

*“For Me and My Gal”:
Wedding Music*

Activity, Time and Materials

ACTIVITY:

Many people know the saying “spring is the time when a young man’s fancy turns to thoughts of love.” Weddings have held an interesting place in North Dakota lore for those who have attended their fair share of weddings, receptions, anniversaries, or just love all the pomp and ceremony of these singular events. Music is a major aspect of any wedding, from the processionals and recessionals to dances at the reception that go late into the evening. As a popular topic for songs, weddings provide information about what weddings were like in decades and even centuries past. This activity plan includes discussing, listening to, playing, and singing the music of weddings, both real and “mock.” Ideally, a live musician could perform some of the better-known pieces of wedding music or program some parts of music for a mock wedding reception.

TIME:

One session of sixty to ninety minutes. (This activity easily can be lengthened to include two to three “planning” periods for a grand finale wedding that could be reenacted or role-played by various staff members and residents. The condensed session should include more preparation and performance of wedding-themed music, with less discussion of the history of the songs. Also, limit the time portion of the reenactments or mockups.)

MATERIALS:

- Audio playing device, such as an MP3 or CD player, and popular wedding tunes like “Anniversary Waltz”
- Overhead or forward-facing speakers (two on each side set out, as two loud speakers are better than one louder speaker)
- Microphone for narrator, officiant (optional), live singing musician (optional)
- For sing-along, handouts of popular wedding song lyrics, such as “For Me and My Gal,” “It Had to Be You,” “Can’t Help Falling in Love with You,” and “Going to the Chapel”
- Handouts for song lyrics to “Daisy Bell” and “Clementine” as modified herein
- Typical wedding vows from an Internet search
- Wedding decorations
- Wedding favors (perhaps prepared by independent living residents), such as decorated candies or knick-knacks for attendees to take home
- The book *Sundogs and Sunflowers: Folklore and Folk Art of the Northern Great Plains*

(Recommended optional publication: *Play Along With Eldersong* by Beckie Karras, Eldersong Publications, 2001.)

“THREE PLAGUES” (LONELINESS, BOREDOM, HELPLESSNESS):

This activity can be done by individuals or as part of a group. The group setting is designed to mimic the function of traditional weddings, which bring people together from different families in celebration. It is in this way that loneliness is addressed. While reminiscing about weddings during the initial portion of the activity is primarily didactic, sing-along interludes as a group are vital in invigorating the morale of a group of people, whether large or small in number. Thus, boredom is addressed. Recalling wedding memories can instill a sense of joyfulness that can help to combat both boredom and loneliness.

People sometimes think of spring and summer as “wedding season.” Yet, weddings, and thus this activity, can happen year-round. However, older adults are not always mobile enough to make long trips to attend weddings. Thus, this activity also offers opportunities for participants to highlight the recent or upcoming nuptials of their younger relatives. As invitations and announcements continue to come to their addresses year-round, the elders may be encouraged to save the announcements for use in this potentially recurring activity. The helpless feeling that occurs each time the elders receive an invitation to something they may not be able to be a part of would be addressed by allowing them to celebrate in some way as part of a group, even if the celebration is at a different place and time.

ASSOCIATED MEDICAL STUDIES:

“Wellness as a movement for both healthy persons and those with diagnosed diseases has been growing in both popularity and acceptance by consumers and the health industry. Wellness in part includes an individual’s positive attitude towards, and active engagement in, the health environment in which they function. A focus of wellness can include techniques and methods that people can use in their lives to combat stress and facilitate relaxation. Music as a sound medium has been used as part of wellness programs in a variety of ways, including as a sonic background for relaxation experiences. In this article, the role of music listening to positively affect neurophysiological and emotional responses related to relaxation is examined. Neurological bases of music listening and sound processing are reviewed, with emphasis on how music is processed by the limbic and related biological systems, including endocrine and hormonal responses. Suggestions for how consumers may use music listening in their own wellness and relaxation regimens are provided, including descriptions of which music to consider, where to obtain it, and how to use it.” [Abstract]

*--Krout, Robert E. “Music Listening to Facilitate Relaxation and Promote Wellness: Integrated Aspects of Our Neurophysiological Responses to Music.” *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 34 (2007): 134-141.*

This meta-analysis of 21 studies of music and dementia suggests an effect of music therapy that is highly significant for treating symptoms of dementia.

--Koger, S.M., K. Chapin, and M. Brotons. "Is Music Therapy an Effective Intervention for Dementia? A Meta-analytic Review of Literature." Journal of Music Therapy 36 (1999): 2-15.

(Activity Plan author Andrew Knight's note: Although this plan is not "music therapy" by definition, the importance of adding music to any care plan for individuals with dementia cannot be overstated.)

Activity Plan

PREPARATION:

Preparation for a single session or a grand finale mock wedding could include any or all of the following:

- projecting of wedding scenes from the 1900s to 1960s via an overhead projector
- gathering wedding pictures of elder residents for projection on an overhead screen or for display on a table
- asking elder residents to dress up as if they were actually attending someone's wedding (The people conducting and assisting in the activity should also dress up.)
- gathering music or soundtrack to play while the participants arrive, as if a string quartet was actually performing the processional music
- asking a local bakery for "display" wedding cakes to borrow for the day
- placing bunting on doors, chairs, and an indoor trellis
- consulting with a staff member from pastoral care to "officiate"
- inviting string players from the local high school or college to volunteer as live musicians
- ensuring reliable microphones and speakers for the "witnesses"/audience

SESSION 1 (60 TO 90 MINUTES):

1. The activity should be done as a large group endeavor, although individuals may be prompted ahead of time to bring in pictures of their own wedding for projection on an overhead screen or for display. Individuals may be prompted ahead of time to also dress up in garb as if they were actually attending someone's wedding. For a more formal feel, the activity director and other people assisting in the event also should dress as if part of a wedding party.
2. The person directing the activity should explain that weddings and traditions related to weddings will be shared and discussed. To facilitate the discussion, read the courtship and marriage folklore on page 133 of the book *Sundogs and Sunflowers*, followed by the "shivaree" entries on page 134, "Anniversary Surprise Party" on page 219, and "A North Dakota Money Tree" on page 221. The activity director now should share his or her own wedding or wedding-related experiences first. Then encourage the participants to talk about theirs. Was there a particularly memorable event? Was there a dance? What kind of music was played and what were some of the songs or tunes? What was the couple's wedding song for the first dance?
3. After the discussion of wedding rituals, begin with a song over the speakers for sing-along or cue a live musician to play while leading the group in singing. The activity director may want to distribute handouts to the participants with lyrics to the chosen songs. For a

sing-along interlude, possible wedding songs to consider include “For Me and My Gal,” “It Had to Be You,” “Can’t Help Falling in Love with You,” or “Going to The Chapel.” For some humor, make a short list of additions to the titles of the songs and provide the audience with a different take on each selection:

- “For Me and My Gal, and her mother, who’ll likely move in with us in about five years.”
- “It Had to Be You, but it could have easily been Esther instead.”
- “Can’t Help Falling in Love with You, but the dowry sure was helpful.”

4. Now it’s time to turn the idea on its head and make it a “mock” wedding. The “Mock Weddings” feature on page 220 of *Sundogs and Sunflowers* should be used as a basis for the discussion. The activity director may want to make copies of the page or project the page overhead as a visual aid for the participants. Read the entire page aloud to the participants, including the photo captions, while pointing out the pictures. Ask if anyone has attended a mock wedding. If they have, encourage them to share what happened.

5. At this point, the activity director should come up with opposites of tradition, unusual “detours” of some basic wedding tenets, or just facilitate some creative silliness. Variations could include a staff member or other resident dressed up as a bride or groom, a man dressed up as a bride (and vice versa), a bride and groom dressed all in black instead of white, an angry father-in-law-to-be walking

his daughter (bride) down your makeshift aisle with a “shotgun” in hand and giving the groom-to-be an ominous look, or a song for a procession that seems completely out of place. After a discussion of some of these possibilities, introduce the one you’ve prearranged with a flourish: “Well, we thought we’d have some REAL fun at this wedding, so here we go!” Then gesture to begin the event or cue the unusual music and song from the musician.

6. What about those weddings that will never happen? Play and sing, or have your couple-to-be act out and speak the lyrics, to songs of forlorn love for a good laugh, such as “Daisy Bell” and “Clementine.” The activity director might consider handing out the lyrics to Verse 1 of “Daisy Bell” on one side of a sheet of paper and then surprise the group with Daisy’s response on the other side. “Clementine” is more well-known for an easy sing-along, or you could even recite the final verse before indicating to the crowd to sing along with the final refrain:

- Well-meaning, but poverty-stricken boyfriend:

Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer true
I’m half crazy, all for the love of you
It won’t be a stylish marriage
I can’t afford a carriage
But you’ll look sweet, upon the seat
Of a bicycle built for two.

- Demanding and soon-to-be-single girlfriend:

Michael, Michael, here is your answer, due
I'm NOT crazy, all for the love of you
If you can't afford a carriage
There won't be any marriage
For I'll be switched, if I'll get hitched
On a bicycle built for two

Explain that “we all know of the darling ‘Clementine,’ but do you know the whole story?” Sing or say (or invite a local musician to do so) the verses and have the crowd join in on each refrain. After saying or singing each verse, reiterate the main point (the suggestions in parentheses).

Refrain:

Oh my darlin', oh my darlin', oh my darlin' Clementine
You were gone and lost forever, dreadful sorry Clementine

Verse 1:

In a cavern, in a canyon, excavatin' for a mine
Dwelt a miner, forty-niner, and his daughter, Clementine
(She's a miner's daughter—no problems so far!)
Refrain

Verse 2:

Drove she ducklings, to the water, every morning, just at
nine
She hit her foot against a splinter; she fell into the foaming
brine (She's a klutz, and she is drowning!)
Refrain

Verse 3:

Ruby lips above the water, blowing bubbles, soft and fine
Alas for me, I am no swimmer, and I lost my Clementine (I
can't swim, so she drowned! Some boyfriend he is!)
Refrain

Verse 4 (slowly and thoughtfully for the first line):

How I missed her, how I missed her, how I missed my
Clementine
Then I kissed her little sister and forgot dear Clementine!

Then talk about the extra verses the audience may not be so familiar with.

7. Now it's time for the main event: the vows. Read some typical vows from a basic Internet search; something about “to have and to hold, in sickness and health” and so on. Then invite the group to suggest some variations:

- “To have and to hold . . . at least until my next wife is out of jail.”
- “In sickness and health . . . but mostly health, because medicine is expensive.”
- “For rich or for poor . . . but mostly rich, thanks to the lawsuit.”

8. Finish with a lively “recessional,” such as “The Chicken Dance,” and a few final wedding songs. Perhaps prepare a wedding cake and punch for attendees to enjoy after singing along, and get ready for the big reception after the ceremony. Consider the “Anniversary Waltz” and talk about how attendees can predict a long and beautiful marriage, with many anniversaries to come!

OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS:

Andrew Knight and Dan Kostad, activity director, conducted this activity at Woodside Village-Valley Memorial Homes in Grand Forks, North Dakota. The elder residents were involved prior to the event by loaning their wedding keepsakes, such as photos, guest books, and dresses. Those materials were then put on display. A projector, accompanied by music, was used to show wedding video comedy and the wedding photos that were collected earlier. Plenty of wireless microphones and speakers for sound quality were used. Ambience was created with a trellis, wedding snack favors for attendees, and two display cakes from a local bakery. And a chaplain told his top three wedding stories with videos, jokes, and songs.

AUTHOR • ANDREW KNIGHT:

Andrew is an assistant professor of music at the University of North Dakota, a board-certified music therapist, and a teacher and supervisor of music therapy students in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Previously, he was an active clinician in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area. There he held various music therapy clinical roles in nursing and geriatric facilities, school districts, and agencies serving adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. He also established a branch of the “Tremble Clefs,” a nationwide group of individuals with Parkinson’s disease and their caregivers, which works to support them physically and emotionally through singing and movement. He lives in Grand Forks with his wife and three children, frequently bikes around the city, and has completed seven marathons . . . so far.