you may not get the 'whole' picture.
- Can you view the band / DJ / entertainer live? This is the best way to choose an entertainer for the wedding. Generally, what you see is what you get. If you're happy with them when you see their live performance, then it should be a reasonably accurate interpretation of what they will offer you for the wedding.
- Is the band /DJ / Entertainer registered as a business and are they insured? It is important that the band/DJ is recognised as a wedding business and that they are fully insured, including public liability insurance.
- How long has the band been together or DJ / entertainer been performing for? Are they experienced in weddings? It is important that the entertainers are experienced in performing together and are familiar with weddings.
- Are they able to deliver the music / entertainment that you wish to have for your wedding? Discuss your needs in full to ensure that you are on the same page in terms of the wedding requirements.

- Do they have a copy of their song list? Ensure that the list include a list of songs or music that you wish to hear on the wedding day.
- Is the entertainer willing to add songs or compilations to their song list upon your request? If there is a particular song that you cannot see on the list, ask whether it is possible for this to be added. In the case of a DJ, this should be fairly simple. For bands or soloists, they may have to learn the lyrics and practise with their musicians. Bear in mind that this may incur additional costs.
- Do they have back-up singers or staff should someone be unable to attend the performance? It is vital that the wedding day not be spoiled in the event that an entertainer is unable to attend the wedding on the day.
- How much do they charge? Ensure that you know exactly what you are getting and how much it will cost.
- Does the entertainer sign a contract with you, what does it involve and does he / she guarantee their work? Ensure that if you are to sign a contract with your entertainer that you have read it in it's entirety and understand it. It may be a good idea to compare contracts from one entertainer to the next to ensure that you are getting the 'best deal'. Always obtain a copy of the original for your records.

Ensure that you book an entertainer at least 9-12 months prior to the wedding in order to avoid missing out. Popular entertainers are often booked for weddings up to 12-18 months ahead, so ensure that you allow yourself enough time to look around.

When you have made your booking/s you will need to consider the music that you wish to have played throughout all aspects of the wedding day. The following information will give you some idea of when you may wish to have music played, along with popular choices of music amongst modern brides.

Most wedding ceremonies can be divided into five main parts: prelude, processional, the ceremony itself, recessional, and postlude.

Prelude

Just as the prelude of a book foreshadows events to come in a novel, the musical prelude for a wedding ceremony sets the mood for the service to follow. The type of music selected should reflect the personalities of the bride and groom, the formality of the wedding ceremony, and the setting. On one hand, if a wedding is to be held on the beach in Maui, the prelude music might include ukuleles, steel drums, or slack key guitars. On the other hand, if the wedding ceremony is held at a venue such as St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, which is the largest gothic-style Catholic cathedral in the United States and seats 2,200 (St. Patrick's Cathedral, 2006), a classical string quartet and trumpet player would be appropriate. You should plan for 30 to 45 minutes of prelude music before moving into the processional music.

TABLE 12.1 Options for Live Music During the Prelude

- Chamber music ensemble (a small orchestra with strings, wind instruments, and percussion)
- Children's choir
- Classical guitar
- Church choir
- Church organ
- Flute and keyboard
- Guitar, cello, and fl ute
- Gospel choir
- Harp
- Harp and fl ute
- Piano
- Solo violin
- String quartet (two violins, viola, and cello)
- String trio (violin, viola, and cello)
- Vocalist
- Wind trio or quartet (assorted wind instruments such as clarinet, oboe, fl ute, trumpet, French horn, or bassoon)

Processional

For the wedding processional, which is when the wedding party walks down the aisle, it is wise to consider the length of the aisle and the number of members in the wedding party before selecting the music. You might also time the trip down the aisle if you are working at an unfamiliar venue. Sometimes the processional is simply one song; most often, it is two or more songs played to differentiate between the arrival of the wedding party members and the arrival of the bride. The processional music, if done well, will build anticipation as the wedding party enters and continue to build suspense until the bride's dramatic appearance.

Wagner's Bridal Chorus from *Lohengrin* (better known as *Here Comes the Bride*) is the most traditional choice for the processional. However, because of Wagner's anti-Semitic writings, he remains a controversial figure and his music is seldom chosen for Jewish ceremonies (Eylon, 2006). Other popular options are Stanley's "Trumpet Voluntary," Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," and Pachelbel's "Canon in D." In addition to the classics, some couples prefer a nontraditional twist on their processional music and incorporate Broadway show tunes, classic jazz, or contemporary pop songs into their wedding day. The decision rests with the bride and groom, and anything goes. However, if the wedding is to take place in a house of worship, be sure to clear any secular music choices with the officiant well in advance of the wedding day, as nonreligious works may be prohibited.

Ceremony

During the ceremony itself, there may be musical interludes for such moments as group prayers and responses, lighting the unity candle, taking communion, or making special

offerings. These moments are made for incorporating a special hymn or other piece of music. The ceremony also commonly includes a performance by a soloist or even a full choir. If your clients will be utilizing musical interludes, be sure that the music is chosen well in advance and coordinated with the needs of the officiant. Many couples choose a close friend who is musically talented to act as their soloist. It is important that this person be given an opportunity to practice during the rehearsal to become familiar with the acoustics of the facility and the style of the accompanist.

Recessional

Once the couple has been pronounced husband and wife, the music should turn festive and celebratory. The recessional music occurs as the wedding party exits the ceremony venue, setting the mood for the party to follow. Popular recessional music includes Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," Handel's "Water Music," and Mendelssohn's "Wedding March." Contemporary song choices might include selections from diverse artists such as Garth Brooks, Destiny's Child, Billy Joel, Shania Twain, U2, and Stevie Wonder. Most importantly, the music your bride and groom select should be joyful and meaningful to them.

For the recessional, consider a creative sound to enhance the exit from the ceremony site. Perhaps your clients want to hire a bagpiper or bell choir to play at the door of the church. If the venue is a hotel, maybe they will hire a blue grass band to set the tone, or perhaps a marching band will play the fight song from the groom's alma mater. The options are vast when it comes to recessional music. The main point is to keep it celebratory, uplifting, and highly personalized.

Postlude

As they say, it ain't over 'til it's over, and the ceremony is not over until the guests exit. This is why planning for a postlude, which is continuous music that plays as guests exit the ceremony space, is important, in particular if there is a large guest list. You should allow for about 10 minutes worth of postlude music, which allows guests to exit quickly and smartly to the sound of upbeat music rather than the shuffling of feet. Keep in mind that for many weddings, the ceremony and the reception are in the same venue, such as a hotel, museum, or resort. For weddings where there is not an obvious change of scenery, the postlude music becomes particularly important as a means to transition between the ceremony and reception. Music will also help encourage movement. For example, in a resort setting the ceremony may be located in a ballroom area, and then the cocktail hour is held on a patio while the ballroom is quickly turned for the reception.

TABLE 12.2 Examples of Cocktail Hour Music

- Louis Armstrong
- The Beatles
- Jim Brickman
- Michael Buble
- Mariah Carey
- Ray Charles
- Patsy Cline
- Harry Connick, Jr.
- Vince Gill
- Norah Jones
- Yo-Yo Ma
- Michael McDonald
- Tim McGraw
- Sarah McLachlan
- Van Morrison
- Rod Stewart
- Vivaldi
- George Winston

Cocktail Hour Music and Entertainment

With the wedding ceremony behind them, the music for a couple's cocktail hour should be light and breezy so as not to interfere with the guests' conversation. As there are limited opportunities for guests to converse during the wedding ceremony, the cocktail hour becomes the perfect setting for them to meet and mingle. Nat King Cole, Billie Holiday, and Frank Sinatra are just a few icons whose pleasing sounds are represented in compiled albums such as *The Original Great American Songbook*. Whether your client's music is live or prerecorded, playing the classics, light jazz, or big band during cocktails will start the reception on the right note. A sample of artists whose music works especially well during cocktails can be found in Table 12.2.

If there is a piano available at the reception venue, put it to good use and hire a pianist to play during cocktails. Make sure the piano is tuned and in good working order prior to the wedding day. Other live music for the cocktail hour might include a jazz trio, a violin and a flute, or even a banjo and a guitar. When hiring musical talent, be sure to check with the local music schools for up-and-coming talent at discounted prices. Also, managers of reception venues are excellent sources for finding a specific type of musician or specialty music such as a German polka band or a salsa band. When advising your client on musical options for cocktails and the reception, keep the space limitations in mind. You don't want a single acoustic guitar to be lost in a large space; conversely, you don't want to overwhelm your guests with too many musicians playing in tight quarters. In addition, be certain to familiarize yourself with any noise restrictions imposed by the venue. Amplified music may be forbidden if your venue is in a residential area. There may also be a limit on the number

of musicians allowed or the duration of the music. If the venue is located in a quiet neighborhood, the last dance may have to conclude by 11:00 P.M. or earlier. Check with the venue for specifications and discuss them with your client. Make sure these restrictions are noted in the music contract.

Reception Music and Entertainment

Once cocktails have ended and the guests are invited to sit down for the reception, the music and entertainment take on a new direction. For the dinner itself, the music will be similar to the cocktail hour so as to encourage conversation. Once dinner is complete, there are specific moments that need to be highlighted through the music and the dancing. These special moments include the couple's first dance; the father/bride dance and the mother/groom dance; the cake cutting ceremony; music for the bouquet and garter toss, if included; music for the leave-taking of the couple, if prior to the end of the reception; and the last dance of the night. Beyond these specific breaks, the rest of the reception is often devoted to the pleasure of dancing.

Some couples will have a strong opinion regarding whether they want their music to be performed live. If they are uncertain, they will ask your advice on hiring a DJ versus hiring a wedding band. As a wedding consultant, you should be able to objectively present both sides for them to consider. The pros and cons of this important decision are listed in Table 16.3. Also, it is important that you stay up on the latest artists. If your clients say that they want a band that has a sound

TABLE 12.3 Pros and Cons of Live versus Prerecorded Music

Prerecorded Music (DJ): Pros

- Less expensive than a band
- Immediate access to a wide variety of music
- Short or no breaks
- Can act as emcee
- If space is tight, a DJ takes up almost no room
- Can take the pulse of the room and adjust music selections to keep the party going
- Can play the latest, contemporary music that cover bands may not play
- Because a DJ is just one person, there is less that can go wrong
- Setup time and special equipment are minimal

Prerecorded Music (DJ): Cons

- Personality may be abrasive or inappropriate
- May try to take over the organization of the reception
- Pre-recorded music cannot be easily adjusted to fit the timing of a moment
- Typically seen as less sophisticated and innovative than a live band

Live Music (Band): Pros

- There is great variety in bands in terms of size and style
- Live performance motivates guests to dance
- Lead singer can act as emcee

- Can readily adjust tone and speed of music
- An excellent band is a memorable part of the wedding
- Can establish a time period through dress, style, and equipment (e.g., Big Band)

Live Music (Band): Cons

- Usually more expensive than a DJ
- More complex contracts and personalities
- Lots of mouths to feed
- More that can go wrong with equipment
- Their repertoire will be more restricted than that of a DJ
- Setup time and equipment may be extensive
- Will require breaks; movement to recorded music during breaks will change

Tone

Similar to Kelly Clarkson, Green Day, Toby Keith, Beyonce Knowles, Rihanna, or Shakira and you have no idea who these artists are, it will be hard to help them find the right talent. One way to stay up to date is by following artists who are on top of the charts. Web sites such as Billboard.com constantly update their listings and include biographies that will help you learn about the newest and hottest talent.

Other Reception Entertainment

Other reception entertainment is generally accompanied by music. The most common form of entertainment aside from the music itself is dance, and specific dances are anticipated moments of many weddings.

When considering these dances, the comfort of the couple should be kept in mind. Lababidi (2004) explains the love-hate relationship that persists with the Egyptian belly-dancing tradition at weddings

Egyptians are deeply conflicted about the respectability of the art form. . . . The fact that weddings are hardly complete without a belly-dancer is revealing, given the function of marriage as sanctifying the union between a man and a woman who is supposed to be a virgin. . . . The bride must fret: How can I possibly compete with this woman invulnerable to taboo? Having spent a lifetime shrewdly protecting her virtue and a small fortune on the appearance of her dress, she is being upstaged at her own wedding by a woman who seems to care for neither. The garter toss, common in American culture, can also push the limits of decorum, and many couples forego this tradition. Other dances are controversial for completely different reasons. Whether to have a money dance, for example, can be a source of significant conflict for a couple raised with different cultural traditions. One person might see it as an anticipated and fun way to dance with an abundance of guests in a short period of time, whereas the other may view it as greedy and tacky. Making decisions regarding whether to incorporate specific dances or other forms of entertainment should be done at least a month before the wedding, as differences in opinion regarding related traditions can cause the couple stress.

Tips for Hiring Entertainment

Whether your clients ultimately hire a soloist, a pianist, a string trio, a band, a DJ, or all of the above, your communication with the entertainment will be a key to the success of the wedding day. Beyond making sure the entertainment actually shows, be certain to have your clients prepare a list of songs they wish to hear and, just as important, a list of songs they do not wish to hear. This is particularly important for the reception. If your bride and groom want a “Macarena”- free reception, it must be stipulated in writing and presented to the entertainment liaison in advance. Also, the entertainment will need to receive a list of the wedding party for introductions, including the names and the correct pronunciations. Any additional special instructions should be spelled out in the contract and highlighted again prior to the wedding. Examples of this would be stipulations such as “No garter toss” or “No father-daughter dance” or “Announce the cutting of the cake at 10:00 P.M.” With entertainment, like the other wedding elements, nothing should be left to chance. When hiring entertainment, prices are often negotiable based on the time of year, day of the week, and time of day. David Fletcher of Washington’s Best Musicians (2006) explains that there are five secrets to hiring entertainment at the best prices.

1. Negotiate. It is often better to state how much you can afford to pay rather than asking the entertainer how much he or she will charge. However, appreciate the fact that the person is an artist, and don’t offend an entertainer with an unreasonable offer.
2. Consider the “proximity to the event” discount. In other words, if your clients are willing to wait until two to three weeks prior to their wedding, they might be rewarded with paying less for musical talent that is not yet booked. While this tactic is implemented frequently in the corporate planning world, it may be more difficult to convince a stressed-out couple that there are merits to waiting.
3. See who is already at the venue. If your event is in the evening, see if there is a band or DJ already playing earlier in the day. You can save a significant amount by hiring them through the rest of the evening.
4. Eliminate the liaison. Talk directly to the person who provides the service. Online searches will provide an abundance of information when trying to find the immediate point of contact for a specific talent.
5. Establish personal contact. Become familiar with the best DJs and bands in your area. Learn the names of key personnel and remember them.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Music and Entertainment Options

- Recognize that each stage of the wedding day will require music: ceremony, cocktail hour, and reception.
- Be aware that there are five main parts of the wedding ceremony: prelude, processional, the ceremony, recessional, and postlude.
- Make sure the music selections are consistent with the overall tone of the wedding.
- Plan for 30 to 45 minutes of prelude music.
- For the processional, consider the length of the aisle and the number of members in the wedding party before deciding on music.
- Provide for a music change or dramatic pause before the bride makes her entrance.
- During the ceremony, highlight special moments through interlude music or vocal performances.

- Get approval on all secular music choices if the ceremony is at a house of worship.
- Be prepared to discuss the pros and cons of prerecorded versus live music with your clients.
- Familiarize yourself with all restrictions for the reception venue.
- Be prepared with a boom box and a CD of ceremony music and reception music just in case the entertainment is missing in action.