

THE ELEGANT TOUCH – STRING ENSEMBLES

By David Tombak – Madrigal Ensemble

During the last three decades, string ensembles have become very popular in providing music for wedding ceremonies. The most useful combination of string ensembles are a string trio of two violins and a cello or a string quartet of two violins, a viola and a cello. In these two combinations, a flute can replace one violin and a trumpet can be added to these sets for professional music.

A wedding ceremony has certain patterns such as the bridal procession, vows and exchange of the rings, signing of the register and recession march, but this can be personalised according to the taste of the bride and groom. There are probably as many kinds of wedding ceremonies as there are brides and grooms in the world.

After choosing and appointing an ensemble to play at the ceremony, the bride and groom should arrange a meeting with one of the members or the artistic director of the ensemble in order to discuss the musical scenario of their wedding ceremony. This could include:

- Warming up the congregation by creating a pleasant atmosphere before the ceremony starts. There is a great variety of baroque music (works by Bach, Handel, Vivaldi and many other baroque composers) which can be blended with works of classic and romantic composers such as Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn and Wagner.
- If there are many participants in the ceremony such as page boys, flower girls, bridesmaids etc, each group can have their own processional music in order that the ceremony might be more majestic in vision and in music.
- Hymns and psalms should be chosen in advance. Sometimes a congregation isn't eager to sing, but bride and groom would like to include them in the ceremony. The text of hymns and psalms can be printed on the wedding pamphlet and the congregation can follow the text with their eyes while the ensemble performs.
- The ensemble can play very softly as a background during the pronouncing of the vows and the exchanging of the rings.
- As long as the signing of the register is an administrative part of the ceremony, so popular songs can be especially arranged and performed.
- According to tradition, the bridal song by Wagner is performed for the bridal procession and the wedding march by Mendelssohn is used for the recession march. But there is a great variety of majestic processional music which can be chosen such as 'Arrival of the Queen of Sheba' by Handel, 'Trumpet Voluntary' by Clarke, 'The Spring' by Vivaldi, 'Alla Hornpipe' and 'La Rejussance' by Handel and many other works.
- Last but not least a strolling duo of violin and accordion can create a cheerful atmosphere to welcome the guests to the wedding and during the cocktails after the wedding service.

If you aren't sure which music selection you would prefer, the artistic director of the ensemble can guide you once you have given them an idea of your musical taste. You don't have to strictly observe tradition; what's important is that you enjoy the music played at your reception and incorporate it into the festivities of the occasion.