

DON'T LET YOUR WEDDING SPEECHES BE AN IMPEDIMENT

By Bianca Marais – Gift of the Gab

Bianca Marais – Since she learnt how to speak, Bianca's parents had a hard time getting her to keep quiet; any occasion, from an informal braai to a birthday party became an excuse for Bianca to entertain her captive audience. Her love of public speaking is only rivalled by her passion for writing and drama – she still loves to share her gift; luckily her audience is a lot more willing these days which makes ambushing them a lot easier!

The speeches are one of the most integral – and meaningful – aspects of any wedding. They follow the symbolic exchanging of vows during the church service and precede the celebratory festivities of the reception. The words of the Father of the Bride can evoke sentimental tears, making an emotional event even more touching.

The anecdotes of the Best Man usually elicit laughter and fond reminiscing which can add even more joy to the blissful occasion. The Groom sincerely expresses his love for his Bride so that all their guests can share in the romance of the day and briefly envy the exciting journey that the married couple is about to embark upon.

The speeches set the tone for the reception. Guests, whose hunger pangs at dinner time have briefly been assuaged by the starters, wait expectantly to be amused and touched by what the speakers have to say. And yet, why is it that such a significant hour of the wedding day isn't paid the same detailed attention as flower arrangements or cake designs?

A bad speech which drones on and fails to capture the guests' attention is a let down. A nervous speaker who stutters through his words and forgets his lines makes guests check their watches, remembering that they haven't eaten supper yet and wondering how much longer they have to sit through.

At most weddings, speakers are chosen for sentimental reasons. A person is asked to say a speech because the bridal couple has a relationship with them and feels that the person knows them well and can speak from the heart. Unfortunately, not all friends or family members are able to express themselves as eloquently or speak as confidently as they would like. Many people dread public speaking and see the speech as something to be gotten over with instead of something to be enjoyed. Not everyone is knowledgeable about wedding etiquette and the selected speaker might not know what is expected of them or who they should toast and thank.

Ensure that anyone you have asked to speak at your wedding pays special attention to the following aspects when writing and delivering their speeches:

- Forget the tired sentiments that everyone has heard a million times before. Express yourself sincerely and eloquently without losing your individuality or downplaying the importance of what you have to say.

- Make sure you know who should be thanked and do it sincerely and personally. Know your responsibilities as well as your time limitations; nothing is worse than a speech that goes on forever. Be original and avoid duplication across the speeches by consulting with the other speakers prior to the wedding.
- Format your speech into cue cards which are easier to handle than large pieces of paper and include reminder catchphrases or highlighted sentiments. Practice and practice again! Most nerves on the big day come from being afraid that you'll forget what you have to say. Deliver your speech in front of the mirror, a friend or a faithful pet – the more you've prepared, the more relaxed you will be.
- Be aware of public speaking techniques like relaxation breathing, pacing yourself, pausing for laughter, voice projection and microphone technique.
- Don't be afraid to use humour and anecdotes so long as they are appropriate. If you aren't a naturally funny person, source jokes and toasts from books or the internet.
- If you aren't a born writer or speaker – don't be afraid to ask for expert assistance. The speech that you are delivering will probably be recorded as part of the wedding video tape to be saved for posterity. It is an honour to be asked to speak which is why you need to prepare and deliver the best possible speech that you can. Every speech should be as magical as the wedding day itself.

Gift of the Gab offers a personalised service to individual wedding speakers or the entire group of speakers. We assist with all aspects of speech creation and delivery and can customise our reasonably priced services according to your needs. Our speciality is turning nervous speakers who aren't sure what to say into witty and confident orators! To add a touch of glamour to your evening or if you aren't comfortable assigning the Master of Ceremonies job to any of your friends or family; Gift of the Gab offers a professional and personalised MC service which will ensure that your evening runs smoothly and that your guests are kept entertained.