

How to Select Your Wedding Music

By Anne Roos

The following suggestions will help to get you thinking about your music style. I've also included an agenda of the typical wedding events that need music accompaniment. Please review this entire document to get the full scope of how to select your wedding music.

Have Fun Choosing Your Wedding Music!

- **Let the music reflect your own unique personality**—This is *your* wedding. You don't need to follow the current wedding trends or old wedding traditions. You don't need to cave into the wishes of others, either.
- **Choose the music that you love**—What kinds of music do you and your fiancé enjoy the most? What types of instrumentation do you like? What do you dance to? Which music downloads have you bought? What does your favorite radio station play on your commute to and from work? What music do you never tire of hearing?

How to Fit Music Into Your Wedding Theme:

- **Music to reflect the things you enjoy**—Use your wedding music to paint a picture of you and your fiancé's personalities. For instance, if you are a fan of Disney movies, include Disney music within each event at your wedding.
- **Music to match your wedding location**—Compliment your wedding scene with your music choices. Getting married on the beach? You could choose 60s surfer tunes. If you are planning a destination wedding, select music that is popular in the location or use music that describes the scenery.
- **Music to honor your religious background**—The music that you grew up hearing in synagogue, singing in church, or chanting in temple may have specific importance to you. If you're exchanging vows inside a house of worship, you could weave sacred melodies throughout your ceremony.
- **Music to celebrate your ethnicity**—Let the music highlight your heritage. For instance, if you are planning a traditional Scottish wedding, and the gentlemen will wear kilts, invite your harpist to wear traditional Celtic dress.
- **Period music for a period wedding**—Choose a time in history and design your entire wedding around that period. You and your guests can wear costumes of that era, dine on

food that from that period in time, and listen to music that was fashionable then. Your harpist can visually fit into the theme by wearing vintage costumes. Choose an early 20th Century theme for a Downton Abbey look. Celebrate the early jazz era with a Gatsby theme. Renaissance period weddings are a particular favorite, for the colorful costumes. And of course, lacey Victorian weddings lend a soft, romantic look.

- **Music for a holiday celebration**—If you are getting married on or around a holiday—Christmas, Valentine’s Day, Fourth of July, Saint Patrick’s Day, or even Halloween—make your wedding music part of the festivities. For instance, add lively jigs and popular songs like “My Wild Irish Rose” if your wedding falls on or near St. Pat’s Day.

- **Music to reflect the season**—There are many songs written about spring, summer, fall, and winter. For example, “Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow” can tie in with a winter wonderland wedding theme.

- **Song titles that mirror your wedding themes**—What if blue is your main wedding color? Use tunes with that color in the title (“Blue Moon,” for example). If your theme revolves around roses, use tunes that include the word “rose” in the title (like “La Vie en Rose”). Whatever your wedding theme, it’s almost a sure bet you can find song titles to match it.

Mix and match these ideas. Who says you can’t have a classy cocktail service featuring songs from Broadway musicals following sacred hymns played for a formal Catholic wedding Mass? Have fun coming up with songs that make you think, “I can’t wait to hear my harp music at my wedding!”

The Typical Flow of Music to Fit Your Wedding Day Agenda

NOTE: Always check with your celebrant—your minister, rabbi, priest, etc.—before making your music selections. Some faiths, houses of worship, or celebrants do not allow secular (non-religious) music or specific selections to be played. Additionally, some will not permit particular selections to be performed during the ceremony itself or outside the walls of a house of worship.

Pre-Ceremony or Prelude Music

This is soft background music performed while guests are being seated. If you want to avoid the bother of listing each song title of your seating music, select a category of music you would like to hear performed (for example, light classical music or romantic popular love songs). The bride doesn’t hear this music played, so if the groom has particular requests that don’t interest the bride, select his choices for seating. It may help to calm his nerves. This is also a good time to select music to honor specific guests who are being seated.



Processional Music

This music begins when the celebrant and the groom approach the altar. The bridesmaids (along with the groomsmen who may join them) continue to walk to this selection, followed by flower girls and ring bearers. Traditionally, this is a majestic piece played at a pace that is easy to walk to. For non-traditional weddings or smaller wedding parties, this selection need not have a triumphant sound, but it should retain an easy walking tempo. This piece ends when the entire wedding party arrives at the altar.

The Bride's Entrance to the Processional

Traditionally, the bride enters to fanfare music that announces her arrival (most often, "Here Comes the Bride"). Again, for non-traditional weddings or small, intimate weddings, other music may be chosen to suit the bride's taste, as long as it sounds good played at an easy walking pace. This piece ends when the bride reaches the altar. When there are no other bridesmaids, other than the maid or matron of honor, the bride sometimes elects to enter to the same piece of music as the maid or matron of honor.

Recessional Music

This is a jubilant, almost fast-paced piece played after the newlyweds kiss. It says to all gathered, "Hey everyone, we just got married! Lets go celebrate!" This tune is played while they walk back up the aisle, followed by the wedding party. It isn't necessary for this selection to be of walking pace.

Post-Ceremony or Postlude Music

These are lively selections played as guests file out. As with pre-ceremony music, if you don't wish to list particular requests, choose the category of selections you would like performed.

Post Ceremony Photo Session Music/Music During Cocktail and Appetizer Service

The bride often doesn't get to hear any music played until she walks down the aisle. So as a treat, invite your harpist to continue performing during the family photo session, following the ceremony. Select songs the bride will particularly enjoy hearing, and mix them up to your liking. The harpist can also continue playing throughout the cocktail hour for guests, before the newlyweds and the wedding party make their grand entrance into the reception.

Music During Meal Service

Choose selections that both the bride and groom love, and guests of all generations will enjoy, too. Feel free to mix up the categories of music. Who says you can't enjoy Irish music interspersed with rock songs? You may want to choose songs for the wedding party's entrance, the first dance, the bridal bouquet and garter toss, and at the cutting of the cake.

Optional Music Selections

- **For a special seating of mothers and grandparents before the processional begins**, select one of their favorite songs to be played while they are guided to their seats. This is a touching way to honor them.
- **During the ceremony**, you could choose individual songs to be played for the lighting of the Unity Candle, Communion, a candle blessing, tying of the lasso, or other sacred traditions. Music can be performed softly behind scriptural or poetry readings, too. These selections should hold special romantic or religious significance to the bride and groom. Keep in mind that additional readings, traditions, and music cause the ceremony to lengthen (and it's difficult to stand for a long period of time at a wedding).
- **Request delicate background music played behind the entire ceremony or during the exchange of vows.** Select just one piece to be played from the start of the ceremony to the vows, and another to be played behind the reading of vows. These songs should hold special meaning to the wedding couple.