

## INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA BÁNHEGYI

*“My Mission is to Transmit the Couple’s Emotions to their Families...”*

**B**ARBARA BÁNHEGYI BECAME THE VERY FIRST FEMALE BILINGUAL MASTER OF CEREMONY 8 YEARS AGO, AND SINCE THAT TIME SHE HAS SUCCESSFULLY ADDED A NEW POSITION, WEDDING CONDUCTOR TO HER RESUME. IN HONOUR OF WORLD MARRIAGE DAY (OBSERVED ON THE SECOND SUNDAY OF FEBRUARY EVERY YEAR), WE MET UP WITH HER TO TALK ABOUT WEDDINGS, UNIQUE CEREMONIES, AND GORGEOUS LOCATIONS.

Photos by Krisztina Németh | Egy jó kép rólad

■ **HOW DID YOU END UP DOING WHAT YOU DO TODAY?**

It started out as a hobby. Back then master of ceremony didn't exist as a profession. I didn't know any bilingual wedding registrars, many times I was asked to do the interpreting at weddings. When I got the scripts in advance, I realized how boring and impersonal they were. Not only me, but couples also felt the need to make a positive change.

■ **WHAT DO COUPLES EXPECT FROM YOU?**

As I usually say, the wedding planner plans the show, the master of ceremony runs the show. I am contacted by couples who are looking for someone who will have everything under control. I work together with the wedding planner, I write the script, but on the big day all I have to do is to be a modern host. Prior to the special event I discuss with the couple how they envision the day to go, and I represent them in front of all the service providers. I make sure to get dinner served in time, and whenever there's a problem, I am the one to solve them. Interpreting is also very important task at bilingual weddings, because we want every guest to feel welcome.

■ **WHAT ARE THE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HUNGARIAN AND FOREIGN WEDDING TRADITIONS?**

Based on my experience, Hungarian and foreign ceremonies aren't very different. But there is something unique only we, Hungarians have: the tribute to parents. Also, while hiring a master of ceremony isn't usual abroad, the photographer, the band, and the food supplier all expect someone to take on the role of a coordinator. Sometimes it's difficult for foreigners to understand.

■ **HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR A CEREMONY?**

Before writing the script I take time to get to know the bride and the groom. They get „home work” in advance. Imagine it as a list of questions, some of which they should answer together, some individually. Later we come together to discuss their answers. It's like a wedding consultation where I take the role of a relationship coach. After learning about their true feelings, I make sure to create a script both personal, moving and emotional. My mission is to transmit the couple's emotions to their families through a touching ceremony.

■ **IF THERE IS ANY WAY TO SLASH THE WEDDING BUDGET, WHAT IS IT?**

Many couples try to cut costs on the wedding dress (they ask a seamstress to make the dress), or to save up money with DIY projects. In my opinion, it is too risky. It happened to me in the past that I had to secure the zip on the dress with a safety pin because it broke before the bride would even enter the hall. If there is anything to spare money on, it is the number of people they invite. It could also help to tie the knot on Wednesday or Thursday, because chances are they would receive a discount from numerous suppliers.

■ **HOW ACTIVE ARE GROOMS IN THE PROCESS?**

They are more and more enthusiastic thanks to the new trend of personalized weddings. Hence I get them involved in planning the ceremony, they are part of the wedding preparation process from the beginning. Sometimes it is challenging to get them to open up about their feelings, but it changes with time. Grooms realized the big day is no longer solely about the bride with them being only bio accessories. They give great theme ideas; if the couple loves hiking, they name the tables after mountains. If they are travellers, names can be written on tiny globes or mini luggage instead of place cards. Self-expression plays a large part in their participation.

■ **WHAT WAS THE MOST SPECIAL LOCATION WHERE YOU HAVE EVER CONDUCTED A WEDDING?**

Scotland, without a doubt. It was beautiful and very unique; both the city of Edinburgh, and the venue, Mansfield Traquair are breathtaking. Once I have conducted a wedding at the Hungarian State Opera House too, where I emerged from the orchestra pit.

■ **WHAT ARE THE MOST CHARMING WEDDING LOCATIONS IN, AND AROUND BUDAPEST?**

I really like Rókusfalvy Inn in Etyek, as well as the recently opened Wedding Wood, and Hernyák Estate, also known as Fűvészkert. In Budapest, Fisherman's Bastion and Kerengő (cloister - ed.) are my favourite wedding destinations. Fortunately more and more venues open around the capital city capable of serving as a great location for the ceremony, the reception and the wedding dinner too. I think, Hungary has a great advantage: in comparison to other European countries, it is much cheaper to organize a beautiful wedding here.

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