

Planning Your Ceremony

Here is a short guide to the different types of selections that are typically encountered at a ceremony service. We have included a short explanation of the usual placement and purpose of these different selections in case you are not familiar with them, and we have also included some comments and tips for each of them that we think might help you in determining the musical content of your ceremony.

This section is designed to be helpful to you in planning your ceremony whether we are providing your ceremony music or not. You can even use this section to help you if you are having your ceremony music provided by a church, live musicians, or both.

Prelude:

The Prelude is the music that starts before your ceremony while your guests arrive and find their seats. It is typically quieter music that helps to set the tone for the rest of your ceremony. This could also be the music that special family members such as mothers, grandmothers, etc. would be escorted down the aisle to their seats to.

Prelude Tips:

The prelude can start either when the doors open, or at a specified time (i.e. 20 minutes or so) before you are going to come down the aisle. One benefit to the second option is that the start of the prelude music acts as a call for mingling guests to start to find their seats. If there is music playing from the time of your guests arriving, there may not be a sense of urgency to get seated and few things are more aggravating than trying to corral and reign-in guests while you are waiting to go down the aisle.

Expect to play no less than 20 or so minutes of prelude selections, sometimes a few more. We are always ready to accommodate unexpected delays requiring an extended prelude.

Processional:

The Processional selections are the selections that your bridal party, and then yourself, will walk down the aisle to. On occasion, more than two processionals can be played. Remember... no two weddings are the same, and we can help you program the music that best suits your wedding needs.

The following is a typical processional order. Please modify it to best suit your particular situation.

1. The groom, best man and Officiate enter by using a side door. They all stand facing the guests.
2. An usher escorts the grandmother(s) of the bride to their seats.
3. An usher escorts the grandmother(s) of the groom to their seats.
4. An usher escorts the mother of the groom to her seat.
5. An usher escorts the mother of the bride to her seat.
6. The ushers walk down the aisle (or escort the bridesmaids) and stand next the groom and best man and then face the guests.
7. The bridesmaids walk down the aisle.
8. The maid of honor walks down the aisle.
9. The ring bearer walks down the aisle.
10. The flower girl walks down the aisle. (Many times the flower girl and ring bearer will walk together)
11. The father of the bride escorts the bride down aisle.

Processional Tips:

Typically, a separate Processional is chosen for each - the bridal party, and the bride herself. Sometimes, there might be more Processional selections if you are having others walk down the aisle as well... to be seated for example. Maybe you even want a separate selection for "the guys" to walk down to.

The Processional for the bridal party should mark an increase in interest from the Prelude selections just played, but should not outshine the regal and splendor of the bridal Processional that the bride will walk down to.

Most often, the Processionals will not be played in their entirety, but only long enough for the parties to walk down the aisle to, after which they are smoothly faded out, with only a short pause before the bride starts to walk down the aisle. Work with us to establish the cue points in each selection when the walk down the aisle will begin. You may not want to start walking at the beginning of the first note, and you may even want us to cue up the start of the selections a point other than the very beginning of the song itself.

Sometimes, depending upon the selections chosen, the walk down the aisle can proceed in-tempo with the selection being played. You decide if this is something you would like to do, and if so, make sure you have a rehearsal with your bridal party and the music to be used so you can practice the walk down the aisle.

Interlude:

Musical segments during your Ceremony where you would like a subtle musical backdrop. Common examples are communion, the exchange of rings, the lighting of a unity candle, etc. Popular vocal/instrumental music is also commonly used as an Interlude, as well as orchestral pieces with operatic vocals. Let your tastes determine what is right for you, and work with us to find the right Interlude(s).

Live performances:

It is not at all uncommon to have either a live instrumental, vocal solo, or other type of live performance at some point in the ceremony. Often, it may even be done by a friend or family member. We invite you to think about this possibility before glancing over it. If someone close to you is musically inclined, and is not averse to performing in front of others, this would make a wonderful addition to your Ceremony, and would be all it would take to catapult it to a whole other level.

Recessional:

Music that plays while the couple walks back down the aisle, followed by the bridal party, and possibly other special individuals such as mothers, grandmothers, etc.

Here is an example of a typical Recessional order that is nothing more than a reversal of the Processional order above. As with everything, modify this as needed.

1. Bride and Groom exit
2. Flower girl & Ring bearer exit
3. Maid of Honor & Best Man exit
4. Bridesmaids (each accompanied by an usher) exit
5. Bride's parents exit
6. Groom's parents exit
7. Bride's grandparents exit
8. Groom's grandparents exit

9. Wedding guests exit

Recessional Tips:

This is usually one of the grandest selections played at a Ceremony, and is typically very upbeat, joyous, and triumphant in nature.

Postlude:

These are the selections that play after you and your bridal party has walked back down the aisle to your recessional. Typically upbeat and joyous in nature, but slightly more subdued than your recessional itself, the postludes provide a pleasing backdrop to which your guests can start to enjoy the company of family and friends and exit the ceremony area on their way to the reception. Usually, only a couple postlude selections are needed, and sometimes, the recessional is simply played in its entirety and no additional postlude selections are played. Work with us to find the best scenario for you.

Some things to consider in making your ceremony music selections:

The location of your Wedding can be a major factor in determining the type of music that is right for your Ceremony.

For example, a Ceremony indoors in a larger, more ornate setting such as a sanctuary or hall might lend itself better to a more regal and formal presentation that is full of power and majesty to match the surroundings you are in. Pieces featuring organs and full-orchestras are best suited for achieving this kind of feel.

On the other-hand, Ceremonies outdoors often go better with lighter, more upbeat and joyous music. Typically Ceremony selections for an outdoor ceremony are performed by smaller, more loosely orchestrated ensembles such as quartets or quintets whose sound is more open and airy, making it a perfect match for an outdoors occasion. Also, pieces featuring guitar, harp, and flute, either as solo performances, or as accompaniment to a larger ensemble, can help to create an intimate and fun setting perfect for celebrating your union with your family and friends.