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VOX HUMANA: I plight thee my troth

Weddings... cheerful productions laced with promises of life-long bliss for a happy couple, or the unutterable nightmare of musicians relegated to the most ignoble of servitude and confronted with the worst behavior of which otherwise rational humans are capable? Last year's request for amusing organ stories brought in a trunk full of wedding anecdotes. At the risk of reducing this profound forum for noble insight to the tawdriness of reality TV, we pass on readers' accounts of what happens when we mix matrimony and music.

Jerry Phillips from Fitchburg, MA tells us about the time that a guest singer came to his church to sing for an 11:00 a.m. wedding. As policy, Jerry opposed free-for-all "guest" musicians, while his pastor had no problem about such. By 11:05, no singer had arrived. Jerry began the processional during which the missing singer huffed and puffed up the stair. At the moment for the solo and the singer put down a copy of the Schubert *Ave Maria* in E-flat, Jerry began the intro and she launched into the Bach-Gounod setting in C! Jerry kept up as best he could. Once finished, the singer cooed, "that was the best accompaniment I ever had." Jerry no longer has the problem of guest singers!

Rodney Trueblood, who played in a little church in rural North Carolina, relates the story of his wedding soloist who once tripped over the extension chord to the spinet Hammond silencing the prelude (and remember what it took to get those tone wheels spinning again?). Another day, Rodney's soloist stood at the door shaking her head instead of singing. The problem? A mouse in the choir loft. At another ceremony, the minister called the bride by the wrong name twice after which the mother stood and corrected him.

Carol Churukian played for a wedding at Illinois Wesleyan University's chapel, a place where each wedding party brings its own clergy. All Carol asks is a signal when the mothers are ready to be seated. Pretty reasonable, eh? The groomsman gave the signal and Carol played the music requested for the mothers. The mothers walked to their seats after which Carol began the processional and all of the bridesmaids took their places. Suddenly, the father of the bride appeared, out of breath, to say that the *minister* had not yet arrived. So, the bridesmaids retreated and twenty minutes later the minister sauntered down the side aisle. They began all over again.

As for starting over, how about this for confusion? Marilyn Polson, a past dean of the Vermont Chapter of the AGO was playing a wedding where, at the appointed hour, the mother of the bride was seated. She kept her eye on the door, but, for an eternity, no bride. Then, seemingly, the mother of the bride was seated a second time as the bride appeared at the door and the processional got underway. Turns out the mother of the bride had a twin sister who wore the same shade of blue!

Finally, there's the tale of Henry Doktorski. Henry is a legitimate accordion virtuoso as well as organist. Because Henry was playing the accordion on the day in question, it may be stretching the rules a slight bit to include this narrative but reeds are reeds, right?

While playing for an outdoor wedding under a tent at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh on a sunny but windy afternoon, Henry began the processional music. Simultaneously, a powerful gust toppled two large potted rubber trees right behind Henry. One tree landed on his shoulder (one suspects a body part especially important to an accordionist) and the other struck his head. There they stayed with their huge fronds blocking any view of the music. True professional that he is, Henry continued playing from memory, but called out to the nearest person in the congregation "Will you please help me?" A Good Samaritan righted the pots, Henry finished up, and the congregation had a good laugh.

It bears out what we've long suspected: no matter what the fee for playing a wedding, it isn't enough. Someday, remind me to tell you about the trumpeter from Julliard...

- Haig Mardirosian