



# Wedding Music Guidelines

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# Contents

Marriage as a Sacrament.....	2
Principles of Planning the Ceremony .....	2
Liturgical Judgments.....	3
Musical Judgments .....	3
Pastoral Judgments .....	4
Use of Music Within the Wedding Liturgy .....	4
Prelude Music .....	4
The Processional.....	4
The Responsorial Psalm .....	4
Gospel Acclamation.....	5
Rite of Marriage.....	5
Preparation of the Altar and Presentation of the Gifts .....	5
Eucharistic Acclamations.....	5
The Lord’s Prayer .....	5
The Sign of Peace .....	6
Lamb of God.....	6
Communion Procession .....	6
Hymn After Communion .....	6
Recessional .....	6
Other Practices.....	6
Cultural Awareness .....	7
Order of Service for Rite of Catholic Marriage Within Mass.....	8
Order of Service Rite for Rite of Catholic Marriage Outside of Mass .....	9
Use of Parish and Guest Musicians .....	10
Use of Recorded Music .....	10
Weddings During Lent.....	11
Worship Aids and Copyrights.....	11
Fees .....	12
Parish Guidelines.....	13
Wedding Music Planning Guide With Mass.....	14
Wedding Music Planning Guide Without Mass.....	15
Wedding Repertoire .....	16

## **MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT**

It is the faith of the Church that when two Christians marry something distinctive takes place. The man and woman who commit themselves to one another celebrate a sacrament. Their marriage is the revealing of God's love for us in a very powerful way. The love of man and woman is made holy in the sacrament of marriage and becomes the mirror of God's everlasting love for the world.

Thus, the celebration of Christian marriage is not just the "couple's day." It is the day of the Church. The People of God gather to witness the exchange of vows, and to express their support, joy and faith through prayers, acclamations and song. The gathered assembly once again hears through the bride and groom everything that God has to say to the world. As they say to one another: "I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life," we formally call to mind the very covenant that God has made with us. We remember that no matter what, God will never forget about us; nor will God ever abandon us. The words they speak to one another are the words that God speaks to us each day of our lives.

As Catholic Christians we have never been shy about our conviction that material things put us in touch with our God. We use bread, water, wine, oil, incense and fire to remind us of the intense and irrevocable presence of God through Christ to the world.

It is our conviction that in the human flesh of Jesus, God has forever bound himself to the world. Therefore, human flesh has been sanctified...made holy. Our own flesh is the presence of God to the world.

May every marriage ceremony be a reflection of the Source of love that has brought them to this day. May it be a reminder of God's love for their family and friends who have gathered to witness with joy and prayer their commitment to one another in Christ.

## **PRINCIPLES OF PLANNING THE CEREMONY**

Since the wedding liturgy is a celebration of a sacrament, the music must reflect that sacramental nature. The same general principles of planning worship and deciding on music are employed as at other liturgies.

The music should be chosen with the utmost care and consideration for the sacredness of the liturgy. It needs to be expressive of Christian faith and values. Music which only celebrates the human secular values of love is not appropriate in church. The assembly

gathered for the wedding should be drawn into active participation in this sacred ritual through prayer and song in order to share fully in the sacramental encounter with Christ the Lord.

Sometimes the only music familiar to the couple consists of songs heard at other weddings; such music may not necessarily be suited to the celebration of the sacrament. Certainly, secular love songs have no place in a sacramental celebration. Sung texts should reflect not only the love of a man and a woman but also the love of God for the couple and for all people. The pastoral musician will make every effort to offer a wide range of possibilities to the couple, particularly in the choice of music to be sung by the assembly.

As with Sunday Worship, planning for a wedding liturgy should begin with reflection on the Scripture readings to be used for the occasion. This done, the parish musician can help the couple select music to enhance the meaning of the chosen scriptures and the entire celebration.

Particular decisions about choice and placement of wedding music should grow out of the three judgments proposed in *Music In Catholic Worship*, and explained further in *Liturgical Music Today*.

#### **LITURGICAL JUDGMENTS:**

- Is the music's text, form, placement and style congruent with the nature of the liturgy?
- What parts are preferred for singing and who sings them?

#### **MUSICAL JUDGMENTS:**

- Is the music technically, aesthetically, and expressively good, irrespective of musical style?
- Is the composition of good quality, and will it also sound good with the resources available?
- Do not confuse good and bad music with one style against another. Many good pieces of music exist in chant, polyphony, choral hymns, responsorial songs and contemporary compositions.

## **PASTORAL JUDGMENTS:**

- Will the words and music help this assembly to pray?
- Will your choice of music have the same feeling of prayerfulness within the assembly as you have originally intended?<sup>1</sup>

# **USE OF MUSIC WITHIN THE WEDDING LITURGY**

## **PRELUDE MUSIC**

The purpose of music at this time, as in any liturgical function, is to help draw the assembly into an attitude of prayer in order to experience more fully the sacred nature of the sacrament to be celebrated. Instrumental and vocal music would best serve in this capacity.

## **THE PROCESSIONAL**

This serves to gather the entire assembly together as one for the beginning of the rite. Music used at this time is not simply marching music for the wedding party, but music which accompanies the gathering of the worshiping community. Organ, organ and brass, a congregational hymn, or a combination instrumental piece followed by a hymn sung by the assembly is appropriate here.

## **THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

The Responsorial Psalm is the sung response to the proclamation of the first reading. This is to be done by a cantor singing the psalm verses with the assembly joining in the singing of the response. It is important, too, that the selections be from the psalms. This is not an appropriate time for a vocal solo in its entirety, which would take away from the assembly something that is rightfully theirs. The Responsorial Psalm at a wedding is no different than that at any other liturgical celebration.

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<sup>1</sup> *Liturgical Music Today* (USCC, Washington, D.C. 1982), no. 29

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

This acclamation announces the proclamation of the Gospel and is always to be sung or omitted if not sung. It is introduced by a cantor and repeated by the assembly. Participation can be fostered by the use of a familiar refrain. The acclamation should be appropriate to the season. (N.B. The alleluia is never sung during the Lenten season.)

## **RITE OF MARRIAGE**

The Rite of Marriage consists of the statement of intent and the consent of the couple and the exchange of rings. Music is not to be a part of this rite; however, a short hymn or acclamation sung by the assembly affirming the couple would be appropriate at the conclusion of the rite.

## **PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR AND PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS**

This part of the liturgy is short and of secondary importance in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is recommended that instrumental music be used to accompany the procession and should not extend beyond the action of preparation.

## **EUCCHARISTIC ACCLAMATIONS**

These three acclamations (Holy, Holy, Holy; Memorial Acclamation and Great Amen) are always to be sung by the entire assembly. The music selected should be familiar enough to the assembly so that they feel comfortable singing.

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

The Lord's Prayer belongs to the assembly and is the common prayer of all Christian churches. It is appropriate, then, that the prayer be recited or sung by all present. If it is sung, a familiar melody, such as the Gregorian Chant tune, should be chosen so that all present may join in the prayer.

## **THE SIGN OF PEACE**

If there is to be music during the Sign of Peace it should be instrumental. The time for this action should not be extended so that the assembly can be attentive to the Breaking of the Bread and the singing/reciting of the Lamb of God.

## **LAMB OF GOD**

This litany which accompanies the Breaking of the Bread may be sung or recited by the entire assembly.

## **COMMUNION PROCESSION**

Communion is the “coming together as one” to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Music at this point helps unify the assembly while also serving to accompany the procession. The assembly joins in singing the refrain of a familiar hymn while the cantor sings the verses. An instrumental or vocal solo could be an option at this time, so long as it is in keeping with the procession, or the sacrament, the scripture, or the liturgical season.

## **HYMN AFTER COMMUNION**

A hymn of praise or thanksgiving may be sung after Communion by the entire assembly, especially if a hymn had not been sung by them during Communion. A period of silent reflection is suggested.

## **RECESSIONAL**

As all are leaving the church, instrumental music best expresses the joy and festivity of the occasion.

## **OTHER PRACTICES**

The practice of lighting a “wedding candle” is not an official part of the Marriage Rite. Likewise the presentation of a floral bouquet to the Blessed Virgin Mary is not an official part of the Marriage Rite.

## CULTURAL AWARENESS

Our society is a multicultural one. The Church is called to express this cultural diversity in many ways. This cultural expression is not merely external. It is in fact a reflection of the soul, the spirituality of a people.

This is a very important concept to keep in mind when preparing a marriage celebration. The goal of the ceremony, like that of any good liturgy, is to incorporate cultural expressions of spirituality in such a way that the gathered community can understand them without much explanation, and thus be able to participate fully and actively.

**ORDER OF SERVICE FOR  
RITE OF CATHOLIC MARRIAGE WITHIN MASS**

Prelude Music

Entrance Rite

Processional and /or Gathering Hymn  
Greeting, Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

Old Testament Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
New Testament Reading  
Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia)  
Gospel  
Homily

Rite of Marriage

Exchange of vows  
Blessing and Exchange of rings  
(Optional acclamation)  
General Intercessions

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Altar/Presentation of the Gifts  
Eucharistic Prayer and Acclamations  
Lord's Prayer  
Nuptial Blessing  
Sign of Peace  
Lamb of God  
Communion  
Prayer after Communion  
Final Blessing  
Recessional

**ORDER OF SERVICE**  
**RITE OF CATHOLIC MARRIAGE OUTSIDE OF MASS**

Prelude

Entrance Rite

Processional and/or Gathering Hymn  
Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

Old Testament Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
New Testament Reading  
Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia)  
Gospel  
Homily

Rite of Marriage

Exchange of vows  
Blessing and exchange of rings  
(Optional Acclamation)  
General Intercessions  
Nuptial Blessing  
(Our Father)  
Final Blessing  
Recessional

## USE OF PARISH AND GUEST MUSICIANS

Each parish should have a clear policy concerning the role of parish musicians for weddings. It is common professional courtesy to offer incumbent musicians a “right of first refusal.” In other words, they are given the first opportunity to provide music for weddings in the parish. Engaged couples should be strongly encouraged to employ musicians from the parish where they will be married. These musicians have the benefit of knowing what does and does not work in their own community. They also are comfortable with the instruments of the church, the sound system and acoustical environment. Parish musicians are at ease with the practice and style of the parish priests and deacons who preside at weddings. Couples should also consider that most parish musicians depend on wedding fees to supplement their salaries

Guest musicians for weddings should have appropriate musical training, experience, and understanding of the liturgy and marriage rite. An interview with the parish music director will determine whether the guest musician meets these criteria.

If guest musicians are subsequently chosen to provide music it is wise policy to include parish musicians in the music planning process for the reasons stated above. A fair compensation should be made to the parish musician for any consultation with the engaged couple, time spent welcoming and orienting guest musicians, and any other incidental tasks they may perform in preparation for the wedding. Typically, an amount equal to the musician’s regular stipend is offered, although a parish may choose to set a different amount agreed upon by the musician and pastor.

Parish musicians should be contacted as soon as the wedding date has been set and before any decisions concerning music are made. Early consultation allows ample preparation time for all concerned.

### USE OF RECORDED MUSIC

The liturgy is a series of signs expressed by living human beings. In the marriage rite, two living persons exchange vows and symbols, indicating that they are becoming one new life together in Christ. The music used in the marriage should also be live. Recordings are not to be used to replace the assembly, the choir, the organist or other instrumentalists or singers. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Liturgical Music Today*, (USCC, Washington, D.C.), No. 60.

## WEDDINGS DURING LENT

The celebration of the Marriage Rite is discouraged during the Lenten season. A wedding is a festive occasion, and Lent, by its very nature, does not allow for that festivity to be developed to its fullest. If, for pastoral reasons, a wedding does take place during Lent, the music should be in keeping with the nature of the season. The word “Alleluia” should not be included anywhere in the liturgy.

## WORSHIP AIDS AND COPYRIGHTS

In recent years many couples have decided to have a worship aid printed to be used at their ceremony. If properly prepared, a worship aid encourages active participation in the spoken and sung prayers of the service and helps those who are unfamiliar with the Catholic Liturgy to understand its basic structure. A worship aid also provides a thoughtful remembrance of the occasion.

Be mindful of the following points, when putting the worship aid together:

1. Avoid printing too much, as the worship aid then becomes unreadable. Print major headings in bold or decorative type so they stand out. A smaller print may be used for the elements of each rite under the major headings. **Do not print the texts of prayers, readings, or vows.** These should be listened to, not read by the assembly.
2. To encourage everyone to sing, print both the words and the music of hymns, refrains, and acclamations. An invitation might also be put at the very beginning of the worship aid asking the assembly to join in the sung and spoken prayer of the wedding ceremony.
3. Any time music and/or words to hymns are printed, copyright permission from the copyright owner needs to be secured. Publishers whose hymns are most commonly used are:

GIA Publications, Inc.  
7404 South Mason Ave.

Chicago, IL 60638

1-800-442-1358

GIA - [www.giamusic.com](http://www.giamusic.com)

New Dawn Music  
P.O. Box 13248  
Portland, OR 97213-0248 1-800-243-3296 OCP – [www.ocp.org](http://www.ocp.org)

(New Dawn gives copyright permission for hymns copyrighted or published by OCP Publications; New Dawn Music; TEAM publications; St. Thomas More Group, England; St. Meinrad Archabbey; Willow Music, Australia; Ediciones MUSICAL PAX, Ediciones Paulinas and Editorial Apostolado de la Prensa, Madrid, Spain; and Ediciones Musica-Liturgia y Oracion, Pamplona, Spain.)

World Library Publications  
3825 N. Willow Road  
Schiller Park, IL 60176-9936 1-800-566-6150 WLP – [www.wlpmusic.com](http://www.wlpmusic.com)

4. The list of ministers, such as members of the wedding party, readers, musicians, and family, is printed on the last page. The service is to be printed first, since this is the most important part. Avoid printing the names of any ministers within the order of the service.
5. It is recommended that the music director or some other knowledgeable person proofread the program before it is taken to the printers. This will help avoid any mistakes.<sup>3</sup>

## **FEES**

Parishes are responsible for establishing musicians' fees. Planning the wedding liturgy with the bride and groom enables the parish Music Director/Organist to maintain the quality inherent in all the other parish liturgies.

When parish policy permits guest musicians to be the principal musician/organist for weddings, the parish Director/organist should be compensated.

These suggested fees, varying due to the musician's experience and training, are based on the AGO (American Guild of Organists, Toledo Chapter) guidelines.

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<sup>3</sup> Austin Fleming, *Parish Weddings*, (Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 1987), p. 44.

Wedding Liturgy

Organist.....	\$100 - \$200
Cantor / Vocalist.....	\$ 75 - \$150
Instrumentalist.....	\$100 - \$200
Rehearsal time (per hour).....	\$ 25 - \$ 50

Responsibilities and compensation should be made clear to all concerned. (Pastor, Deacon, Liturgy Planner, Music Director, Bride and Groom)

**PARISH GUIDELINES**

Parishes may wish to state policies covering other issues in addition to music.

# WEDDING MUSIC PLANNING GUIDE

## WEDDING RITE WITH MASS

Bride \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Groom \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time of Wedding \_\_\_\_\_

Presider \_\_\_\_\_ Musicians \_\_\_\_\_

Cantor \_\_\_\_\_

### **Prelude:**

Music \_\_\_\_\_

Processional/Gathering Hymn: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Liturgy of the Word:**

1st Reading \_\_\_\_\_

Responsorial Psalm \_\_\_\_\_

2nd Reading \_\_\_\_\_

Alleluia \_\_\_\_\_

Gospel \_\_\_\_\_

Homily

Rite of Marriage

Exchange of vows

Blessing and exchange of rings

(Optional Acclamation) \_\_\_\_\_

General Intercessions

### **Liturgy of the Eucharist**

Presentation of the Gifts \_\_\_\_\_

Holy, Holy, Holy \_\_\_\_\_

Memorial Acclamation \_\_\_\_\_

Great Amen \_\_\_\_\_

The Lord's Prayer \_\_\_\_\_

### **Nuptial Blessing**

Lamb of God \_\_\_\_\_

Communion Hymn \_\_\_\_\_

Hymn of Praise after Communion (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer after Communion

Final Blessing

Recessional \_\_\_\_\_

# WEDDING MUSIC PLANNING GUIDE

## WEDDING RITE WITHOUT MASS

Bride \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Groom \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time of Wedding \_\_\_\_\_

Presider \_\_\_\_\_ Musicians \_\_\_\_\_

Cantor \_\_\_\_\_

### Prelude

Music \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Entrance Rite

Processional/Gathering Hymn \_\_\_\_\_

### Liturgy of the Word

1st Reading \_\_\_\_\_

Responsorial Psalm \_\_\_\_\_

2nd Reading \_\_\_\_\_

Alleluia \_\_\_\_\_

Gospel \_\_\_\_\_

### Homily

### Rite of Marriage

Exchange of vows

Blessing and exchange of rings

(Optional Acclamation) \_\_\_\_\_

General Intercessions

Nuptial Blessing

(Our Father)

Final Blessing

Recessional \_\_\_\_\_

# Wedding Repertoire

## PROCESSIONAL OR GATHERING HYMN

*(This song could replace an instrumental procession as the wedding party enters the church or be sung immediately following. These songs are typically found in most hymnals.)*

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee  
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling  
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty  
God in the Planning (GIA)  
God, Who Created Hearts to Love (OCP)  
Hear Us Now, O God and Father (Lutheran Book of Worship)

## COMMUNION SONGS

*(While any Eucharistic hymn is appropriate, these songs are particularly suited to the occasion of a wedding.)*

Gift of Finest Wheat	Westendorf/Kreutz
God Is Love	David Haas
Love One Another	James Chepponis
May Love Be Ours, Lord	Michael Joncas
Take and Eat	Michael Joncas

## RESPONSORIAL PSALMS FOR THE WEDDING RITE

Psalm 33: *The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.*

From the Gelineau Psalter GIA  
From Psalms for the Church Year, Vol. 2 by Marty Haugen

Psalm 34: *Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.*

From the collection Psalms by Robert Kreutz OCP  
From Psalms for the Church Year, Vol. 1 by David Haas/Marty Haugen GIA

Psalm 103: *The Lord is kind and merciful.*

From When Love Is Found, David Haas/Jeanne Cotter GIA  
From Psalms for the Church Year, Vol. 1 by David Haas/Marty Haugen GIA

Psalm 112: *Happy are those who do what the Lord commands.*

From WORSHIP 3<sup>rd</sup> edition #190 (Gelineau/Carroll) GIA

Psalm 128: *Happy are those who fear the Lord.*

A Wedding Psalm by Daniel Laginya GIA  
From Psalms for the Church Year, Vol. 2 by Marty Haugen GIA

Psalm 145: *The Lord is compassionate to all his creatures*  
 by Joseph Barry Smith GIA  
 From Psalms for the Church Year, Vol. 1 by David Haas/Marty Haugen GIA

Psalm 148: *Let all praise the name of the Lord.*  
 From WORSHIP 3<sup>rd</sup> edition #192 (Gelineau/Proulx) GIA

The following psalm and wedding music collections have settings of responsorial psalms in a variety of styles. Consult the publisher's catalogs or web-site for further information.

Gelineau, Joseph	Gelineau/Grail Psalter	GIA
Guimont, Michel	Lectionary Psalms	GIA
Haas/Cotter	When Love is Found	GIA
Various composers	Singing the Psalms (multi-volume series)	OCP
Various composers	United As One, Vol. 2	OCP
Various composers	Psalms for the Cantor (multi-volume series)	WLP

## KEYBOARD MUSIC

### *Organ*

COMPOSER	TITLE	DIFFICULTY	PUBLISHER
Biggs, E. Power, ed.	Treasury of Shorter Organ Classics	E-M	Merrymount
Burkhardt, Michael	Hymn to Joy	M	MorningStar
Callahan, Charles	Wedding Music for Manuals	E	Concordia
Cornell, Garry	Procesion Alegre	M	Celebrations Unlimited
Hopson, Hal	Processional in C		
Johnson, David N.	Wedding Music Vol. 1 – Prelude Music Vol. 2 - Processionals & Recessionals Vol. 3 Vol. 4 Vol. 5 – Manuals only <i>(These volumes also contain optional parts for C and B-flat instruments)</i>	E-M	Augsburg-Fortress
Johnson, David N.	Trumpet Tune in D major	M	Augsburg-Fortress
Lemmens, Jacques	Fanfare	D	various
Manz, Paul	God of Grace <i>from Five Hymn Improvisations for Weddings or General Use</i>	M	MorningStar

COMPOSER	TITLE	DIFFICULTY	PUBLISHER
Pachelbel, Johann	Canon in D <i>S. Drummond Wolff, editor</i> <i>Hal Hopson, editor</i>	M-D M	Concordia Hope
Warner, Richard	Organ Music for Weddings	E-M	G. Schirmer
Young, Gordon	Baroque Suite Prelude in Classic Style	E-M M	Flammer Flammer
Mitchel-Wallace, Sue Head, John	The Classical Wedding	E-M	Hope
Various composers Concordia	Wedding Music, Part 1  <i>Processionals and Recessionals</i> <i>for Church Weddings, Anniversaries and Other Festive Occasions</i>		M

*Piano/Keyboard\_*

COMPOSER	TITLE	DIFFICULTY	PUBLISHER
Callahan, Charles	Keyboard Favorites, Vol. 1	E	MorningStar
Carter, John	Folk Hymns for Piano	E-M	Hope
Cotter, Jeanne	After the Rain	M	GIA
Keil, Kevin	Reflecting God's Love	E	??
Kogut, Malcolm	Piano Reflections Vol. II and III	M	GIA

*Organ and trumpet or other instruments*

COMPOSER	TITLE	DIFFICULTY	PUBLISHER
Bach, J.S. (E. Power Biggs, ed.)	Now Thank We All Our God	E	Presser
Holstein, Jane	Classic Solos for Flute and Keyboard	E-M	Hope
Johnson, David N.	Wedding Music Vol. 1 – Prelude Music Vol. 2 - Processionals & Recessionals Vol. 3 Vol. 4 Vol. 5 – Manuals only	E-M	Augsburg-Fortress

Krebs, J.L. (E. Power Biggs, ed.)	Eight Chorale Preludes for Organ with trumpet or oboe	M-D	Presser
Mitchell-Wallace, Sue (and John Head)	The Classical Wedding	E-M	Hope
“ “	Timeless Music for Weddings and Special Occasions		Hope
Moore, Bob	Five Liturgical Preludes for flute, violin or oboe	M	GIA
Tucker, Dale, ed.	Let Trumpets Sound	M	H.W. Gray
Wolff, S Drummond	Baroque Music for Solo Instrument and Keyboard Set 1 & 2, for C and B-flat instruments	E-M	MorningStar

*Vocal Solos*

<u>COMPOSER</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PUBLISHER</u>
Bach, J.S./Silhavy, arr.	May the Grace of Christ Our Savior <i>(Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring)</i>	GIA
Beck, John Ness	If You Love Me	Beckenhorst
Bell, John	God in the Planning	GIA
Bunjes, Paul, ed.	Wedding Blessings	Concordia <i>A Collection of Vocal Solos</i>
Haan, Raymond	The Unity Candle Song	GIA
Haas, David	When Love Is Found <i>(collection)</i>	GIA
Carroll, J. Robert	Lord May Their Lives	GIA
	Love is the Sunlight (Gaelic tune: BUNESSAN)	GIA
Copeland, Roger	Bridal Prayer	Hope
Hallquist, Gary	Song of Ruth	Hope
Hopson, Hal	The Gift of Love When Love Is Found	Hope Hope

Miller, Aaron	Bow Down Your Ear	Augsburg-Fortress
Peeters, Flor	Wedding Song (Whither Thou Goest)	C.F. Peters
Roff, Joseph	Bless, O Lord, These Rings One in Heart and One in Mind	GIA GIA
Verdi, Ralph	Wedding Song	GIA
Various composers	United As One, Vol. 1 and 2 ( <i>collection</i> ) ( <i>Vol. 2 contains wedding verses for the "Celtic Alleluia" as well as several settings of wedding responsorial psalms.</i> )	OCP

*In addition to the solo selections listed, there are hymns and songs found in most hymnals that work well as vocal solos.*