

Planning the Music for your Wedding Ceremony

Selecting music for your wedding is a very important part of the planning process for your wedding ceremony. The musical selections the bride and groom choose, set the mood of the wedding and reflect the personality of the couple being married. Sandra Halleran, the Director of The Marini String Ensemble, and her colleagues, have years of experience planning and performing at wedding ceremonies. Every wedding the ensemble performs at is unique and special. Sandra will be happy to help you choose music that reflects your personal style and tastes.

Here are some guidelines to consider when planning the music for your wedding ceremony:

1. Plan your ceremony carefully before choosing musical selections.

If you know how your ceremony is going to proceed, then it is simple to choose and insert your favorite musical selections.

2. Listen to music.

We have twelve traditional classical wedding selections on our Demo CD. This is, however, only a *very* small sampling of the music we perform. For additional selections, you may browse our repertoire list which contains a more comprehensive selection of titles we offer. We will also do our best to accommodate other works that you have heard outside of this list that you feel will enhance your ceremony.

3. Choose a processional coordinator.

At the ceremony, it is essential that someone be available to inform the ensemble when your wedding party is ready to begin the processional. Most churches and venues have a coordinator assigned to each event. If you do not have a coordinator, it will be necessary for you to choose someone to take on this important responsibility, perhaps a family member or friend. Be certain to ask someone who can remain calm under pressure, as these duties are crucial to the success of your processional. There are several professional ceremony coordinators in the Rochester area who can assist you with your rehearsal and ceremony coordination. If you have trouble finding a coordinator, Sandra will be happy to refer you to someone.

4. Organizing the processional.

Musically, the processional is the most complicated part of the ceremony to coordinate. The ensemble strives to time the music exactly to give the impression that the music ends just as the last step is taken down the aisle. It is very important for us to know exactly how many people will be processing, and in what order, so that we can ensure more precisely timed music.

- **Decide who will process, and in what order.**

Every wedding is different, and you may choose whomever you like to be involved in the processional. Some possibilities to consider are: the Officiant, the Grandparents of the Bride and Groom, the Parents of the Bride and Groom, the Groomsmen, the Bridesmaids, the Flower Girls and Ring Bearers, and of course, the Bride.

- **Consider these other activities that could take place during the processional.**

- Will an aisle runner be pulled?
- Will there be candles lit?

- When and from where will the groomsmen and Officiant enter?

It is advisable to inform Sandra of such decisions, as they can affect the performance of the music you choose.

- **Chose a format for the music for your processional.**

There are several ways that music for the processional can be organized:

1. If you prefer that your processional be simple, swift, and seamless, then everyone can process to the same music. This option is best if you have fewer than 7 people processing.
2. If you have a slightly larger wedding party, the Grandparents/Parents and Bridesmaids can process to one musical selection, and the Bride can process to a different selection. This is best for weddings where there will not be any other activities, such as a candle lighting, pulling of an aisle runner, etc., happening during the processional, and where there are fewer than 6 bridesmaids processing.
3. If you have a large wedding party or if you will be lighting candles or pulling an aisle runner, you could choose three separate musical selections: one for the Grandparents/Parents, one for the Bridesmaids, and a final selection for the Bride. This creates a slightly more segmented processional yet can help highlight the special activities taking place during the processional.

5. Music during the ceremony.

- **Simple wedding ceremonies**

You may want The Marini String Ensemble to perform music during the ceremony. This is not necessary, but can be easily accommodated, and can be quite beautiful. The lighting of the unity candle, a rose ceremony, or some other symbolic or meaningful gesture are common places for us to perform such a work. It is best to have music performed during parts of the ceremony without any speaking.

- **Catholic mass wedding ceremonies**

Catholic masses are by far the most complicated ceremonies at which we perform. There are usually many people and musicians involved in planning the ceremony and music for a mass. It is highly recommend that if there is going to be any singing during the mass, by either a cantor or soloist, or by the congregation, that a pianist or organist also be hired to perform at the ceremony. Including a pianist or organist alleviates many of the problems inherent in mass ceremonies, especially those associated with congregational singing.

Sandra will be in contact with the musicians, (pianist/organist, cantor, etc.) and with the music director at the church where the mass will be held, to plan the ceremony music.

The Marini String Ensemble generally performs the following parts of the mass alone: Prelude, Processional, Presentation of the Gifts, Sign of Peace, Communion, Recessional, and Postlude.

We can perform the following parts of the mass with a pianist: Responsorial Psalm, Gospel Acclamation, Mass Parts (Holy, Holy; Memorial Acclamation; Amen; Lamb of God), hymns and/or vocal selections.

A Unity Candle Lighting Ceremony is not an official part of the Catholic wedding mass, however many clients choose to add this meaningful and symbolic ceremony to their wedding. We can certainly perform a musical selection during this part of the ceremony if it will be taking place.

- **Other religious ceremonies**

Each church and religion have their own traditions and customs. Sandra will work with you and with the music director and religious leaders from your church to ensure that these traditions and customs are respected and followed. Please plan your ceremony carefully and share as much detail with Sandra as possible. This will help her to ensure that the ceremony music is effective and appropriate.

6. Using vocalists and other instrumentalists in your ceremony.

The Marini String Ensemble sometimes performs with a vocalist and/or other instrumentalists (such as a trumpeter or a flutist) during wedding ceremonies. If you would like to inquire about the possibility of us accompanying a vocalist and/or working with other instrumentalists, please contact Sandra for more information. A great deal of planning and preparation are necessary when working with musicians from outside our ensemble. It is possible to do this but can also be very complicated. Each event is unique and will be considered individually. In order to perform with a vocalist, it is necessary to have at least a string trio performing at your event.

7. The recessional.

Most clients choose an upbeat piece for their recessional. The piece you choose for the recessional will be performed in its entirety and will be played until all of the people who processed into the church have exited back down the aisle.

8. The prelude and postlude.

You may request musical selections that you would like to be performed during the prelude (the music performed while the guests are being seated prior to the ceremony) and the postlude (the music performed following the recessional). If you prefer, The Marini String Ensemble can choose appropriate music for the prelude and postlude. While this music sets a mood for the framing of your ceremony, it is not an intrinsic part of the event and allowing us to choose it could relieve you from the pressure of having to make yet another decision regarding your ceremony. Prelude music is generally slower, pensive and romantic, while postlude music tends to be more upbeat and celebratory. You may, however, choose something different depending on your tastes.

Sandra will be happy to assist you in the process of choosing the music for your wedding ceremony. Please contact her with your musical ideas and questions. Most music planning takes place one month prior to the event, although it can be done any time after your signed contract and deposit are received. If you have special musical requests that do not appear on our repertoire list, please bring them to Sandra's attention as early as possible in the planning process. Please understand that it can take as long as six weeks to order sheet music.

The Marini String Ensemble strives to provide fine personal service and careful attention to detail while planning for and performing at your event. The highest levels of performance and professionalism are always our primary concern.