



If music be the food of love Rachel Wainwright, a teacher, and Andy Kershaw, a musician, met three years ago when they were both tutoring on a music course. "We got together after I left a note on his car asking him if he'd like to meet up for a drink – and he called me to say yes!" says Rachel. "The proposal was in two halves. I'd come back late from a parents' evening to find that Andy had cooked a special dinner for me, which should have been a fairly big clue. He didn't say anything then because he was waiting for the right moment and I'd arrived back exhausted! By the next evening, he decided he couldn't wait any longer and proposed to me over a glass of wine. It was a complete surprise, but I was overjoyed."

Our venues "We decided on a winter wedding, because we hoped to capture some of the excitement of the festive season, with rich colours like dark red in the decorations and flowers," says Rachel. "Andy's family have strong connections with St Nicholas Church in Barton-le-Clay, Bedfordshire, and Andy was christened there, so it was the perfect setting for us to exchange our vows. The reception was held in the Sculpture Gallery at Woburn Abbey (woburn-hospitality.co.uk). It's a really beautiful space, which made up for the fact that, as it was December, we couldn't rely on the weather being kind to us! It's also set in lovely grounds, which we knew would wow our guests as they drove up the drive to the ceremony."

The outfits – bride, maids and groom "I wore an ivory dress from Christina Clayton in Bedford (claytonsonline.co.uk), which is where I also found my accessories," says Rachel. "It was the first one I tried on and I decided almost there and then that I would never find one I liked more. My wedding ring had particular sentimental value. It was made by local jeweller Heather Goldthorpe (01525 402 086) and engraved with an orange-blossom design, which echoed my grandmother's wedding ring. She and my grandfather were married for 66 years, so I hope the ring is a good omen!" Andy wore a traditional morning suit with an ivory waistcoat which had dark red detailing, and a dark red cravat, also from Claytons. The three bridesmaids wore white faux-fur shrugs from Debenhams and burgundy dresses from American website hiphopboutique.com. "They were my most budget-friendly items, around £50 each, including the postage from America," says Rachel.

The flowers "My bouquet included red roses, red gerberas and trailing ivy as I wanted it to feel vibrant and seasonal," says Rachel. "The bridesmaids had bouquets of cream roses with a mix of seasonal berries and leaves, all created by our florist Buds In The Village (budsinthevillage.co.uk). As our wedding was during Advent, the church wasn't as decorative as usual, but we added a couple of pedestal displays in the same colours as our bouquets." ▶



"We wanted all the bouquets to reflect the time of year with seasonal leaves and berries and to look untamed, like they'd just been picked," says Rachel



'Tis the season...

... to be married. Rachel and Andy chose Christmas time for their dazzling red and gold wedding



The wedding cars were from Rayment Lewis Cars (raymentlewis.com)

The reception was held at historic Woburn Abbey



Our musical celebration “Before the ceremony I felt quite nervous, but very happy,” says Rachel. “The service was quite traditional but, as the vicar was a family friend, it also felt warm and informal. Because Andy is a musician, music played an important part in the service. We were lucky to have a group of friends, also professional musicians, to accompany the hymns and the signing of the register – playing two movements from *Brass Cats* by Chris Hazell – on trumpets, trombones, French horns and a tuba. My favourite part of the day, apart from exchanging our vows, was a minute or two of calm after we’d signed the register and were able to sit next to each other as husband and wife and enjoy the moment.”

Food and entertainment Guests were treated to drinks and canapés on arrival, with music from a steel band from the school where Rachel teaches. For the wedding breakfast, the Sculpture Gallery was decorated with a Christmas tree, centrepieces of dark red flowers and greenery and red ribbons around the napkins. Favours were small gold bags filled with champagne truffles and Belgian chocolates from confetti.co.uk. The catering was in-house and guests were served a brie, leek and Wensleydale tartlet, followed by a main course of sea bass and crushed lemon potatoes. “Pudding was a trio of crème brûlées in Berry, Classical and lemon flavour, which is one of our favourite dishes as we’d eaten it the night Andy proposed,” says Rachel. “We decided against a seasonal menu in case our guests had already had their fill of roast dinners in the run-up to Christmas! We had a traditional white fruit cake decorated with fresh flowers and made by Andy’s mum. We knew it would be fabulous because we got to enjoy practice runs before she made the final one!” In the evening a band called Men In Black (aliveandkickingentertainments.co.uk) kept guests dancing well into the night. “We also had a casino in the bar (prestigefuncasino.co.uk), which kept my 87-year-old granny happily occupied for much of the evening! The wedding finished at about midnight, then we went back to the Inn At Woburn (theinnatwoburn.com) where we were staying and joined family and friends for a few nightcaps.”

And another thing “I’m notorious for arriving late for everything, so I’d promised myself that I wouldn’t be late for the wedding,” says Rachel. “In the end, we left in such good time the driver insisted on slowing down so we didn’t arrive too early!”

Photography: [Ashworth Photography \(ashworthphotography.com\)](http://Ashworth Photography (ashworthphotography.com))

My insider tips for brides...

- “Choose a wedding perfume, so when you wear it afterwards you’ll always be reminded of your big day. I wore ‘Romance’ by Ralph Lauren, which Andy helped me choose as I wanted it to be something we both liked.”
- “Give your maids personal gifts. There was a lovely photograph of my three bridesmaids so I gave them each a framed copy as a thank-you present.”
- “Don’t try to do everything yourself. Many decisions end up falling to the bride but Andy did a great job of finding the wedding cars (from raymentlewis.com). I should have let him do more!”
- “Try to use suppliers who know the venue. They’re a useful source of knowledge and can give you good advice on what will and won’t work.”
- “I’d also recommend having a friend film the day or hiring a videographer (ours was sgfilms.co.uk). The day goes so quickly and there’s so much that you inevitably miss. It’s great to look back and be surprised by things you didn’t even know had happened!”



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