

Perfect Harmony

LOCAL PROS SHARE THEIR TOP TIPS FOR INCORPORATING LIVE MUSIC INTO ALL PHASES OF YOUR WEDDING.



FROM CEREMONY TO RECEPTION, live music can be the perfect accompaniment to your wedding day. More and more couples are turning to on-site musicians to enhance their celebrations, trusting them to strike the right chord for each unique moment of the day. “Live music feels more elegant,” says Nate Berg of G.L. Berg Entertainment in St. Cloud. “It adds a lot to the energy.” Not sure where to start when it comes to bringing live music into your big day? Local experts share their insight and advice.

Here Comes the Bride

It’s critical to get the music right during the ceremony, whether that means classical strings or pop songs. Traditionally, of course, ceremonies feature classical pieces, but some brides may not be familiar with the repertoire, and that’s where the pros come in. Anne Strasser of Crocus Hill

Trio—violin, flute and cello—supplies couples with 10 songs representing a breadth of styles and then suggests a playlist based on the ones couples liked best. The resulting selection resonates perfectly with the couple’s tastes.

Looking for something a little less traditional? Style-Architects director of weddings

ABOVE:
Nothing keeps the energy up, and allows you and your hubby to steal the spotlight, quite like live music.

and events Rachele Mazumdar sees ceremony music leaning toward more contemporary selections, with brides choosing movie scores or modern-day pop classics for their walk down the aisle, rather than mainstays like Pachelbel's *Canon in D*.

While anything goes for a secular wedding, those holding a religious ceremony should consult with the institution's music director to ensure appropriate and approved selections.

Hit the Right Note

Using musicians for the entire wedding day can get expensive. But, says wedding consultant Anna Senrick from Fête Perfection, you can maximize your budget when it comes to having live music in your wedding. She suggests using a musician or two from the dance band to play the earlier parts of the evening, like the cocktail and dinner hours. You can also reverse this idea for the cocktail hour and use a single cello player from the string quartet that played your ceremony.

Beyond your budget, the size of your guest list also should inform your choice of musical group, suggests James Borden, owner of Musicians Unlimited. Five to seven pieces may be a big enough group for a 100-person wedding, while a larger band might work better for a reception of 300 guests.

And be sure to match your band to the style of the venue, recommends Berg. A bar band won't suit an elegant space, just as a formal, classical group may seem out of tune in a budget venue.

Strike Up the Band

It's important to remember that dinnertime isn't just about table chatter and background music. There are toasts and speeches, along with silverware-to-glass cues for newlywed kisses. Live music can enhance such impromptu moments. "If a piano is playing during dinner, the musician can create a quick ending to the song as needed," says Borden. "There's a cadence in a nice, professional way that's more elegant than just turning down the volume."

An East Coast trend is making the scene in Minnesota, and it's changing the traditional dinner-then-dancing schedule. Mazumdar has coordinated several New York-style receptions, in which dinner service is alternated with brief periods of dancing. The band strikes up as guests enter the ballroom after cocktail hour, immediately followed by the grand march and the couple's first dance, before guests join them on the dance floor for a few songs. Guests are then seated for a welcome and salad course. Before dinner service and the customary wedding speeches, guests are invited back to the dance floor for a few more songs. "You keep the energy in the room," says Mazumdar, "as opposed to keeping people seated for an hour and a half during dinner."



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Dance the Night Away

Another trend imported from the East Coast may help those torn between choosing a DJ or a band. Fusion groups, like Minneapolis' Union, add live harmonies and melodies to the well-known songs played by a DJ. A band like Union—made up of a percussionist, saxophone player and keyboardist—provides the energy of a live band, but with the unlimited repertoire and flexibility of a DJ, which can come in particularly handy for requests.

If a traditional dance band is more your style, Borden recommends starting with at least a five- to seven-piece band. If the budget allows, adding a horn section and additional singer helps achieve a sound closer to the original arrangements.

For their reception, newlyweds Lisa and Colin Peterson enlisted dueling piano performers Deuces Wild to ensure everyone hit the dance floor. "They got everyone involved, from the little kids to the grandparents," says Lisa. The duo, plus optional drummer, interacted with every guest, from performing a tribute to the bride with all of the groomsmen to encouraging even hesitant-to-dance parents to take a turn around the floor. "Deuces Wild were up on the stage, they were down on the dance floor," says Lisa. "It was like we had two crazy uncles there who also happened to be amazing musicians."

Deuces Wild was willing to use a song list, but Lisa's trust in their creativity and experience led her to choose otherwise. "I felt that the best thing to do was to let them take the lead and not be too picky about what they could and couldn't do," she says. "And I wouldn't have changed a thing." *



Deuces Wild! Dueling Pianos

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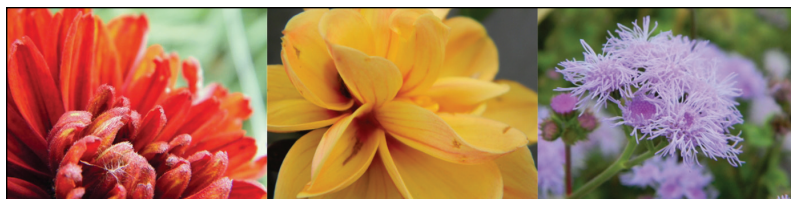
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