

## The First Stages

You probably already have a few songs in mind for your special day, but before you go any further, you may find it helpful to consider the **order of service** for your ceremony. This will help you determine when during your ceremony you want your selections to be played, and may guide you in your decision-making process.

## A Sample Order of Service

- Prelude Music -

Seating of the Mothers/Grandmothers  
Bridal Party Entrance  
Flower Girl/Ring Bearer  
Bridal Processional

- Incidental Music -

Bridal Recessional  
Recessional

- Postlude –

## Prelude Music

Generally, prelude music is played while guests are walking in, finding their seats, and mingling with family and friends the 30 minutes prior to the ceremony. Prelude music can set the atmosphere for the ceremony and can even provide entertainment for your guests. Without prelude music, the time before the ceremony can seem particularly quiet or even awkward.

Prelude music is generally **soft, flowing, and not too fast**. Of course, depending on your style, you can mix selections of various genres, sound levels, and even speeds to make things interesting.

## Ceremonial Music

This refers to music that accompanies important parts of the ceremony, including the seating of the mothers/grandmothers, bridal party entrance, and most importantly, the **Bridal Processional**. Generally, you should choose a different song for each entrance, that is, one song for the Seating of Mothers/Grandmothers, one song for the Bridal Party Entrance, and one song for the Bridal Processional.

Some brides choose not to change songs between the entrance of the bridal party and bridal processional. If you choose this option, make sure you ask your musicians to cue the bride's entrance with an appropriate *Bridal Fanfare*, which signals to the guests that they should stand for the bride's entrance.

Ceremonial music can range in style from **soft and slow** to **bright and fast**, depending on the ceremony. Some brides want a quick and exciting entrance, while others prefer to walk down the aisle to a slow, regal selection.

## Incidental Music

Incidental music refers to short pieces accompanying inner-portions of the ceremony such as the lighting of the Unity Candle, Moments of Reflection, or Sand Ceremonies. The incidental music can be either a song or a short musical improvisation provided by your musician. Most importantly, tell your musician to make it **short and sweet**; there's nothing more awkward than standing for 3 minutes while the music drags on, especially when lighting the candle only takes 10 seconds.

## Recessional and Postlude

Choosing appropriate music for the Bridal Recessional is important. Generally you want to avoid slow and soft in favor of a more up-tempo, vivacious, and exciting piece. Many brides choose selections from the classical repertoire, even if their ceremonies are more contemporary in vision. Whatever you choose, it should be **happy and quick**, as it will help propel you down the aisle as a new couple and excite your guests.

Following the Bridal Recessional comes the General Recessional, in which the wedding party and guests begin to exit. Many couples choose to let the music for the Bridal Recessional serve as the General Recessional as well, with no pause in the music. Others choose two selections, one for both the Bridal Recessional and General Recessional. Make sure both are upbeat!

The Postlude occurs once the wedding party has exited and the remaining guests begin to file out. It can be similar in tempo to the Recessional, and it should be joyful.