

Theme of Paganini." "One of my favorites in which the guitar has a harp-like quality accompanying the flute and violin is the "Entr'acte" from Bizet's *Carmen*. It is an exquisite preamble to the bride's entrance," Blasco says.

HERE COMES THE BRIDE

Want to make bridal standbys like Wagner's "Bridal Theme" from *Lohengrin* seem fresher? Give them a twist and play them with an unusual instrument. Request Wagner's classic, but have it played on the bagpipes, suggests Brad Beaton, a bagpiper in Suwanee, GA. Consider having a harpist perform Clarke's "Trumpet Voluntary," or a trumpet player tackle Bach's "If Thou Be Near." "The Canon in D has a great arrangement for the guitar," says Keith Gehle, a classical guitarist in Atlanta. "The melody has simplicity and beauty. As the bride enters, the music is like the sun breaking through clouds."

Opera buffs can have some of the most moving vocal melodies arranged for instruments. Take "The Flower Song" from *Lakme* by Delibes: "In the opera it is a beautiful duet between two sopranos," Meyer says. "Here, two violins take over while the viola and cello accompany them. I think it's very special, but then again, I am biased. This was what I walked down the aisle to for my wedding." The "Triumphal March" from Verdi's *Aida* or "The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba," from *Solomon*, by Handel, are two other dramatic, majestic pieces from operas. "They would be stunning choices with almost any combination of instruments," Blasco says.

But if delicate and personal is your style, don't bother with majestic music at all. Gehle suggests a piece by Vivaldi, not only because it was written specifically for the guitar (the lute is an early version of the same instrument), but because it strays from the typical processional accompaniment. "People often like an intimate moment when the bride appears," Gehle says. "Vivaldi's Lute

Concerto in D major has a meditative, lyrical quality."

TIME FOR THOUGHT

Many brides take a break in their ceremony for a musical interlude—you and your musicians need to consider how long you want that to last when choosing the song. "As a musician I want the interlude to either be a short piece or one able to be ended quickly, because even lighting the unity candle can be very fast," Gehle says. "Mertz's 'Nocturnes' is great because it is lyrical, flowing and in

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two sections—so it is easy to end at the first section if need be."

But if you're willing to devote a moment in the middle of the ceremony just for music, you might not be able to resist the classics. "For Christian ceremonies, nothing surpasses Schubert's hauntingly beautiful 'Ave Maria,'" Meyer admits. The Bach/Gounod version is slightly less iconic, but also breathtaking.

Meyer then pitches a lesser-known piece for consideration: "Traumeri" by Schumann. "It is also a piece that takes a journey, and is just the right length for a moment of reflection during the ceremony," Meyer explains. "Lord Made Their Lives," by Robert Carr, is another good alternative, says Sean A. Lane, a pianist in Crofton, MD. And on the bagpipes, Beaton suggests performing "The Skye Boat Song," "The Flower of Scotland," "The Ash Grove," or other traditional airs, which he defines as slow and stately, with sometimes haunting or hymnlike melodies.

The interlude is your chance to choose something really personal, moving or significant to you, because you don't have to consider the marching tempo or length as you would with the ►

processional and recessional. "During the ceremony you could do anything. I've played 'Grow Old Along with Me,' by John Lennon, for example," says Felice Pomeranz of Gilded Harps, in Sudbury, MA. "I've played Motown, Broadway, even 'Stars & Stripes Forever' as ceremony music," Lane adds. So put your thinking caps on and figure out what music means the most to you.

THE GRAND FINALE

There's no way to prepare yourself for that surge of joy when the officiant pronounces you man and wife—but you *can* try to find music to express it when you walk back down the aisle hand in hand.

The trumpet, with its brilliant timbre, can project some of that emotion, says Charles Evans, a trumpeter in Philadelphia. "'Handel's 'Rejoicing' from *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, is a great, lesser-known alternative to Handel's 'Horn Pipe' or Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March,'" Evans says.

Blasco suggests exiting to "Musetta's Waltz," from *La Boheme*, by Puccini, while Meyer recommends the last movement of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3. "It really allows the virtousity and the unique, rich sound of a string quartet to shine," Meyer says. Pomeranz offers her own alternative: "Variations on a Theme by Haydn," by Brahms.

You might think that it's just a coincidence that so much of ceremony music comes from the Baroque period—it's not. "Most Baroque pieces, like the minuet, waltz and gavotte, were written for different dance forms, so they already have a moving quality to them," Gehle explains. Bach's Gavotte No. 2 is Gehle's personal choice for a recessional piece.

So, go ahead! Choose the tried-and-true or venture out into the lesser-known melodies—just as long as you march to the beat of your own drummer. ■