



YOUR GUIDE TO WEDDING MUSIC

BY NIKÉ JEMIYO
WEDDING SINGER AND PIANIST



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Congratulations on your engagement!

Having been part of countless weddings, I've seen for myself how planning a wedding can be equally exciting and overwhelming. Almost all of the brides I have met tell me that knowing where to start is the biggest challenge, and so, I came up with the idea of developing this resource.

With so many aspects that need to be planned for a wedding, music usually comes last, but it is nevertheless an important aspect. The venue, the flowers, the gorgeous gown... all these make your wedding beautiful. But it's the music that will make it feel beautiful.

Through this guide, I hope to hold your hand through the crucial aspects of selecting music that will make your big day as memorable as it should be.

Enjoy!

Niké

IN THIS GUIDE

YOUR WEDDING MUSIC GUIDE

The Importance of Planning Your Wedding Music	4-5
The Basic Parts of a Wedding Program	5-10
Live Music: Your Options	11-14
Questions You Should Ask Your Live Musician	15-16

PLAYLISTS

Spotify's 10 Most Popular Wedding Songs	18
Songs for Your Walk Down the Aisle	18
Classic Wedding First Dance Songs	19
Tunes for a Sophisticated Reception Dinner	19



I. THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING YOUR WEDDING MUSIC

From your ceremony to your last dance, music is a powerful way to set the mood of your wedding day. Put together harmoniously with other visual and thematic elements, the right songs, at the right moments, will add the emotion that will make your wedding memorable, not just for you, but for your guests as well.

It is important then, to plan your wedding songs in such a way that they reflect your unique personalities and identity as a couple, as well as match the mood of your wedding program.

To do this, try the following:

1. Act as if you are planning a wedding soundtrack.

Think of your most recent favorite film, and what you felt during your favorite part of the movie. Aside from the movie's narrative, wasn't the accompanying music vital in making you feel the range of emotions you felt at the moment? Such is the effect that the right music can have on your wedding!

To figure out what kind of 'feel' you want for parts of your wedding, visualize each part of the program -- such as the processional or when you and your entourage walk,



the ceremony, and the recessional when you walk out the church with your husband. What do you imagine happening during these moments, and what kind of music accompanies them? Is the music upbeat or slow? Do you hear guitar strings or piano keys?

2. Use your favorite films and music as pegs.

Look no further than your favorite movies and songs for inspiration! Just like the best films come alive when the composer adds the right musical score, your wedding will do so too, as you know the best kind of music that should be played.

Just like films, any great wedding has an interesting and meaningful mix of music – it can open with light or dramatic moments, build to an exciting climax and conclude with ending. Which songs from your favorite movies or albums will lend these feelings to your wedding soundtrack?

3. List down ideas and be on the lookout for inspiration.

Have a small wedding planning notebook or use your phone's notes to organize music ideas for your wedding. While you may choose to do your wedding music planning in one sitting, you never know when inspiration will strike.

You can also seek out songs or artists similar to the ones you like, in order to find more songs that have not been on your radar yet. Apps such as iTunes, Spotify and Shazam have features that help you explore the genres and sounds that you like.

Jot down titles or lyrics of songs you encounter on TV, film, the radio or at weddings and parties. This is a creative process, so let inspiration guide you, and help your ideas flow.

II. THE BASIC PARTS OF A WEDDING PROGRAM



In this section, we'll familiarize ourselves with the basic parts of the wedding, to ensure that we don't miss out on anything. Think of this as a musical tour of the big day – it'll help you decide what to play and when to play it.

So what happens during each part of the wedding, and what music genre is usually played in these parts?

Here is a guide:

1. The Prelude

This is right before the wedding ceremony starts, when all the guests begin to arrive at the venue. At times, refreshments are served during this part, and guests catch up with one another.

Recommended genres: Classical, Jazz or Instrumental

[A Thousand Years – Christina Perri](#)

[Here Comes the Sun – Beatles](#)

[I Never Thought I'd See the Day – Sade](#)

2. The Pre-Processional

This is when all the guests are requested to be seated, and when the Wedding Party is preparing to make their entrance. Some weddings also prepare special pre-processional music for distinguished guests who are not part of the entourage.

Recommended genres: Classical or Romantic Ballads / Modern Instrumental

[*Moonlight Sonata - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*](#)

[*Everything – Michael Bublé*](#)

[*#34 – Dave Matthews Band*](#)

3. The Procession

This part is when the Wedding Party and the Groom make their entrance. You may choose different music for the Wedding party and the Groom, or choose a lighter song for children, such as the ring bearer or flower girls.

Recommended genres: Instrumental Classical or Romantic Ballads

[*Canon in D – Pachelbel*](#)

[*Destiny \(Instrumental\) – Jim Brickman*](#)

[*Le Vie en Rose - Louis Armstrong*](#)



4. The Bridal Entrance

The moment that everyone is breathlessly waiting for! The bride makes her entrance alone, or with a significant person, such as her Mom and Dad. For sentimental reasons, many brides choose their couple song for the march. There is a wide variety of songs to be played here – from contemporary, to traditional and dramatic.

Recommended genres: Any song significant to you, whether slow or upbeat

[Marry Me – Train](#)

[I Choose You – Sara Bareilles](#)

[You and Me - Lifehouse](#)

[All of Me - John Legend](#)

[I'm Kissing You - Des'ree](#)

5. The Ceremony

This is when the officiant gives prayers and blessings, and when the couple exchanges vows and rings. In most religions, there is a traditional program that is followed, which is complete with hymns.

It is suggested that these are followed in order to honor tradition and the practices of your religion.

Recommended genres: Ceremonial hymns

[Ave Maria – Beyonce](#)

[Amazing Grace – The Chamber Group](#)

[Endless is Your Love - Tom Kendzia](#)

6. The Recessional

This is the joyous exit of the couple, a celebration of their newfound union, as well as of their families. This can be either a traditional or contemporary song, but is usually jovial and upbeat. At times, before leaving the church, both sides of the family or different groups that the couple are close to, take official photos – you may choose separate music for this.

Recommended genres: Classic or Modern songs that have a jovial feel

[Walking on Sunshine – Katrina and the Waves](#)

[Use Somebody – Vitamin String Quartet](#)

[All You Need Is Love – Beatles](#)

[Let's Stay Together - Al Green](#)

7. The Cocktail Hour

The couple is usually given time to refresh themselves right before the reception, so the guests arrive at the venue ahead of them, and are usually served refreshments. Sometimes, this period is also used for picture-taking, particularly if the couple opted for a photo booth at the venue.

Recommended genres: Easy listening Jazz, Soul or Pop tunes

[*Someone to Watch Over Me – Ella Fitzgerald*](#)

[*The Sweetest Thing – U2*](#)

[*Just My Imagination – Temptations*](#)

[*Ain't No Sunshine – Bill Withers*](#)

[*Feeling Good – Nina Simone*](#)

8. The Reception

This is the time to celebrate! With your families, wedding party and guests around, it's your chance to thank them for being part of this occasion. Most couples have a program as part of their reception – with speeches, dedications, videos and even dance numbers.



Most receptions also start with a grand entrance of the Bride and Groom, and sometimes the entire wedding party is included. Feel free to choose whatever music you feel fits your chosen theme and personality as a couple.

Recommended genres: Jazz, Soul, R&B or House or Modern Pop Music. Feel free to choose according to the theme of your reception!

9. Your First Dance

Your first dance together, as husband and wife. A slow, romantic ballad is usually chosen for this moment, so the couple can take their time as they waltz on the dance floor. These days, however, some couples surprise their guests by doing choreographed dances to modern tunes!

Recommended genres: Romantic Ballads or Classical Songs that you can waltz to, or songs with a sentimental value to you as a couple.

[*If I Ain't Got You – Alicia Keys*](#)

[*Can't Help Falling In Love – Elvis Presley*](#)

[*We Are Man and Wife – Michelle Featherstone*](#)

10. Father – Daughter / Mother – Son Dance / Family Dance

Giving away a daughter or a son is never easy. To honor your parents, you may include a dance between parent and child. A mellow song with an inspirational message is usually apt for this moment.

Recommended genres: Slow songs that express gratitude and adoration for your parent

[*Because You Loved Me – Celine Dion*](#)

[*Just the Way You Are – Billy Joel*](#)

[*Isn't She Lovely – Stevie Wonder*](#)

11. Last Dance

End your wedding with a bang! Play upbeat songs to thank them for their presence during your special day.

Recommended genres: Any song that will get everyone, young and old, on the dance floor

[*I Wanna Dance With Somebody – Whitney Houston*](#)

[*I Gotta Feeling – Black Eyed Peas*](#)

[*Uptown Funk – Mark Ronson feat. Bruno Mars*](#)

II. LIVE MUSIC: YOUR OPTIONS



Now that you've pretty much got your wedding program and line-up, and perhaps maybe some songs that you'd want to play, it's time to think about how the music will actually be played during the wedding.

The easiest option is to play an iPod playlist at your wedding, for sure. But having live musicians play at your wedding will give it a special atmosphere that's hard to replicate.

There are many options when it comes to live music, but the most popular ones among brides are piano and vocals, a band, or a DJ. To help you choose your live music option for your big day, here are some things you could ask yourself:

When should you consider each option?

A DJ: When the bride wants to dance to her favorite songs, and needs someone to keep everyone in a partying mood. Best chosen for the wedding party, which comes after the reception.

A Band: When the bride loves to party and wants that live concert atmosphere, as well as live interaction between the audience and the band. Best chosen for the reception, if the bride wants a concert atmosphere.

A Pianist / Singer: When the bride wants an emotive or classy feel to her wedding. Vocal solos with piano accompaniment can range from classic background music for your ceremony and unique versions of classic & contemporary Rock, pop or Soul numbers for your reception.

When and where will live music be played?

Churches, outdoor weddings and reception venues have acoustics that vary. For this reason, you and your wedding coordinator will have to consider how the music will sound during particular parts of the wedding.

Some logistical concerns you need to ask yourself are:

- Is my ceremony or reception happening indoors or outdoors?
- What is the venue like, and will it have space for a DJ, pianist, or band?
- What are the acoustics like?

- Will we have electricity in the venue? Will the set-up (electricity, wires, amps etc.) be safe?
- What will we do if it rains?

What are some ways to find a good DJ, pianist or band in our wedding location?

The web has made it easier than ever to find musicians in your local area. Moreover, you are also able to preview their performance through their websites or YouTube and Soundcloud accounts, so you know whether their musical style fits your needs.

Some websites where you can browse local musicians are the following:

Can we put lastminute and warble first please

[Headliner](#)

[Pop Top UK](#)

[Top Wedding Bands UK](#)

[Freak Music](#)

[Warble Entertainment](#)

[Last Minute Musicians](#)

Do seek the opinions of friends who have been married as well, or try to recall a wedding you thoroughly enjoyed, and perhaps their wedding singer or band may be a good fit for you as well.

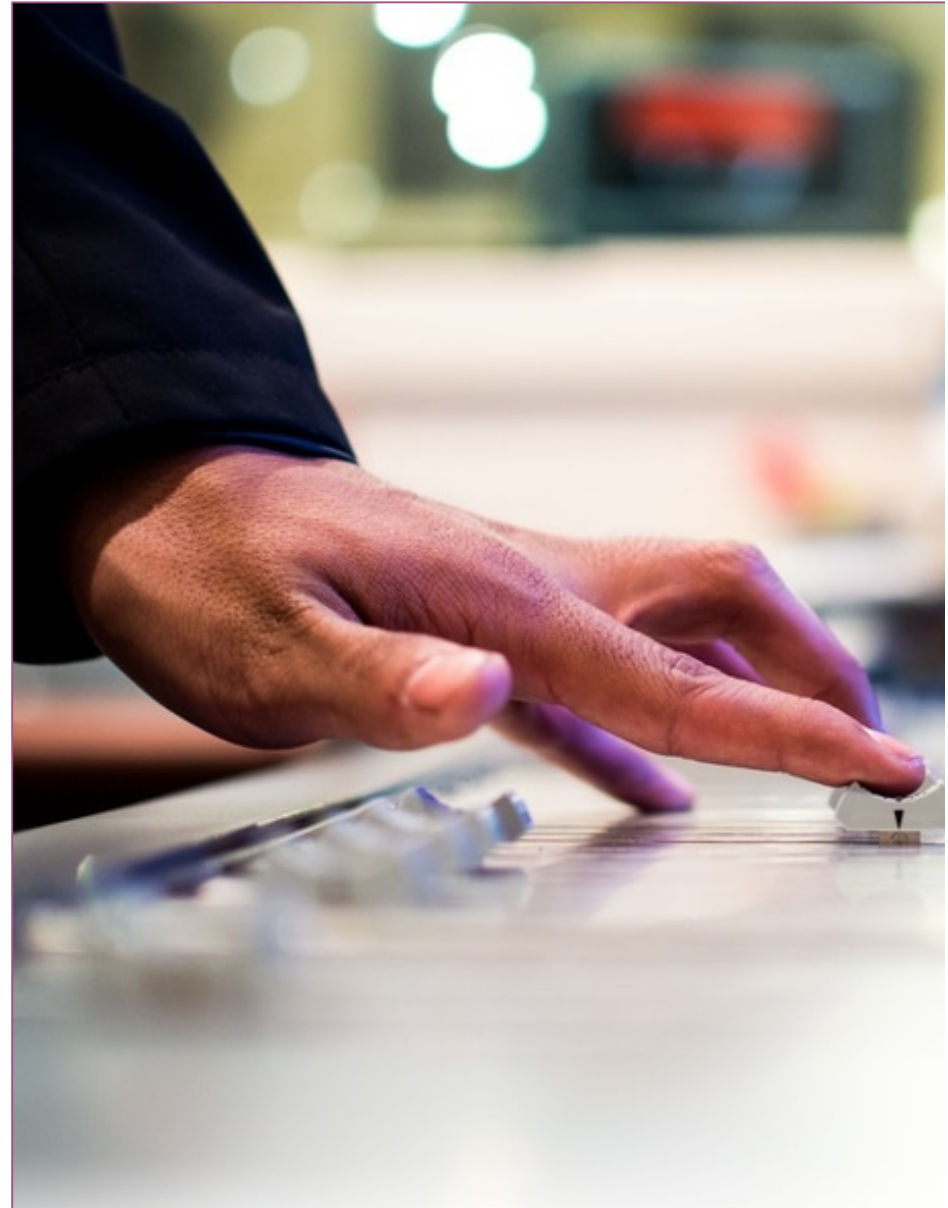
How can I make the best decision when choosing live musicians?

If you haven't seen their website yet, ask for a demo that includes live recordings of their performances. It is very likely that they have a YouTube or Soundcloud account. If they have public gigs near your area, it would be good for you to see them play live.

How much does it cost, typically?

There is no typical cost, although bands tend to be more expensive than singer-pianists and DJs, because of the headcount involved. Costs are typically based on their per-hour rate, as well as travel expenses, if they are not based in your wedding venue's local area.

I suggest setting a budget for live entertainment, and looking through costs at the websites I mentioned above.



How can I work with the DJ / singer-pianist / band in making the music library?

At least two weeks prior to the wedding, set a meeting with your wedding coordinator or with the performers themselves and provide a list of your favorite artists, genres and songs.

You may have your own line-up of songs already for each part of the program, but I suggest being open-minded and asking the performers for their recommendations. As they have been performing at weddings, they will have a pretty good idea of other songs that fit your taste, and those that guests respond well to.

Lastly, be mindful as well of your guests, especially for the wedding party. They might not like the same music you do, so pick a good mix of songs, with something for everyone. I suggest you look at your guest list to gauge your crowd — what are their ages, where do they come from, are there more girls or guys?

In planning your wedding soundtrack, playing music that you enjoy, and your guests will respond to, is key.

What music trends do you see at weddings that I can replicate?

Brides tend to be traditional from the prelude to the Bride's entrance, playing classic and instrumental music to set the mood for the ceremony.

When it comes to receptions though, couples are more open to upbeat choices. The toasts and formalities are moved to the dinner hour, in order to make time for more dancing after the reception program.

The first-dance has also been more relaxed and fun. I see many couples starting out with classic and traditional songs, only to transition to an upbeat, fun track, sometimes complete with choreography! The key is to choose what goes with your unique personalities.

IV. THE CHECKLIST: QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK YOUR LIVE MUSICIAN

Whether you decide to book a DJ, a solo performer, or a band, music will be a major component to your wedding day. Not only will they set the atmosphere for your wedding, they will also help keep the event flow smoothly from one segment to the next.

If you've already decided on your musician, or perhaps have narrowed down your list to a few, here's a list of questions you or your wedding coordinator must ask before finalizing agreements with them:

a. Their Background and Experience

- Are you available on my wedding day?
- If not, when are your next available dates?
- How long have you been performing or performing together (for bands)?
- How many weddings have you performed for?
- Do you perform at more than one event in a day?
- Have you done events at my wedding venue?
- Are you also able to do hosting duties? How would you define your style as a host?

b. The Music

- Do you have demos or recordings of your live music?
- What genres can you cover? Do you have a song list?
- I also have a list of songs I'd like to be played at the wedding. Are you open to requests?
- Can I also submit a "Do Not Play" list of songs?
- Can you assist me in choosing songs for my ceremony, reception, etc?
- For bands - If the DJ or one of the band members scheduled for my event is unable to perform for some reason, do you have a backup replacement ready to go?
- How long is each of your sessions and breaks?
- What music can be provided during the breaks?
- How many band members will perform that day?
- What do you do to motivate the crowd if nobody is dancing?
- Do you take requests from our guests?

c. Their Pricing

- What is included in your proposed cost?
- Will this cost include travel, setup and breakdown between ceremony and reception locations?
- How much would you charge for each hour of overtime?
- Are there any additional fees that I should know about? Such as charges for special musical requests?
- When will I receive a written contract? Or should we draft it?
- How much of a deposit do you require and when is it due? What forms of payment do you accept?
- What is your refund/cancellation policy?
- How far in advance do I need to book you?
- What information do you need from me before the wedding day?
- Are you and your equipment insured?

d. Logistics

- Can you provide me with a list of equipment you bring, as well as their electricity requirements?
- Do you bring backup equipment?
- What kind of space or stage do you require for the DJ or band – such as a tent? If the venue doesn't provide what you need, will you make arrangements or am I responsible for renting it?
- How much time will you need for setup, sound check and breakdown on the day of the event?
- What time will you arrive at the site?
- Will we meet again before the wedding?
- When do we need to submit our music requests and event details?
- What will you wear to our wedding? Are you open to dressing according to the wedding theme?
- Do you (or the band members) require a meal?
- What is your policy on alcohol or smoking during the wedding?



WEDDING PLAYLISTS

SPOTIFY'S 10 MOST POPULAR WEDDING SONGS

Today's most requested wedding songs that are loved by just about every bride in the world. I think these tunes will be wedding classics years from now!

Click the links below to play the songs on my [Spotify channel](#).

- [ALL OF ME – John Legend](#)
- [MARRY ME – Train](#)
- [FIRST DAY OF MY LIFE – Bright Eyes](#)
- [MARRY YOU – Bruno Mars](#)
- [HO HEY – The Lumineers](#)
- [YOU ARE THE BEST THING – Ray LaMontagne](#)
- [I'M YOURS – Jason Mraz](#)
- [A THOUSAND YEARS – Christina Perri](#)
- [THINKING OUT LOUD – Ed Sheeran](#)
- [LUCKY – Jason Mraz feat. Colbie Calliat](#)

SONGS FOR YOUR WALK DOWN THE AISLE

Here comes the bride! I've compiled a spectrum of wedding songs that you can walk, run, or dance down the aisle to!

Click the links below to play the songs on my [Spotify channel](#).

- [I CHOOSE YOU – Sara Bareilles](#)
- [HERE COMES THE SUN – The Beatles](#)
- [WALKING ON SUNSHINE – Katrina and The Waves](#)
- [DOG DAYS ARE OVER – Florence and The Machine](#)
- [YOU AND ME – Lifehouse](#)
- [MY KIND OF LOVE – Emeli Sande](#)
- [FROM THIS MOMENT ON – Shania Twain](#)
- [YOUR SONG – Elton John](#)
- [MARRY ME – Train](#)
- [I'M KISSING YOU – Des'ree](#)

CLASSIC WEDDING FIRST DANCE SONGS

These wedding songs will let you and your significant other connect on the dance floor, and make this moment one to remember.

Click the links below to play the songs on my [Spotify channel](#).

- [IF I AIN'T GOT YOU – Alicia Keys](#)
- [MAKE YOU FEEL MY LOVE – Adele](#)
- [NATURAL WOMAN – Aretha Franklin](#)
- [CAN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF YOU – Lauryn Hill](#)
- [CAN'T HELP FALLING IN LOVE – Elvis Presley](#)
- [BECAUSE YOU LOVED ME – Celine Dion](#)
- [EVERYTHING – Michael Bublé](#)
- [I WON'T GIVE UP – Jason Mraz](#)
- [HOW SWEET IT IS – James Taylor](#)
- [JUST THE WAY YOU ARE – Bruno Mars](#)

TUNES FOR A SOPHISTICATED RECEPTION DINNER

Finally, you are man and wife! Share this moment with your nearest and dearest through a selection of songs that will set an elegant ambience.

Click the links below to play the songs on my [Spotify channel](#).

- [SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED – Stevie Wonder](#)
- [CRUISIN' – Smokey Robinson](#)
- [STAND BY ME – Ben E. King](#)
- [SOMETHING'S GOT A HOLD OF ME – Etta James](#)
- [KISS ON MY LIST – Hall and Oates](#)
- [JUST MY IMAGINATION – The Temptations](#)
- [JUST TO SEE HER – Smokey Robinson](#)
- [HOW DEEP IS YOUR LOVE – Bee Gees](#)
- [LET'S STAY TOGETHER – Al Green](#)
- [MARVIN GAYE – Charlie Puth feat. Meghan Trainor](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Niké Jemiyo is a MOBO nominated soul - pop vocalist and pianist, who captivates her audiences with her outstanding live performances. Based in the London, Niké has performed at venues including Hampton Court Castle, St. John's Smith Square and The Royal Automobile Club.

For the past ten years she has been lending her elegant, soulful sound to provide the perfect atmosphere to weddings and private functions.

Niké's repertoire ranges from relaxing to upbeat covers, from soul classics to contemporary artists like Alicia Keys, Emeli Sandé and Adele. Attention for Niké peaked due to her stunning rendition of 'Someone Like You', which now has one million views.

You can listen to her music [here](#).



"She has an amazing voice and was so thoughtful with her song choices and performance..."

Rich Smith (Proposal, Jan 2016)

