

ADVICE TO A BUDDING WEDDING CEREMONY SOLOIST

For the wedding stuff, your absolute best bet is to have brief recording samples of yourself singing a variety of tunes you expect to be singing for a ceremony. Don't book a gig with someone who hasn't heard you.

You don't want any surprises for the day, and you want to be able to provide calm, reassuring confident answers to a bride or wedding planner who asks for or about anything. You also want to know two other singers who could potentially fill in if you got sick at the last minute, and two accompanists who can fill in if yours gets sick. It's best if they have their own electronic keyboards, as wedding locations are often chosen without instrument access foremost in mind.

Once you have good solid rep, give your name to the accompanists you know, tell them you are looking for appropriate gigs. If you really want to get your name out there, make a 1 minute montage or your voice singing several tunes in various styles, in mp3 format, send that to your accompanists and to a mailing list of local wedding planners as well. People won't generally hire a stranger without a sample, and soloists who do this a lot have websites with streaming samples.

As far as rep, check online "wedding song" lists, there are tons of sites of varying value – e.g. <http://www.gracefulmusic.com/samples.html>. Capital music or any other sheet music store will have tons of books with wedding songs. You'll notice that ceremony songs tend to go from classical, then range into older jazz standards, then into Beatles love songs, then into pop ballads. In reality - very few voices can do classical as well as they do pop, so it's wise to have a very clear self-assessment of what rep you feel comfy selling.

Here are a few different types of lists of materials – from some various weddings I had to do.

CLASSICAL

This was my pitch list for a couple who really wanted classical and legit oriented material. I sent them a cd with the samples I had so they could listen. Brides are often incredibly picky and want to listen to everything and make a very serious selection. Which won't matter later at all. Anyway, you can see how chatty I was, which you don't have to be with every couple, these just seemed like that. <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/5513427/DIOS/Classical%20wedding%20recs%20for%20Tom%20and%20Anne%20tte%20.pdf>

here's another comprehensive listing I got from somewhere long ago, these are traditional and very legit

– <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/5513427/DIOS/WEDDING%20REP%20classical%20traditional.pdf>

Legit Broadway

This style of tune is appropriate for classically trained voices, but gives a slightly more contemporary slant. Pop and jazz voices can also carry off these tunes convincingly, so it's a very useful territory to have a lot of rep in. It's still considered relatively formal, though, and pleasing to older people especially:

Sunrise, Sunset (Fiddler, use to be classic for entrance of the grandmother)

Starting Here, Starting Now (from and old musical of the same name)

One Hand, One Heart (from West Side)

Love Changes Everything (Aspects of Love)

Here's site with some more examples: <http://www.squidoo.com/love-songs-from-musicals>

Another: <http://www.musicalschwartz.com/schwartzrecordings-special.htm>

Older Jazz love songs

Classically trained singers must tread carefully here, as even uneducated listeners can usually tell if a singer is truly at ease in this genre, or faking it. Here are some great tunes that show up in ceremonies, but also in the "first dance" slot for receptions.

*Our **Love is here to stay**

*I've got you under my skin

*Let's Fall in Love

*I can't give you anything but love

*All the Way

*You do something to me

*What are you doing for the rest of your life

*Embraceable You

*Come Rain or Come Shine

*The Best is yet to Come

*L-O-V-E (Nat King Cole)

*Night and Day

....And so so very many others. These are the easiest types of tunes to get chords for, as so many of them are considered "standards".

Vintage R&B

Don't attempt it unless you really got it. This is often where the couple is attached to a particular recording, and they don't realize that a live singer with a solo instrument won't sound the same as a large Detroit gospel singer with a wall of sound big band. Etta James' At Last is the classic example. Every solid wedding reception band should be able to do the tune, and hire a singer with persuasive chops to do it, but unless you are of that caliber, don't put tunes like that on your list. Learning these tunes is really great and satisfying, but it takes huge balls to really sell them. Anything made famous by Aretha Franklin or Ray Charles is basically off limits.

Vintage pop and soft contemporary

Your largest category of possibility: at this point the Beatles, the Carpenters, Van Morrison, Elvis, Chicago, the Mama's and the Papas, Anita Baker, Bryan Adams, Celine Dion, Stevie Wonder, Debbie Boone, Kenny Loggins, Alison Krauss, Jason Mraz, Taylor Swift, Kelly Clarkson, anything that's been karaoke'd enough so that the original recording version is no longer the only version that will suffice. These tunes can be very satisfying for the couple if they have a special attachment, just be careful that you edit the songs down to a reasonable length. Radio length is typically 3 minutes which is TOO LONG for the middle of service. The recordings often include an instrumental, many repeated verses with embellished instrumentation to make the song build, etc. You won't have that for a ceremony, typically, you get a piano. <http://www.wedalert.com/songs/firstdance/index.asp>

Truly contemporary or alternative tunes

If the couple requests something really contemporary, or very unusual that you don't know, try it out, make a little scratch recording of yourself singing it, and make sure they are satisfied before confirming the tune.

Give you something to start with?

For my own wedding, I booked an opera singer friend of mine for the ceremony, but a totally different band for the reception. The trumpet player played for both (horn players are usually good at crossover, whereas singers and pianists typically are not). I told the opera singer (whom I know well) "I don't care, it's for the processional, pick something pretty and light." She chose "Eternal Source of Light Divine" which is a fine Handel choice that repeats or cuts easily so that it times to the processing well. She ran the piece once with the trumpeter and keyboardist about 30 minutes before the service, having never met them before. They were all veterans, it's not a hard piece for a pro, and it came off fine.