You're Not Planning to Wear Just "Any Old Gown"

So Don't Neglect the Ceremony Music !

I marvel at how selecting live music for one's ceremony often takes a back seat to choosing flowers, gowns and other physical elements. After years of watching brides during the planning stages, I've concluded they don't really mean to undervalue music, but often feel ignorant or intimidated. Don't worry"I won't go into a discourse on the Importance of Music here. Let me just say that well-chosen, well-played music keeps your guests entertained and moves everyone into place at the right time. It gets you in and out with an air of elegance and dignity. Even though it may seem fleeting and ephemeral, music is as concrete a presence at your ceremony as the candles and boutonnieres. When you play back your video for years to come, guess what's in the background? A soundtrack! Make it as much a priority as planning the other details.So what do you do when you don't know Mozart from Beethoven, and find it easier to buy matching gloves for the bridesmaids than select your wedding march? This is where a knowledgeable wedding coordinator and/or a music planner will be of great assistance. As you shop around, beware of sites or vendors who only focus on reception music. There's more to a wedding than the party afterwards! I know of one statewide association whose music page mentions nothing about the ceremony"only celebrating when it's over. In a similar vein, don't let a DJ talk you into doing your ceremony. In my opinion, playing a CD in place of live music is like wearing blue jeans down the aisle.Some musicians place restrictions on what is considered proper for ceremonies. This is an injustice to the client. That's why it's so important to communicate with musicians before hiring. View their websites. Contact their references. Find out if he'll play "Evergreen" during the prelude. Ask if she can play the Widor "Toccata" for the postlude. After you pick someone, you and your fiance should schedule a consultation to audition pieces from their repertoire. Or you may listen to recordings and convey your choices by phone, fax or email. You can greatly assist the process prior to the consultation by listening to and identifying the style of music which most appeals to your tastes. Specific composers (like "Schubert") and periods (like "Romantic") and names of works (such as "Ave Maria") will greatly aid the performer and make the consultation session more productive. Bring sheet music of favorite songs, tapes, or programs from other weddings, too. Many wedding music sites list suggested pieces with sound samples and online retailers like Amazon offer 30 second clips from CDs"and often that's all it takes. Brides don't have to take an Intro to Music course to make good choices. In fact, you don't have to know anything at all about what you're listening to. The main criterion is that you like it! After all, it's a matter of taste, and it's your day to design as you wish. Then again, some brides have no musical preferences and elect to have the professionals choose the music. If you are having your ceremony in a church, use discretion when requesting love songs and other secular music, keeping in mind the sacred nature of the event and place. Your minister or wedding coordinator might offer guidance on this subject. Rules defining restrictions vary from church to church, so ultimately these decisions should be made in conjunction with the officiating minister. If your ceremony is at a mansion, country club, garden, or is simply less religious in tone, find musicians who are open to non-traditional styles of music.Plan ahead! There has to be time for your musicians to obtain sheet music for specially requested songs, to work out arrangements, and to practice! Stay in touch with your organist or music planner. If you have a wedding coordinator, make sure she keeps in contact with your musicians. If using a bagpiper, make sure your planner has plenty of time to locate a good piper. Members of bands are obligated to appear at highland games, competitions, concerts and various festivals throughout the year and may not be readily available for your wedding on short notice.My last word of advice is to take your rehearsal seriously. The walk-through of the bridesmaids' processional, bridal march, and recessional should be done in real time to give the organist or other performers a sense of exactly how much is required to get people from point A to point B. It also alerts the bridal party to their cues so everything runs smoothly.

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