

Having live music during a ceremony, drinks reception or wedding breakfast will magically enhance your special day.
Your musicians will be alert to what is going on during the proceedings and "fill in" any gaps that occur. For example, if the Bride is late or there is some kind of delay in the proceedings they will carry on playing during those nervous quiet moments!

Your musicians can also make a real difference to a wedding processional as they will play until the bride has finished making her entrance and will then fade out - no waiting for the CD to finish and then having it abruptly turned off.

A good music group will have a mixed repertoire that caters for all age groups. Having musicians at your drinks reception and wedding breakfast creates a real focal point for your guests, and will create a good ambience to help get your celebrations underway.

As a rule background music for weddings breaks up into the following three separate sections.

1. If you are having a civil, church wedding or blessing there is the ceremony itself. This involves playing as guests arrive, a processional as the bride makes her entrance, during the signing of the register, and a recessional as you leave the room.
2. Drinks reception after the service (usually whilst photos are happening, as there can be general milling around for the guests)
3. During the wedding breakfast.

Please note that most Registrars don't allow music which can have "religious" associations to be played at a civil wedding ceremony. This includes the traditional wedding marches Here Comes the Bride by Wagner, Wedding March by Mendlessohn and Ave Maria by Gounod. There is no "law" saying you cannot have this music if you wish, it is purely up to the Registrar's personal taste. So if you would like these pieces to be played you will have to discuss this in advance with the Registrar.

Civil ceremonies - The registrars do not usually allow guests into the room until about 10-15 minutes before the start of the ceremony - your musicians will start playing as soon as the guests arrive in the room prior to the start of ceremony. Then play a processional whilst the bridal party enters, 2 pieces during the signing of the register, and then a recessional as the bride and groom leave the room.

Church ceremonies - Guests usually arrive a bit earlier so your musicians would start playing about 15-20 minutes prior to the start of the ceremony. Depending on whether the church has an organ and organist, you may want the organist to play the recessional or processional.

Hymns almost always usually sound better on an organ. Unless your guests are regular singers at church you may wish to book a choir or singer to help lead the hymns. For Church ceremonies you may want brass fanfares, a solo singer, a string quartet, a duo, a harpist, a piper, or a combination!

Drinks receptions - usually 1 1/2 hours (as the meal is normally 2-2 1/2 hours after the start of the service). You will need to consider in advance whether your drinks reception will be based totally outdoors. Most musicians don't like playing outdoors, as it not good for the instruments and music needs an acoustic to travel. So if your reception is to be outside do check to see whether there is sheltered spot that musicians can gather on. Most receptions have a room indoors adjacent to the gardens where guests can base themselves if they do not wish to go outside. With windows and doors open, it may well be that that will be the best place for musicians to set up as the sound will carry outside. If you venue does not have that option and you are booking a string quartet or harpist make sure that they have a hard level ground surface to set up on and that there is shelter on at least 2 sides around them, a gazebo is good. Most venues have a regular sheltered spot that musicians use, but be guided by what the venue usually provides and the space available. Check with the musicians you are booking as they will be best to guide you on their needs and will probably know the layout of the venue.

Wedding breakfast - You should expect your musicians to be ready to play in the room at the start of the line up - normally 20 minutes prior to the sit down time arranged with the hotel. They will then play during the meal, until coffee is served. This will give musicians enough time to pack up and leave the room discreetly before the speeches start. Make sure that you let the venue know that you have booked musicians as this will affect the way they layout the room, and also tell them the space requirements for your musicians. The venue can then advise you as to whether they can then be fitted into the room comfortably - for most venues this is usually not a problem.

Your musicians can create the perfect ambiance to make your day truly special.

With special thanks to Warble Enterment Agency, visit www.warble-entertainment.com for more information.