



Music *to* My Ears

The songs that are played at your wedding will set the proper atmosphere and the mood for your guests. *Richard Lord* explains that selecting the tunes, however, is best left to the experts

THERE'S THE GOOD NEWS: when it comes to choosing music for your wedding, there are no rules. In the end it's all about what you, the couple, want. That doesn't mean there isn't the potential for things to go wrong, however—inappropriate musical choices can set the wrong emotional tone, bore everyone else to tears or even cause offence. Disasters should be fairly easy to avoid and this is at least one part of the big day for which you can completely hand over responsibility to the professionals.

Justin Siu, founder of Innonation, which provides music for weddings and other high-end private events, advises couples not to worry too much about trying to keep everyone happy. “I believe the music should represent the couple,” he says. “With the right music creating a genuinely happy couple, everyone

in attendance is going to have a great time. Some come to us with just an idea that they want music, period. We take a look at their initial rundown and make recommendations. On the other end of the spectrum, we have couples with an exact idea of what they are after, right down to the individual songs and even the type of voice of the vocalist.”

There are a few key musical moments to think about during the day: the bride's (and possibly also the groom's) arrival, the recessional (the music played immediately after the ceremony as the couple leave the venue) and the first dance at the post-ceremony festivities. Beyond that, there's a fairly obvious musical transition most weddings follow, from lighter music to more dance-friendly material.

“Most of the time,” says Maria Wong, project manager for wedding music provider ME2 Productions, “especially for

TOP TUNES

We asked some event experts and movers and shakers around town to name a few of their favourite tunes for a wedding—it’s clear that Pharrell Williams’ *Happy* and Bruno Mars’ *Just the Way You Are* have become modern wedding classics alongside Pachelbel’s *Canon* and Gigue in D Major

Shirley Hiranand, co-founder, Bonvivant & Bellavita

- Roy Orbison, *You Got It*
- The Stylistics, *Can’t Give You Anything (But My Love)*

Ronald Kwok, director, Opera Hong Kong

- Bruno Mars, *Just the Way You Are*
- George Benson, *Nothing’s Gonna Change My Love for You*

Christy Liang, co-founder, The Lace Atelier

- Ellie Goulding, *How Long Will I Love You*
- Sara Bareilles, *I Choose You*

Jamie Lee, co-founder, CrossFit 852

- Rachel Platten, *Stand by You*
- Pharrell Williams, *Happy*

Lianne Lam, solicitor, Nixon Peabody CWL

- George Benson, *Nothing’s Gonna Change My Love for You*
- Whitney Houston, *Saving All My Love for You*

Evelyn Mills, founder and creative director, Marriage Maestros

- Ed Sheeran, *Thinking Out Loud*
- Train, *Marry Me*
- Pachelbel, *Canon and Gigue in D Major*
- Christina Perri, *A Thousand Years*

Justin Siu, founder, Innonation

- Mendelssohn, *The Wedding March*
- Bart Howard, *Fly Me to the Moon*
- Pachelbel, *Canon and Gigue in D Major*

Johnson Ho, owner, Johnson Ho Music Production Company

- Pachelbel, *Canon and Gigue in D Major*
- Bruno Mars, *Just The Way You Are*

Maria Wong, project manager, ME2 Productions

- Pachelbel, *Canon and Gigue in D Major*
- Christina Perri, *A Thousand Years*
- Pharrell Williams, *Happy*



weddings in Hong Kong, we begin with some light music so guests can comfortably mingle and enjoy dinner—it’s also a good way for relatives and more elderly people to get involved—and then kick off the later part of the party with some modern, upbeat dance tunes to cater to the younger generation.”

But there’s no strict formula—simply because no two couples are the same. “The key thing is that the music should reflect them and their personalities,” says Sonya Yeung, founder and creative director of wedding planning company Bliss

Creations. “Don’t feel you have to bow to tradition if you really want to have a unique wedding. Even the music during the ceremony doesn’t have to be traditional. The bridal procession should still be something quite touching, but it no longer just has to be Pachelbel’s *Canon*.”

That particular piece of music, German baroque composer Johann Pachelbel’s sweet-but-stolid late-17th-century contrapuntal chamber piece *Canon and Gigue in D*—utterly obscure since its composition until a recording began receiving radio airplay in the US in the late 1960s,

sparking a frenzy of interest—is overwhelmingly the most popular choice at weddings. Johnson Ho, production director of his own wedding music company, says he was asked to play it at every wedding between 2010 and 2014.

But there are also opportunities to go against the grain. If the groom’s entrance has a musical accompaniment, as one of the less traditional aspects of the ceremony it can be a chance to have a bit of fun: Yeung says she’s had grooms and groomsmen enter to *The Imperial March*, Darth Vader’s theme from *Star Wars*.

If there’s music after the ceremony, it should be something light and unimposing, such as jazz or lounge music, that allows people to mingle and chat. Music during the dinner, if any, should be very much kept at background level. And then there’s the party, when the music really comes to the fore.

The first dance tends to be whatever song is most meaningful for the couple—most often something romantic, although Kay Tai, account manager for music provider Parkland Music, says that she remembers a couple choosing the theme from



Beauty and the Beast, much to the amusement of their guests.

After that, says Evelyn Mills, founder and creative director of wedding organiser Marriage Maestros, it’s important to be flexible. “It all comes down to timing, as it’s important to gauge the crowd and its mood. Nothing is ever set in stone. A good band or DJ will be able to sense when it is time to lift the mood up, speed up the tempo or bring things down a notch.”

Contemporary pop and classics from the 1970s and ’80s are usually winners, covering the entire age range of people who are most likely to be dancing. Do consider in advance the lyrical content of anything you’re thinking of playing, though. As well as obvious no-nos such as swearing, violence or explicit sexual content, love songs can be surprisingly dangerous territory because a lot of them are actually rather negative—watch out for anything about breaking up, having a broken heart, cheating or feeling miserable without someone. Mills says that a lot of couples, for example, request James Blunt’s *You’re Beautiful*, which is actually a deeply miserable song about romantic loss that contains drug references and expletives, as well as being exceedingly annoying to many ears.

Apart from a few things to bear in mind, the party is your chance to enjoy yourselves, so go for the music you love. “It’s the first bit of the day when the couple don’t have to keep anyone else happy; it’s theirs,” says Mills. “Focus on the key moments—the bride’s entrance, the first dance. For the rest of the music, as long as it’s not inappropriate or distasteful, you should be fine.” 