

The Wedding Ceremony Music Planning Guide



by
Rosanne Ferreri

Forward

Music speaks to our inner, spiritual being in ways that words seldom can. Live music that is artistically performed by talented musicians mentally prepares bridal participants, family and friends for the ceremony to come and sets the mood—whether formal, semi-formal, or informal—for your entire wedding. These carefully selected pieces, placed appropriately in your wedding ceremony, will make the difference between a “nice service” and an “incredibly beautiful, one-of-a-kind wedding.” When a bride and groom take the time to carefully plan their wedding ceremony, the results are far-reaching and inspiring. Every guest is emotionally touched by the beauty and power of the sacrament of marriage. Recently married couples and those who have been married 50 years will once again be reminded of why they made this same commitment. “To love and cherish ...until the end of your days” is a powerful, awesome commitment! Your ceremony will be remembered with fondness if it embodies your own heartfelt beliefs which are stated both in words and song.

Spend time writing your vows or a portion of your service so it becomes meaningful to you; find your own personal style; discover which Old and New Testament readings or non-traditional readings really speak to your heart; coordinate readings to complement special music; design a program that is unified and flows from section to section—all of these enjoyable assignments will help you mutually define your marriage. The key beliefs you have about marriage in general, and your marriage to this special person in particular, will become evident as you spend time together planning your wedding ceremony. Your music should be selected by you, the future bride and groom, based upon your beliefs about marriage; it should also be chosen in accordance with the policies of your minister/priest and church. Find pieces that express the depth of your affection, your search for each other, and your hopes for the future.

Ceremony music usually receives little or no attention in most wedding planning guides; their limited description of a wedding ceremony is usually followed by an inappropriate list of pop tunes. To remedy this lack, I decided to create a guide that would walk you through the different parts of a wedding ceremony, give you a wide variety of traditional and contemporary pieces appropriate for each part, and help you plan for meetings with your musicians and minister. I owned a wedding business called Wedding Song from 1983-1993 and, based on those experiences, I’ve written this guide in a candid (and often humorous manner), so you can understand the typical “pitfalls” and avoid them. Since then, I’ve worked as an Event Manager, planning 200+ events and as the Regional Manager of The Wedding Guide of Middle TN. More than ten years later, there still is a lack of information about how to find and hire musicians and plan a cohesive ceremony, so I’ve revised this guide anew for 2007 release. The *good news* is that there are now entire libraries on the internet with sound files of wedding music, and though it’s not performed by the musicians you’ll eventually hire, you can certainly listen and determine what you like without ever leaving home. You will find my music lists quite eclectic; I love a wide range of music and styles. Some of the older songs have endured for a *good reason* and should not be overlooked; new love songs may be hits now, but not every lyric birthed this year is appropriate for a wedding ceremony. A blend of new and old works best so people of all ages feel welcome.

The same organizational skills that you use in the business arena will be helpful to you as you plan your wedding. Here are a few: product knowledge (learning about traditional and contemporary music options), design (blending songs and text so your program is unified), research skills (requesting CD's to locate the finest wedding ceremony musicians in your locale) and, eventually, trust in the professionals you decide to hire. In addition, many religious bookstores have extensive collections of wedding music and the internet has sites where listening is free and downloading is reasonable.

I encourage you to spend one afternoon listening to wedding music. Familiarize yourself with the sound of traditional wedding music and contemporary wedding music. This will help you determine your musical preferences, so you can direct your musicians toward pieces that you will like. Keep in mind that your church may also have specific requirements about music that can be performed within its sanctuary; find out these facts before you select music or hire musicians. Also remember to allow 2-3 weeks to order sheet music, if this is required. Some music stores maintain a large inventory of wedding pieces that are sold separately or in collections; others order pieces upon request and you'll have to wait for that one piece to be shipped.

Lastly, don't forget to keep your sense of perspective as you plan your wedding; avoid turning into Bride-zilla, the name wedding consultants bestow on brides who seem to view weddings as an opportunity to present people with a list of demands. I once sang at a wedding where the bride insisted on an outdoor wedding, even though her parents had arranged a back-up emergency plan; she had all 100 guests seated in the rain, escorted by the usher who held the sole umbrella, until lightening appeared in the sky. Keep in mind that this is your *first opportunity* to be a gracious hostess to all of the family and friends who have flown in and driven miles to be at your celebration, and *demonstrate* that you *are ready* for all that marriage entails. You *can* create a meaningful wedding ceremony that is a direct reflection of your musical tastes, your personal beliefs about marriage, your values, and your new life together.

Congratulations to you both!

Rosanne Marie Ferreri

Bride and Groom's Questionnaire

1. Have you created a budget for your ceremony music? Go to your local bridal shops and pick up at least 2-3 different bridal directories for your city. Some stores may have mail in cards for this purpose; others will have the actual directory. Call several wedding musicians who are listed, and determine an accurate fee range for your locale.

For example, the typical fees in Nashville for the following services are:

Vocalist, Harpist and Trumpeters: \$125-\$250

Brass Quartet, String Ensembles, Voice/Flute/Classic Guitar Trio: \$850-1250

1. What is your ceremony music budget? \$_____

2. Is your wedding style formal or informal, restrained or exuberant, elegant or casual? Sweetly romantic or modern? Afternoon or evening? Describe your wedding style:

3. Will your ceremony be held in a church or an alternative site, like a conservatory or formal garden, mansion, chartered boat, or reception hall? The type of site you select will also help determine the style of music and the instruments to be used. Certain instruments will sound better for an indoor wedding than an outdoor wedding where sounds can get lost to the wind and trees. Amplification, which requires electrical hookup and protective shielding against the wind and sun, will be necessary if your wedding is going to be held outside.

4. If you are using a church as your wedding site, find out if there are any restrictions on music. Some churches only allow liturgical music to be used. What is liturgical music? It is music that has lyrics that are taken directly from Biblical text. In other words, contemporary music and even certain types of classical pieces (like those from operas) cannot be used. Find out this important information before you select your musicians or ceremony site.

Professional Musicians

Six to eight months before your wedding date, you will need to make a decision about who will perform at your wedding. I feel compelled to explain to you the major differences between hiring professional musicians versus having a college roommate, relative, or a talented family member perform for your wedding. I want you to make an informed decision.

First, what are your expectations? Do you expect your musicians to arrange their own rehearsals? be flexible to last minute changes on the day of your wedding? practice your music to perfection and perform confidently? assist you in finding unique wedding pieces that are specific to your beliefs and values? You are seeking the services of professional musicians if you answered “yes” to those questions.

When you pay professional musicians for their services you can require a certain level of competence and quality of performance. You cannot (and should not) make such requests of family or friends, because you would harm lifelong friendships in the process. Remember that your family and friends have jobs or run businesses that require a 30-50 hour work week; then you will understand why they cannot practice perfect your wedding music.

Professional vocalists practice scales daily to keep their voice in shape and maintain their vocal range; professional musicians exercise their fingers or use their mouthpieces daily to maintain flexibility and endurance. Few people realize how many hours of preparation are required of musicians in order to perform before an audience. What seems so effortless is really the result of formal lessons and practicing that can usually be traced back to early childhood. While other kids were out playing dodge ball, they were practicing scales and learning theory. For this reason, I’ve often wondered why when musicians price their services...they ask for a pittance.

Professional musicians know how to handle unforeseen delays that occur on your wedding, like late arriving guests or a minister’s last minute instructions to the bride and groom. Sometimes musicians need to be able to fill fifteen minutes worth of time because a key person has not arrived; they are easily prepared to omit or add pieces, so no one in the audience notices the change.

Second, what about CD’s? Why not just find CD’s and play them at the appropriate time. There is simply too much room for both human and mechanical error. The CD player could decide to “die” on your wedding day, even though it worked perfectly well hours before. You do not want to have to continue your wedding in silence. In addition, people can tell the difference between pre-recorded music and live music; your guests will actually listen and ready themselves for your ceremony if there is live music; whereas CD’s are thought of as “silence filler,” which is why they are played in an elevator or restaurant. There really is no comparison between the two. My heartfelt recommend-ation? Hire talented, respected, professional musicians for your special day. Do some- thing out of the ordinary, because a wedding is an extraordinary life-changing

event.

Third, how does a person find talented, professional musicians? You must keep your eyes and ears alert when you attend friends' weddings and other social events. Make a mental note when you hear a trio, string ensemble, vocalist or harpist that has full command of his/her instrument. You can ask your friends for recommendations, but be certain to investigate these leads fully. Even the finest of musicians play in all sorts of unexpected places and many don't advertise or have anyone "in their corner" promoting them. The fine musicians I found for my daughter's wedding were playing at place called *Puckett's*. I was looking for someone who could play in a jazz style perfected by Django Reinhardt, so my musical family from Chicago could dance up a storm or sit in! In sum, I wanted live music performed exceptionally well. God placed The Gypsy Hombres on the program that night just for me, or I never would have found them, and I hired them several months later.

Most cities publish at least 2-3 wedding directories; wedding vendors have mail-in cards that brides can use to receive these directories for free. Once you receive your free directory, call all of the vendors that interest you and ask them to send out a CD sampler. A demo CD is the most basic of promotional materials for a professional musician; think of it as a resume. If an executive manager was seeking work and didn't have a professional-looking resume *or a resume at all*, what would you think?

Finally, and I know it will sound obvious, never "drop in" on someone's private party to hear a promising new group perform. Attend any public concerts, listen to demo CD's, and ask for references. Professional musicians have often arranged and collected unique pieces that are unavailable for purchase anywhere. They maintain and update these libraries with diligence, so they can offer something totally unique to brides that seek their services over the services of other musicians. There are numerous *unpublished* arrangements of these pieces held by professional musicians throughout the U.S. It is these unique variations of wedding pieces that will identify your wedding from the millions that occur every year.

If you intend to use musical instruments on the premises, such as an organ or a piano, make certain these instruments are in good shape. If the instrument is an organ, do all of the stops and pedals work properly? or do they stick? If you are using the piano, has it ever been tuned?

Remember that once you have walked up the aisle to the altar your audience will only view your wedding dress, your flowers, and your wedding party from the side or back. The focus of your service will then be upon the minister's message and your music, which should both reinforce your values and beliefs about marriage. By now I hope you've learned that music is an *essential component* of your wedding that needs to be planned very carefully.

Prelude Music

From the moment your guests arrive at church, your prelude music will set the tone for your wedding. Carefully chosen musical selections will unify, beautify, and complement your entire ceremony, while expressing your beliefs about marriage. Prelude music generally begins a half hour before the service, while guests are being seated.

Some people put all of the pieces they weren't able to use in the body of their service in the prelude. It becomes a reservoir of music—a veritable hodgepodge of styles. This is certainly not the intent of prelude music. First and foremost, you want to set a mood. Go back to your questionnaire and review the information you wrote down about the style of your wedding. Heavier, more dramatic classical pieces need to be offset with livelier classical or contemporary pieces. Select pieces with varied melodies and tempos. It has happened that a bride will initially select 3-4 pieces that sound almost identical to each other. This is the surest way to lull your guests to sleep. (You will find it hard to make a grand entrance when your guests are snoring, and your musicians will have to play "Sleepers Awake" by J. S. Bach) Your professional wedding musicians should assist you in creating a varied program for your prelude.

You do not need to delineate every song, when you hire musicians you trust. Allow them to do their best work. With regards to your printed ceremony program, keep in mind that you do not need to print every piece that will be used in your prelude. I have typed out every piece in the sample given at the end of this guide to show you the types of pieces that were included, but you only need to print 1-2 pieces on your actual program or you can print the words "Various Selections." Your musicians, however, will want a fully fleshed out program including cue words from your minister or whoever is reading aloud.

Traditional Prelude Music

- 1 "Arioso" from Cantata No. 156 by J. S. Bach
- 2 "Bist du Bei Meir" (When Thou Art Near) by J. S. Bach
- 3 "Blest Be the Tie that Binds" by H. G. Nageli
- 4 "Cavatina" by Stanley Meyers
- 5 "Gymnopedie" by Erik Satie
- 6 "I Love Thee" by Edvard Grieg
- 7 "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" by J. S. Bach
- 8 "O Perfect Love" by D. Gurney
- 9 "Ode to Joy" by Ludwig Van Beethoven
- 10 "Pavane" by Gabriel Faure
- 11 "Sheep and Lambs May Safely Graze" from Cantata No. 203
- 12 "When'er You Walk" from Semele by G. F. Handel

Contemporary Prelude Music

- 1 "A Wedding Benediction" by Austin Lovelace
- 2 "God, a Woman and a Man" by Lilly Green
- 3 "I Will Be There" by Steven Curtis Chapman
- 4 "Love Will Be Our Home" by Steven Curtis Chapman
- 5 "On Eagle's Wings" by M. Joncas
- 6 "Perhaps Love" by John Denver
- 7 "Since You've Asked" by Judy Collins
- 8 "Starting Here, Starting Now" by David Shire
- 9 "The Father Says 'I Do'" by Brent Lamb
- 10 "The Wedding" by Michael Card
- 11 "Wedding Prayer" by Mary Rice
- 12 "You and I" by Frank Meyers

The mother of the bride will be seated after the last guest has been escorted to his/her seat. If the mother of the bride has a favorite wedding song, you may have that piece performed as she is being seated. For instance, a shortened version of a piece like "On Eagle's Wings" could be performed. If you do not want to include additional music, the mother of the bride should be seated just prior to the bridesmaids' entrance. Be certain the mother of the bride and bridesmaids know their musical cues and practice entrances and exits during your rehearsal, the evening before your wedding.

One additional note: Your musicians *will not* be attending your rehearsal, unless you have specifically hired them to do so and you've put that in your contract. Ninety-nine percent of the time, musicians will not be present, because it would be considered a second performance. You will be walking through your service without the benefit of music, but you should pause whenever it is appropriate to indicate that a song will be played, readings will be voiced, the unity candle will be lit and accompanied by a specific piece, etcetera.

You musicians should be told to discuss important timing issues with your minister 1-2 days before your wedding and then again on the day of your wedding to make any needed adjustments. It is very important that you give your musicians a detailed, updated, printed copy of your wedding service as a reference. I would recommend that you send your musicians this material a minimum of two weeks in advance. Think of your printed service as an actor's script and you will understand why it is essential to give your musicians this material and time to practice/memorize their cues. Brides that only give their musicians hurried verbal instructions on the day of their wedding should not expect a flawless performance.

Processionals

Following your prelude music will be two processionals. The first is for your bridesmaids. After your bridesmaids arrive at the altar, a second piece will be played which honors the arrival of the bride. Some brides like to walk down the aisle to piece that is full of heraldry; others prefer a soft, contemplative piece. Some brides select a piece that complements the piece chosen for the bridesmaids, so the entire wedding party functions as an ensemble; others select a piece that differs significantly in style (and often volume) so that the audience becomes fully aware that the bride is coming forth. It is really a matter of personal preference and individual style. Recall, once again, the answers you wrote down on your questionnaire regarding the formality of your wedding, church restrictions, and style/mood you wish to create.

Processionals

Traditional=T

Contemporary=C

- 1 “Arioso” from Cantata No. 156 by Johan Sebastian Bach (T).....quick and lively
- 2 “Bridal Chorus” by Richard Wagner (T).....most well-known and frequently performed
- 3 “Canon in D” by Johan Pachelbel (T).....soft and contemplative
- 4 “Coronation March” by William Walton (T).....full of heraldry and formality
- 5 “Gymnopedie” by Erik Satie (T).....soft and contemplative
- 6 “My Heart Ever Joyful” by Johan Sebastian Bach (T).....quick and lively
- 7 “Ode to Joy” by Ludwig Van Beethoven (T).....quick and lively tempo
- 8 “Pavan in D major” by Luis Milan (T).....moderate and lively
- 9 “Prince of Denmark’s March” by Jeremiah Clark (T) which has been attributed to Henry Purcell as “Trumpet Tune”.....full of heraldry and formality
- 10 Processional from “Royal Fireworks” by George Frederick Handel (T)...full of heraldry and formality
- 11 “The Rondeau” by Jean Joseph Mouret (T).....lively, spirited piece
- 12 “Wedding Processional” from the Sound of Music by Richard Rogers (C)....regal

Write down the pieces you are considering for each wedding processional. Your

musicians should be able to demonstrate a few bars of each so you can hear the different tempos and styles.

Old and New Testament Readings and Non-Biblical Readings

In order to select music to be used after each of your readings, you must first find readings that best state your views on marriage and reflect your religious beliefs. Your music should complement the words spoken by your minister and readers. I am, therefore, listing the readings typically used for Christian wedding ceremonies, along with non-Biblical, contemporary readings used for non-traditional weddings.

Old Testament Readings

- 1 Genesis 2:18, 21-24 “It is not good for a man to be alone...”
- 2 Genesis 24:48-51, 58-67 “Isaac loved Rebekah...”
- 3 Ruth 1:16-18 “Entreat me not to leave thee...”
- 4 Proverbs 31:10-31 “A woman of valor...”
- 5 Ecclesiasticus 1:1-8, 3:1-10; 26:1-4, 16-21
- 6 Song of Songs 2:8-10, 14, 16; 8:6 “Love is as strong as death...”
- 7 Isaiah 61:10; 62:5 “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord...”
- 8 Hosea 2:11-21 “And I will betroth them unto Me forever...”

Psalms to be read responsively

- 1 Psalm 29 “Ascribe unto the Lord...”
- 2 Psalm 63 “O God, Thou art my God...”
- 3 Psalm 95 “Come let us sing unto the Lord...”
- 4 Psalm 98 “O sing unto the Lord a new song...”
- 5 Psalm 100 “Serve the Lord with gladness...”

New Testament Readings

- 1 Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes)
- 2 Matthew 22:35-40 “The commandment of love...”
- 3 I John 4:7-12 “God is love...”
- 4 I John 3:18-24 “Love, real and active...”
- 5 John 4:7-18; 15:9-17; 17:21-24 “God is love...”
- 6 John 15:12-16 “Love on another...”
- 7 John 17:20-26 “That they may be one”
- 8 I Corinthians 13:1-8 “Love never fails...”
- 9 Ephesians 5:2, 21-33 “The mystery of marriage..”

Modern Biblical

“Footprints” by Russell O’Brien

Not all weddings, however, have a traditional format. Unitarian ceremonies, for instance, allow a bride and groom to write their own wedding vows and find poetic, inspiring readings from a variety of sources. Here is a list of non-Biblical readings that

can be used for a non-traditional wedding. For additional options, I would heartily recommend that you purchase Eleanor Munro's *Wedding Readings*, which was published by Penguin Books in 1989; it's an oldie, but a goodie.

Non-Biblical Readings

- 2 "Are you the new person drawn toward me?" by Walt Whitman
- 3 Essay on "Love" by Emerson
- 4 Excerpt from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran
- 5 Excerpt from Leo Buscaglia's *Love*
- 6 "Explanations of Love" by Carl Sandburg
- 7 "Fidelity" by Denis DeRougement
- 8 "Give All to Love" by Ralph Waldo Emerson
- 9 "Grow old along with me..." by Robert Browning
- 10 "How Do I Love Thee" by E. B. Browning
- 11 "If ever two were one..." by Anne Bradstreet
- 12 "Irish Blessing" anonymous
- 13 "Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments..." by Shakespeare
- 14 "My true love hath my heart..." by Sir Philip Sidney
- 15 "Simple Gifts" a Shaker hymn
- 16 "To Julia" by Robert Herrick
- 17 "To love is good..." by Rainer Maria Rilke from *Letters to a Young Poet*
- 18 "When You are Old" by W. B. Yeats
- 19 "Whose Name I Know" and "Many Named" by Samuel Menashe

Music to Accompany Readings

The music you select to accompany your readings should be short, yet filled with meaning. Remember that you are still at the very beginning of your wedding service, so limit your soloist to 1-2 verses maximum to retain the attention of your audience. Ministers and priests will often become upset when they see the number of pieces you intend to include in your service; they are imagining a wedding that will never end—an eternal deluge of music. Reassure your minister or priest that you will make certain your wedding does not turn into a concert and that you are willing to omit pieces or verses whenever necessary to prevent awkward and unnecessary pauses. Your professional wedding musicians will tell you when you have reached “peak capacity.”

Traditional Pieces

- 1 “Entreat Me Not to Leave Thee” by Charles Gounod
- 2 “Eternal Life” (The Prayer of St. Francis) by Olive Dungan
- 3 “Heavenly Father, Grant Protection” from the Birthday Cantata by J. S. Bach
- 4 “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us” by William Bradbury
- 5 “Song of Ruth” by Gary Hallquist
- 6 “Wither Thou Goest” by Heinrich Schuetz

Contemporary Pieces

- 1 “Bless the Broken Road” by Rascal Flatts
- 2 “Butterfly Kisses” by Bob Carlisle
- 3 “Draw Me Close” by Kelly Carpenter
- 4 “Flesh of My Flesh” by Leon Patillo
- 5 “Friends” by Michael W. Smith/Deborah Smith
- 6 “God Causes All things to Grow” by Steven Curtis Chapman
- 7 “I Love You With the Love of the Lord” by Jim Gilbert
- 8 “Love in Any Language” by John Mays/Jon Mohr
- 9 “Nature of Love” by Brown Bannister
- 10 “Only God Could Love You More” by Dwight Liles/Niles Borop
- 11 “The Gift of Love” by Hal Hopkins
- 12 “The Greatest of These is Love” by Lorna Lynn
- 13 “The Prayer” as sung by Andrea Bocelli and Celine Dion
- 14 “The Wedding” by Michael Card
- 15 “Til the End of Time” by Steve Green
- 16 “When God Made You,” as recorded by Natalie Grant
- 17 “When You Say You Love Me,” as recorded by Josh Groban
- 18 “You Raise Me Up” as recorded by Josh Groban

Write down the readings you have chosen, the music to accompany each reading, and the reader.

1st Reading: _____ Musical Selection: _____

The person you have chosen to do 1st reading: _____

2nd Reading: _____ Musical Selection: _____

The person you have chosen to 2nd reading: _____

Music to Accompany the Lighting of the Unity Candle or the Statement of Vows

There are numerous contemporary pieces that are appropriate for the lighting of the unity candle or the statement of vows. I think it is important that you select a contemporary piece for this part of your service, because it is your opportunity to interject your own strong, modern beliefs about both marriage and your love for each other. You will want to look very closely at the lyrics of the piece you select for this very important part of your wedding service. Your selection should be short and sweet, because waiting beside (and staring at) a hot, burning candle so close to the end of your wedding service can become quite tiresome. Therefore, like your music to accompany readings, limit the number of verses used for this selection.

- 1 "And On This Day" by Tina English
- 2 "At this Altar" by Eugene Clark
- 3 "Bridal Prayer" by Roger Copeland
- 4 "Cherish the Treasure" by Jon Mohr
- 5 "Friends" by Michael W. Smith/Deborah Smith
- 6 "Household of Faith" by John Rosasco
- 7 "I Love You with the Love of the Lord" by Jim Gilbert
- 8 "I Will Be There" by Steven Curtis Chapman
- 9 "One Hand, One Heart" by Leonard Bernstein from the musical
- 10 "Only a Shadow of Our Love" by Rev. Carey Landry
- 11 "We Are An Offering" by Dwight Liles
- 12 "We Are One" by Chuck Bentley and Mark Gersmehl
- 13 "Wedding Prayer" by Mary Rice
- 14 "With This Ring" by Roger Copeland
- 15 "You've Searched Me" by David Haas

Write down three of the choices you are considering for this part of your service:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Ceremony of the Unity Candle

Introduction

What greater thing is there for two persons than to feel that they are joined for life, to be with each other for the duration of their days...

Statement of Marriage

Marriage joins two people in a unique relationship. In their togetherness, they may share many experiences as if they were one person, but each must retain his or her own identity in order to grow.

Lighting of the Unity Candle

_____ & _____, take the candles representing your individual lives and together light the center candle to symbolize the beauty and strength of your marriage.

Statement of Hope

_____ & _____, today you have pledged yourselves to a relationship of caring for one another. May your togetherness bring you joy and comfort throughout your lives.

A Blessing

May the blessing of light be with you both, shining upon you and lighting your way on this new path you share.

The Marriage Vessel and the Rose

A unique alternative called the Marriage of the Vessel and the Rose could be used instead of the lighting of the unity candle. The rose is a symbol of beauty and the vessel represents endurance. By using this symbol the couple is demonstrating that marriage requires both beauty and strength to survive. Marriage is a partnership and each person grows and blossoms as a result of the other's unconditional love.

You can use a piece of china from your own unique china or crystal pattern; then, you will be able to create your own yearly tradition of placing a rose in the vessel on each anniversary to reaffirm your marriage commitment.

Ceremony of the Vessel and the Rose

Introduction

Marriage is an evolving entity in which two people vow to spend a lifetime of selfless giving to the other; a husband and wife promise to help each other grow and mature. Each always wants only what is best and most fulfilling for the other. Such a marriage of minds and bodies requires both strength and love to endure.

The Meaning of the Gifts

This vessel made of clay represents love's ability to contain and protect its contents. It is strong and will endure the elements. This rose is a symbol of beauty, a beauty that blossoms with love and nourishment. This single rose represents each of you as separate and unique individuals and together in this marriage you are both creating.

The Giving

Groom: May this gift represent my gratitude for the person you are and the person you are becoming.

Bride: May this gift represent my gratitude for the person you are and the person you are becoming.

The Sharing

As you share each day of your new life together, remember that in order to grow you must: "Stand together, yet not too near together; For the pillars of the temple stand apart, and the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow."

(A single rose is then placed in the vessel by the bride and groom)

A Blessing

Remember this tradition each year on your anniversary; renew your vows to each other daily. May your lives continue to strengthen this commitment you have made here today.

Pieces to be used during a Communion Service

During the Presentation of the Gifts and throughout the Communion Service, you may have several pieces sung or performed instrumentally while your family and friends are receiving communion. The number of pieces chosen will depend entirely upon the number of guests you have invited to your service and the anticipated number of guests who will be receiving communion. It is generally best to over-plan and select more pieces than will be actually required; your musicians can always omit pieces when the last person has left the altar and returned to his/her seat. Nothing is, in my opinion, worse than having the music conclude when there are still fifteen or more people waiting in line to receive communion, awkwardly knowing that every eye is upon them.

Traditional Pieces

- 1 "Come, Gracious Spirit, Heavenly Dove" by Simon Browne
- 2 "Come, Thou Font of Every Blessing" by Robert Robinson/J. Wyeth
- 3 "Come with Us, O Blessed Jesus" by John W. Hopkins
- 4 "Let Us with Gladsome Mind" by John Milton/Daniel Moe
- 5 "Lord of All Hopefulness" by Jan Struther
- 6 "Panis Angelicus" by Cesar Franck
- 7 "The Lord's Prayer" by Albert Hay Malotte (soloist or entire congregation)

Contemporary Pieces

- 1 "As Water to the Thirsty" by David Haas
- 2 "Be Not Afraid" by Bob Dufford
- 3 "Create in Me a Clean Heart" by Brown Bannister
- 4 "Deep Within" by David Haas
- 5 "Holy is His Name" by John Michael Talbot
- 6 "My Soul is Still" by David Haas
- 7 "Now in this Banquet" by Marty Haugen
- 8 "One Bread, One Body" by John Foley

Write down the pieces you have selected in the order you would like them to be performed:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Additional Pieces for a Roman Catholic Service

In a Catholic service, there are a few additional pieces that will be sung by your soloist. The Minister of Music at your church will be able to provide the standard arrangements of those pieces that are used. Every church seems to differ in this regard, so you will need to specifically request this information for your soloist.

- 1 Responsorial Psalm after 1st reading
- 2 Alleluia and Chant after 2nd reading
- 3 Holy, Holy
- 4 Memorial Acclamation
- 5 Amen
- 6 Lamb of God

In a traditional Roman Catholic wedding, “Ave Maria” is only sung if the bride brings a bouquet to the Holy Family altar. Here are the three mostly commonly used versions of “Ave Maria”:

- 1 “Ave Maria” by Franz Schubert
- 2 “Ave Maria” by J. S. Bach/Gounod
- 3 “Ave Maria” by G. Rossini

Catholic wedding services are held during the day prior to 6 p.m. Weddings are not planned on sacred days relating to the church calendar, such as Good Friday. In order to be married in a Catholic church, certain requirements must be met; you must have the following: 1.) a baptismal certificate issued within 6 months of the wedding date, 2.) a record of Confirmation, and 3.) Pre-Cana conferences with your priest to make certain you are freely consenting to marriage. These conferences are like marriage encounter classes; they deal with how to improve communication skills, handle conflicts effectively, responsible sexuality, and fidelity. Printed “banns” are still used, as in days of old, to announce a forthcoming wedding; they are usually published in church bulletins for three consecutive Sundays.

The Commission of Church Music of the Archdiocese of New York has published a statement entitled Music for Weddings, which states the following: “The music of the wedding should assist the assembled believers to express and share the gift of faith.”

A Roman Catholic wedding uses time-honored, sacred symbols and procedures to teach that marriage is a sacrament. You will need to familiarize yourself with the customs and procedures of your church, so you fully understand why things are done, and when things are done in each part of your service.

Congregational Hymns

You may wish to have your entire congregation sing a traditional, well-known hymn. Your soloist or minister can be the song leader.

- 1 “Blest Be the Tie that Binds” by John Fawcett/Johann G. Nageli
- 2 “Come, Gracious Spirit, Heavenly Dove” by Simon Browne
- 3 “Come, Thou Font of Every Blessing” by Robert Robinson/J. Wyeth
- 4 “For the Beauty of the Earth” by Folliot Pierpoint/Conrad Kocher
- 5 “Hear Us Now, Our God and Father” by Harry Huxhold/Rowland Prichard
- 6 “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee” by Henry V. Dyke/L. V. Beethoven
- 7 “Let All Things Now Living” by Katherine Davis
- 8 “Let Us With A Gladsome Mind” by John Milton/Daniel Moe
- 9 “Lord of All Hopefulness” by Jan Struther
- 10 “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” by Bernard Clairvaux/John Dykes
- 11 “Now Thank We All Our God” by Martin Rinkhart/Johann Cruger
- 12 “O Jesus, Joy of Loving Hearts” by Bernard Clairvaux/W. Gardiner
- 13 “O Perfect Love” by Dorothy F. Gurney/Joseph Barnby
- 14 “The King of Love My Shepherd Is” by Henry W. Baker/Irish tune
- 15 “This Is My Father’s World” by Maltvie Babcock/Franklin Shepherd

If you do decide to have your guests sing a hymn, instead of having a soloist perform, be certain to provide a printed copy of the lyrics and melody in your wedding program, or ask your minister/priest to announce the specific hymnal page number. Don’t throw the lyrics up on a projection screen, like you’re hosting a business seminar. Do not assume everyone will recognize the piece you’ve chosen. You may have guests who are of another religion or denomination; the last thing you want to do is make them feel uncomfortable because they don’t know the customs and songs familiar to your church.

List some of your favorite hymns:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The Blessing and Recessional

A short blessing can be sung after your minister or priest says the blessing. This is completely optional, and its inclusion will depend upon the length of your service and the number of pieces you have already included. One of my clients was Irish and wished to have a final blessing sung to her friends and family a capella (without instruments). She wished to incorporate her cultural heritage with the song, “Irish Blessing.” Another beautiful blessing is called “A Wedding Benediction” by Austin Lovelace.

Your recessional announces you as husband and wife. This piece should be lively, upbeat and joyous—a reflection of your new and *happy* life together!

Traditional Recessionals

- 1 “Allegro” from the Sonata in A min. by G. F. Handel
- 2 “Allegro” from the Sonata in C maj. by Telemann
- 3 “Pomp and Circumstance No. 4” by Edward Elgar
- 4 “The Four Seasons- 1st Movement” by Antonio Vivaldi
- 5 “The Water Music Suite” by G. F. Handel
- 6 “Trumpet Air” by Henry Purcell
- 7 “Trumpet Fanfare” by Jean Joseph Mouret
- 8 “Wedding March” by Felix Mendelssohn

Contemporary Recessionals

- 1 “Beginning Today” by Darryl Ducote
- 2 “How Beautiful” by Twila Paris
- 3 “This is the Day” by Scott Wesley Brown
- 4 “What a Wonderful World” by George Weiss/Bob Thiele

At my wedding, I had a Norwegian fiddler play both the bridal processional and the recessional. Since my husband is of Norwegian heritage and his entire family resides in Minnesota, this made perfect sense to me and it overjoyed my in-laws. My Italian heritage was included through the classical music and readings from Leo Buscaglia’s book, *Love*, used throughout our service. My daughter’s wedding in Nashville (23 yrs. later), incorporated magnolias and Southern flair in the design of her dress, tea room location, menu, cake, ceremony and reception music, the design of her programs, the choice of invitations, and every little detail...all well-laid out in a 3 “binder.

I think it is *very important* to validate your separate cultures and demonstrate that you have become enriched through this new union.

Postlude Music

All of the pieces under the recessional section will do nicely for the postlude music, which should not conclude until the last guest has been ushered from his/her seat. Your music should always remain within the same style used throughout your ceremony and be in keeping with the rules of your church.

If, however, your wedding site is at a park, mansion, ballroom, etc. then you may want your musicians to make a transition into livelier, contemporary pieces. This will indicate to your guests that the reception has now begun.

The following contemporary pieces can be used in the postlude for a non-church wedding:

- 1 "All I Ask of You" by Andrew Lloyd Webber (from Phantom of the Opera)
- 2 "Because You Loved Me" by Dianne Warren (from the Mirror Has Two Faces)
- 3 "Grow Old Along with Me" by John Lennon
- 4 "I Finally Found Someone" by Streisand/Hamlisch
- 5 "On the Side of Angels" by Gerry House
- 6 "Ordinary Miracles" by Alan & Marilyn Bergman
- 7 "Out of My Dreams" by Rogers and Hammerstein (from Oklahoma)
- 8 "Since You've Asked" by Judy Collins
- 9 "Starting Here, Starting Now" by David Shire
- 10 "The Wind Beneath My Wings" by Larry Henley/Jeff Silbar
- 11 "Till I Loved You" by Maury Yeston (from the movie Goya)
- 12 "What A Difference You've Made in My Life" by Archie Jordan
- 13 "With You" by Stephen Schwartz (from Pippin)
- 14 "You Mean More to Me" by Lionel Ritchie

SAMPLE WEDDING PROGRAM

Prelude

“Gymnopedie”.....	Erik Satie
“Cavatina”.....	Stanley Meyers
“Arioso” from Cantata No. 156.....	J. S. Bach
“I Love Thee”.....	Edvard Grieg
“Pavane”.....	Gabriel Faure

Processional

“Canon in D”.....	J. Pachelbel
“Bridal Song”.....	Richard Wagner

Pastor’s Greeting

Charge to the Couple

First Reading.....	Ruth 1:16-17
Second Reading.....	I Corinthians, 13:1-8
Music “The Greatest of These is Love”.....	Lorna Lynn

Wedding Address

The Marriage Ceremony

Lighting of the Unity Candle

“And On This Day”.....	Tina English
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Holy Communion

“The Lord’s Prayer”.....	Albert Hay Malotte
“We Are an Offering”.....	Dwight Liles

Nuptial Blessing

Benediction

“A Wedding Benediction”.....	Austin Lovelace
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Recessional

“Ode to Joy”.....	L. V. Beethoven
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Postlude

“Allegro” from the Sonata in C maj.....	Telemann
“Allegro” from the Sonata in A min.	G. F. Handel

Ceremony Program Hints

Thank-you Notes

Think about this special day and what it means to have all of your friends and family surrounding and supporting you in this decision to marry. Then, design your own thank-you note which comes from the heart to place on the back of your ceremony program, such as:

Dear Family and Friends,

Our sincere thanks to all of you who came to celebrate with us on this special day. Your being here makes this time of worship and thanksgiving even more memorable.

A special thanks to our parents for their love, support and guidance, and to our God who make this day and all things possible.

We thank all of you for being with us to share in the celebration of our marriage. Each one of you holds a special place in our hearts and in our lives.

We would like to thank all of our relatives and friends for sharing this wonderful day with us. We especially thank our parents for their love and guidance.

We wish to thank all of our family, friends, and co-workers who came to share the beginning of our new life together as man and wife.

Thank you for being here to share this special day.

New Address/Telephone Information

In addition, you may wish to put your new address and telephone number on your wedding ceremony program, so people will know how to contact you after your wedding day. Some may even wish to send gifts to that address, so your parents will not be burdened with forwarding countless packages.

Some Final Thoughts As You Plan...

1. I know I've said it earlier, but it bears repeating: if you are using on-site instruments at your church, like a piano or organ, make certain the piano has been recently tuned and that the organ has working pedals and stops. You do not want to find out on the day of your wedding that these instruments are critically out of tune or broken.
2. Think about the acoustics in your ceremony site. Will the sound be absorbed by carpeting or unusual architectural features causing the musicians to need amplification? Will the sound echo and bounce wildly because of marble flooring and high ceilings? Find out what has been used typically at this particular wedding site; learn from other's mistakes.

- 3 Where can the musicians be placed, so that they'll be able to see the minister and your wedding party simultaneously. This is essential for timing of the processional and recessional pieces, otherwise a "runner" will need to cue your musicians.
- 4 Is lighting ample at your wedding site, or is the site filled with dark, stained glass windows? Will the musicians need to bring stand lights, because the corner in which they will be placed is completely in shadow?
- 5 If your wedding is going to be held outside, what provisions have you made if it rains? Your musicians will undoubtedly refuse to continue to play in the rain; it will ruin their instruments. Will they be playing under a tent with flaps?
- 6 Make certain there is a secured (locked) area for your musicians to leave their personal belongings and instruments when they are not being played. They should be given their own separate room to tune up and quietly prepare for your wedding.
- 7 Be certain to pay your musicians prior to the start of your wedding. Find them and express appreciation for their performance in advance. They may have another wedding job to play after yours, so don't cause them to be late by withholding payment until later. Do the same with your minister and florist. Whenever possible, pay for services in advance; the final days before your wedding will seem far less hectic if you handle "housekeeping" tasks, like final payments, in advance.
- 8 Consider your guests when planning your wedding ceremony music, especially if they will be required to sing as a congregation. Know your audience and their abilities. If the group cannot sight-read difficult melodies, pick a hymn that everyone will know. This is not the time to teach them a complicated song with changing time signatures and unusual harmony parts.
- 9 Any time expended on your wedding beyond what has been specifically outlined in your contract will constitute over-time, and there will be a fee charged. Find out what these fees are in advance, just in case you want your musicians to extend the contract. If you needed an extra half hour, what would the fee be? Musicians love to play...but give them extra compensation if your wedding does not fall within the hours delineated on your contract.
- 10 Obey the restrictions of your church; find out about them in advance, and learn to work within their confines. You cannot do "anything you want" even though it is your wedding day. Be respectful of the traditions of your church and do not make unnecessary waves about trivial matters. Your minister has reasons that are based on personal experience for doing things in a certain manner.

Books

1. Before You Say "I Do" Devotional-Building a Spiritual Foundation for Your Life Together
2. Carry Me Over the Threshold-A Christian Guide to Wedding Traditions available on www.tommynelsononline.com
3. It's Her Day and I'll Cry if I Want to by Leslie Milk, 2005 (a must-have for the mother of the bride)
4. The Best of Martha Steward Living
5. The Book of Romance-What Solomon Says about Love, Sex and Intimacy by Tommy Nelson
6. The Complete Book of Christian Wedding Vows by H. Norman Wright
7. The Perfect Wedding by Maria McBride
8. Wedding Blessings by June Cotner

Websites

1. www.christianmusicabout.com Go to Christian music/Gospel sub heading
2. Classical Guitar Arrangements for flute and guitar, voice and guitar and trios: <http://www.patrickferreri.com>
3. www.libvirginia.edu Music Library
4. www.sheetmusicplus.com
5. www.topweddingsites.com/wedding_ceremony_music.html
6. www.weddingsheetmusic.com
7. www.weddingvendors.com/music

Additional CD resources:

1. A Classical Wedding, CD, 1996
2. For Your Wedding Ceremony, CD, 2001
3. A Day to Remember-Instrumental Music for your Wedding, CD, 2002