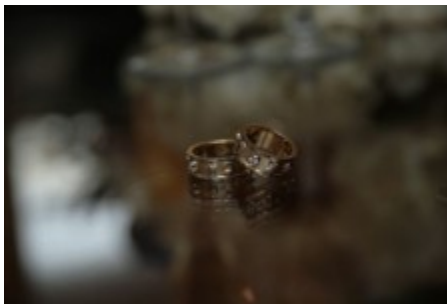


**LIWeddings.com**  
**Real Weddings: Candice and Richard**



We had been engaged for quite some time but I only really started getting serious about wedding planning and research a year prior to the date. I did most of the correspondence on my blackberry while on tour and would meet or email the vendors when I was back in the states.

The planning came in stages. Luckily my Mom bought me "the book of Wedding Lists". I need lists to keep me on track and having a book to travel with made it easier for me. I kept it pretty much on schedule with the timeline. Now I send my friends who are getting married your website for them to register and stay on track with! Of course, things never go exactly as planned and as a 1st time bride who expected exact order I was a little harried before the date. But it was a great learning experience. Sometimes things aren't exactly as you plan them, people cancel last minute, unexpected things happen. Its ok. We actually planned many things like it was a big party for our guests. Some of the most fun things for me were designing the bridesmaids dresses and bouquets, going through the swatches, having each girl choose their colors. We arranged belly dancers to perform for people who stayed after 10:30pm, bottle dancers before dinner, a magician who walked through and performed for the crowd, a photo booth which people LOVED. And of course we had "minstrel" friends who came in from Germany, Florida and Michigan who perform at the fairies so we had a lot of entertainment and the night ended with a jam session with all of us singing and playing. Some of the entertainment were gifts from friends and family- my parents hired the bottle dancers and dj, a close friend flew the magician in to perform- so it was quite an exciting and different event for all involved because everyone could participate in the fun or watch if they didn't want to participate. The cake was a gift from a friend who is also runs a bakery and my hair was done by a friend too so a lot of the things that made the night memorable were gifts from family and friends. But I am still getting people who tell me that was the most fun wedding that they ever went to and they never wanted it to end! We only invited close family and friends so when you are surrounded by only the people who love you and you see the smiles on their faces and there is only positive energy in the room- its amazing!



There are so many things that you can do to make the day unique and "your own" without having an excessive amount of time or funds. I found that symbolism weaved into the ceremony and mentioned in the program I prepared made the visuals even more special and it was interesting for the guests to read as well. For example- we had a chuppah made of willow with white roses and monarch butterflies. So in our program, I explained that the willow branches symbolize their ability to bend without breaking showing that challenges may appear in life, but we will get through them together; white roses in Native American culture symbolize happiness and security and monarch butterflies are for re-birth as well as peace understanding and beauty. We even had moon and star wedding rings that symbolize that our love is without limitations- as infinite as the universe. Each of my bridesmaids wore a different color because each one of them had such strong, different and beautiful personalities. To make them all wear the same thing was incongruous to me. But in my bouquet I included 1 of each of their colors because they are all a very important part of me and we are all tied together in friendship and sisterhood. Symbols are everywhere- if you choose what represents you and your relationship the most it brings the remembrance of your day to a whole new level. I loved going to the craft store and getting items that were so much cheaper than the price I was being given by the florist. I bought multicolored petals and stuffed them in decorative bags for the guests to toss at us at the end of the ceremony. My sister made a glitter sign for the basket that said "Petals of Happiness".



I made a basket with petals up for the flower girl/and best man to toss petals as they walked down the aisle. My mom, one of my bridesmaids and I made flower wreaths from silk flowers we got at the craft store for the girls to wear in their hair. I bought crystals for the florist to use and vases for them to use at my cocktail hour- all of which cost a fraction of the price of what I was being quoted. Plus its your day so these items should be your choice and your style- and it is so much more cost efficient. And when you make things for your day with your friends or family the moments that you shared make memories.

2 things that Ritchie and I are most inspired by are nature and the romance and magic of the Renaissance times. For the celebration it was important to me that it be outside in the castle gardens. We said our vows in October while the Hudson valley autumn leaves were brilliant colors and made sure to have the officiant mention to people not to forget to look around them and appreciate the colors and the beauty of the outdoors. The reception was more Renaissance period inspired. Ritchie and I have been Renaissance enthusiasts for years. We have a band that has been together for 11 years now called Blackmore's Night in



which we take the melodies from the 12-15th centuries and add new lyrics and arrangements to bring them into this time period while still retaining the beauty of the melodies from days gone by. We perform around the world in castles. When we finally decided to put the breaks on our touring and recording and walk down the aisle, the dream venue for us was a castle. We knew many castles overseas from performing in them, but we wanted to find one as local as possible so that all our friends and family could attend and enjoy the surroundings. Once we found the castle, it made sense to put in our invitations "Renaissance garb requested, not required" and 98% of our guests dressed up in garb! I also made seating cards with fantasy titles on them. Everyone was either a Lord, Lady, Minstrel, Alchemist, Maiden, Prince- many people kept their seating cards they liked the idea so much. It felt like we had stepped back in time when we walked into the great hall of the castle and everyone was there dressed in period outfits. An incredible sight...



The moment we walked through the doors. Though I have to say, seeing it up on the hill and knowing that's where you're going kind of takes your breath away. When we saw the stone lions at the door and felt the real stone walls, we knew that this place was very

special. Seeing the rooms that we would stay in, the reception hall with its stained glass windows and cathedral beamed ceilings and the amazing gardens. It has class and elegance, yet also brings you back to the romance, beauty and magic of a time gone by. Perfect for a fairy tale wedding



In addition, Castle on the Hudson is the 1st certified "green" castle which helps the environment, it was only an hour and 1/2 away from our home so it was within driving range of most of our friends and family. It was also a hotel so we could all spend the night in a beautiful castle upon a hill. And they have a restaurant and catering facility so within the price of the wedding package was all the catering, the cake (even though we chose to bring our own cake maker in), a bridal suite and it not only had that amazing Great Medieval Hall but the Castle Gardens so we had the ceremony and the reception all at one site which was much more convenient for everyone. Having stayed in and played at so many castles around the world in so many countries we know many good castles- and Castle on the Hudson is right up there with some of the best we've been to. Stone walls, dark wood carved staircases...you could be in Europe! But its so close to home. And right next to the town of Sleepy Hollow which we loved, too. Many of our guests went exploring there the next day



My dress was also a very important part of my special day and the unique theme we had chosen. I had done a lot of research on dresses through magazines, books and the internet but only went to 3 stores. I knew ultimately what looked best on my body type was going to be a corset style- which was perfect for the time period we love, but also flatters my body type. I finally found the perfect dress at Macy's Bridal which showcases Demetrios dresses- but I wanted to make a few modifications. I was very lucky when my manager called Demetrios' office in NYC and they knew who I was through my music and my work as a character in Magique theme parks and they offered to do the dress for me as a gift. What an incredible gift! I had them add on off the shoulder 2inch wide strap/sleeves because I love that off the shoulder look. It already had a drop waist and the bottom was lace vintage style flowers. The bodice had crystals and silver threading which made it shimmer in the light. They then hand sewed crystals into each lace flower on the skirt portion so the whole dress subtly shone. They gave me a veil to complete the fairy princess visual, again with subtle beading and crystals just around the edges. It was the most perfect gown I had ever seen. I felt like a princess in that amazing dress.



But not every bride has to have her dress specially made. When I first started dress shopping, I began my search at David's Bridal when they had their \$99 dress sales. If you add your own touches to anything it becomes unique and different but distinctly you. Wearing and modifying a dress that your mother or sister or best friend wore and making it your own by adding touches to it will be sentimental but also up to date and show your personality. And could be cheaper than getting a brand new dress. Adding your grandmothers brooch will bring history but also some sparkle. I added my grandmothers marquisate pin to my bouquet. I wore my mothers watch and I had one of my best friends who owns a bead shop make my fresh water pearl and crystal bracelet and the jewelry for all the bridesmaids. Its always about what you bring to the items that makes it specially your own. What represents you? If you love a certain kind of flower, put them in your hair or on your dress. Its those little touches that give it individuality and they don't have to be expensive. Add a lace jacket or go to a craft store to see what embellishments you can use to add to your dress.

You'd be amazed at what you come up with if you think outside the normal box.



Don't forget that this day is about you. So many people have opinions based on what they would do or what they would want. Stay true to your vision. I had people think I was crazy when I mentioned I wanted every bridesmaid to wear a different color-but when they all dressed up and you could see the vision I had before your own eyes people thought it was incredibly beautiful. Certainly people thought we were a bit odd when we requested they come in garb. But it made it like a costume party so in the end they had great fun going to costume shops and finding their inner Renaissance persona. Some felt more akin to knights, some were gypsies but they all loved how they felt in their costumes. It made the day fun for everyone and the photographs are otherworldly! Some people thought I was crazy when I said I wanted to wear silver sparkly shoes from Macy's - then the day of the wedding everyone wanted to know where they could get them! I can't stress how much individuality is important. You can have as much tradition as you want but to make it different you have to examine what you love and incorporate it into your day. I wrote the vows of the ceremony for the officiant, which brought our guests attention to the beauty of the gardens and nature; we had readings from the Tao and shared wine with Mother Nature and then broke a light bulb because it was environmentally the best way to nod to the Jewish tradition of breaking the glass. I think that drawing your guests attention to symbols throughout the ceremony is something that stays with them. I still have people asking me to send them our ceremony readings so they can refer to the readings about the doves that were released, that mate for life and were flying home that day. There are romantic symbols in everything- just do some research and let others know what those symbols stand for to you. Don't be afraid to do something different and to follow your heart and your own path. After all...that's what got you to this point in the first place. The other thing that I loved



was how many people offered their services as our wedding gifts. From music to the cake to the jewelry to the gown and tiara to hair being done. If you know that someone has a talent that will come in useful that day- don't be afraid to ask them. I found people were happy just to be a part of it all and it will save you on cost as well. More importantly, they are giving a bit of themselves to make your day special and that is a beautiful thing.

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