

Performing Hammered Dulcimer for Weddings

The Structure of a Wedding Ceremony

Event	Music I play	Hammers, etc.
seating	quiet background music - waltzes, classical, Baroque, etc.	soft hammers
bridal party processional	usually waltz played with strong rhythm, sometimes a march	soft or hard hammers
bride's processional	same as above, often louder	hard hammers
prayer or candle-lighting ceremony (optional)	melodic waltz or slowed down and arranged reel – often played lyrically	soft hammers
recessional	joyous and energetic - jigs	hard hammers
unseating	either continue playing jigs or anything upbeat and melodic	hard hammers

Musical/Performance Considerations

Skills You'll Need

- play standing up
- playing while keeping an eye on a signal or door to open
- musically killing time
- ending a tune quickly

Repertoire

You need to be organized

- your participation should be flawless and go like clockwork
- you want to be as professional and un-obtrusive as possible - do not become a burden to the bride or groom on their wedding day

At the wedding you will also need to accommodate

- schedule changes
- delays
- working with/around other musicians and performers

Fees

Determine what you will charge

- what is your time worth - remember it's more than just the time you will be performing!

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- determine what other musicians in your area are charging to see what the market will bear, and to make sure people feel your prices are reasonable compared to others
- if you charge too little people will think you are inexperienced

When setting your fees allow for:

- getting-out-the-door
- travel time for a “reasonable” distance/time
- time for setup and tuning

Practice stating your fees with confidence

- don't sound ashamed or uncomfortable - you are not begging
- you are worth it (hopefully)

What should/will you charge extra for:

- travel over a certain time or distance?
- learning a new tune?
- special costume/dress (tux, colonial era, Renaissance, etc.)

Promotion

Marketing material - to introduce yourself with and to leave-behind

- business cards - a must!
- brochure?
- demo tape?

Get connected with local/popular wedding consultants and Justices of the Peace

At the wedding event be prepared to leave material with anyone who expresses, or is involved in the wedding business:

- wedding consultant or coordinator
- site managers and event coordinators (wedding chapels, function halls, etc.)
- clergy and (especially!) Justices of the Peace
- caterers
- other musicians (DJs, piano players, etc.)

It is poor taste to proactively distribute marketing materials during the ceremony/event

Proactive marketing

- bridal magazines
- wedding shows
- send or (preferably) visit and hand deliver material to popular wedding sites/businesses:
 - restaurants, inns, country clubs
 - function palaces
 - bridal shops?
- get yourself listed on the approved list for popular wedding chapels/sites (if you can)

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Booking agents

Initial Contact

Many people don't know how a ceremony typically works, or don't have their plans firmed up at the point they will usually be contacting you

- feel them out as to what they might want, like, require of you
- determine if what they are looking for you can and want to provide

Answer questions about the dulcimer, type of music you play

- if they want to see/hear you perform let them know where you'll be playing in public
- if you or they want to come to a private event you will be performing at, check first with the people who are paying you for that event

Explain to them what you typically do, or have done, for different ceremonies

- will impress them that you know what you're doing
- may give them some ideas they can use

Gather and record information (consider designing a form):

- bride and groom name, address, telephone numbers
- date, time you will expected to play
- location of ceremony - will excessive travel be required?
- religious denomination (may dictate type of music you can/cannot play, etc.)
- is there any theme to the wedding?
 - will you need to wear and/or rent a costume?
- other performance details?
 - indoors or outdoors – if rain, what will happen?
 - is there a special place you are to perform from
 - other musicians you will be playing with or before/after
- background of bride and groom
 - are they dancers?, will family ethnic background (Irish, Jewish, etc.) behoove you to know/play some particular tunes?
 - are they familiar with hammered dulcimer music?
- how did they find or hear of you
 - see if your marketing is working
 - make sure to thank person who recommended you

Will they want you to perform for more than the ceremony?

- they may not be aware of other types of music or events you perform at
- offer yourself (solo or with others) for:
 - background music during reception, cocktails, or dinner
 - a post-dinner contra dance
 - if so, will you (and other musicians) be fed?
- do not high-pressure them or suggest you can do everything (too much of a good thing...)

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Give them at least a rough idea of what it will cost them

- briefly explain your fee structure
- feel them out as to how serious they are about using you (are they shopping around?)

Let them know what should happen next

- do you need to check on availability of other musicians, callers?
 - if they are not ready to contract with you, let them know your typical lead times
- you will send contract
- they need to return signed copy with deposit of \$\$\$ by what date
- do you need to meet or later decide on tunes?
- you will check back with them a week before the event to re-confirm everything

Music selection

Find out if bride/groom wants anything special

- will you learn and arrange a new tune you might not ever play again?
- is it something that will sound good on the dulcimer?

Tune selection tape

- play each tune just one time thru
- keeping it updated as you learn new tunes
- ask to have it returned (but don't expect that it will be)

Meet with bride & groom in advance to play tunes

- have them come to your house (remember - you're not getting paid for this)
- let them record you playing so they can decide later
- if unable to meet or if a long distance, offer to play over the phone for them

Contract

Do not leave anything unstated, otherwise Murphy's Law will prevail

- exact time and place
- time(s) you are expected to perform
- any specific tunes chosen and agreed upon
- fee and payment arrangements
- state deposit amount required and when due
- if needed require they provide map and/or directions
- provisions for being asked to play for additional time, cancellation and deposit refund policy

Send 2 copies (signed by you) with a cover letter

- be cordial and business-like
 - state (or re-state) a due date for returning signed contract with a specified amount of deposit

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- do directions/map need to be included with returned contract?
- include (more) business card(s), brochure
- stamped addressed return envelope (makes it easier for them to return it)

Payment

Deposit or payment-in-full required with returned contract

- commits wedding party to not changing their mind later
- commits your time to them on that date

Balance due

- required **before** your performance
- have someone other than bride groom be designated to pay you at the ceremony

Dress

Usually a suit/dress unless otherwise stated:

- find out if a special costume required
- see if any special color scheme you might be able to fit into
- men: if playing with suit coat on is too restrictive, let bride/groom know in advance that you will need to play in just a shirt and tie

The Big Day

- Allow **more** than enough time to get there (to get gas, traffic problems, etc.)
- Allow time for the unexpected (cleaning up the coffee you spilled on yourself in the car, finding the room, changing clothes, going to the bathroom, etc.)

Pre-tune your dulcimer at home before leaving (just in case)

Bring with you

- contract (in case there is a dispute) and any additional correspondence
- directions you received
- business cards
- hammers, tuning wrench, tuner!

Introduce yourself and speak with the priest/rabbi/minister/JP

- agree upon your signals
- find out if there are any last minute changes to the ceremony you need to know about
- see if they want you to play the processional to a musically logical stopping point (allows the priest to calm down the bride and groom at the altar)

Store your case and gig bag out of sight, preferably in another room

Playing

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- location in room/sanctuary
 - you need to see when processional will begin and the ceremony site (altar)
 - consider: on pulpit behind floor floral arrangement (to hide the dulcimer stand)
 - anywhere off to the side in the front
- sitting or standing
- hard vs. soft hammers - have both readily available
- write down the tunes you need to play during the ceremony
- have a wedding repertoire list handy for when you can't think of anything else to play (ie during seating)
- kill time with chords, arpeggios, etc.

Pack up and leave after the guests have left the hall

- if you have a cordial relationship with the bride and/or groom, offer them your congratulations at the end of the reception line
- do not stay for the reception unless you've been invited and really want to
- leave quietly, discreetly, professionally

Distribute marketing material before leaving to parties who have expressed interest in you, your music, etc. (ie minister, wedding coordinator, other musicians, etc.).

Afterwards

Send a follow-up letter expressing your congratulations, what a nice wedding it was, etc.

- you hope they will recommend you to their friends and guests if the need arises
- Include more business cards