

THEY SAID YES!

Photo credit: Anthony Vasquez

BY SHARON ROTH

The January 17, 2009 wedding celebration of R&B recording artist Rietsa Lelekakis to former Mets catcher Paul LoDuca at the Pierre Hotel was a majestic winter fantasy of cascading white roses, hydrangas, calla lilies and orchids. Icy blue lighting, splashes of opaline crystal and flickering candlelight against a lush backdrop of crushed satin ivory linens completed the winter wonderland look. Guests toasted with passed mojitos, cosmopolitans and champagne before partaking of baby Maine lobsters, Bluepoint oysters, caviar, foie gras mousse, braised guava short ribs, filet mignon and rack of lamb. How they met: Two years before, when the bride was singing at a lounge in Long Island. Lo Duca asked the owner for an introduction, but the future bride hesitated. Lo Duca's sense of humor and persistence won the day! The proposal: Surprise at couple's home during bride's 28th birthday party. Bridal fashion choice: Ivory silk satin Ulla-Maija creation with crystal button detail and bubble-hem train. Traditional ivory cathedral veil. Bridesmaids in black Jim Hjelm. Wedding Planning and Design: Michael Russo, Celebrity Planner of Roses N Lollypops. Wedding Bounty: Bridesmaids received engraved Swarovski crystal jewelry boxes, Givenchy earrings, baby pink slippers and black pashminas; groomsroom were presented with personalized vintage plaques, bluetooth headsets, leather charging stations and cigars. All guests took home delectable Godiva chocolate wedding cakes, by Sylvia Weinstock. Fun facts: Exquisite Greek Orthodox ceremony was followed by traditional Greek "dollar dance," where the couple is showered with dollars while dancing with guests; Couple, along

with photographer Anthony Vasquez, braved the freezing January weather for a couple of hours to get outdoor shots. Honeymoon: Chillaxing with margaritas in Mexico.



The August 16, 2008 Metropolitan Club nuptials of preschool teacher Marisa Schoenfeld and Joshua Opperman, Founder of the wed site, "IDONOWIDONT" dot com – a web site that helps people sell engagement rings from divorces and broken engagements! – was an old-world Venetian fiesta of vivid reds, pinks, oranges, greens and golds. Custom-made plaid shantung silk-lined linens graced the Metropolitan Club's sumptuously elegant interior, accented by roses, calla lilies, orchids and hydrangas in a rainbow of sorbet hues. Guests feasted on Maine lobster, mustard and shallot-crust black angus filet mignon and danced until 3 a.m. to the strains of Unity, a local New York band. How they met: The couple met and dated briefly a few years ago, but lost touch. Bride ended up in the same graduate program at NYU as groom's mother. Fortuitously meeting again at graduation rekindled their romance! The proposal: Simply fabulous. Groom rented out private dining wine cellar at downtown eatery Philip Marie, hired a violinist to play and decorated it with flowers and a sign that read, "Will you marry me?" Bridal fashion choice: Gorgeous Oscar de la Renta tulle creation, "Sex in the City" worthy! Groom's preference: Armani tux. Fun facts: Guests enjoyed a bellini bar, in tribute to bride's favorite drink; groom's father, a musician, rose to sing with the band! Honeymoon: Monte Carlo, with hops to visit neighboring cities. Photo credit: Harold Hechler Associates



BY SHARON ROTH

On October 1, 2008, *7th Heaven* star Beverley Mitchell married accountant Michael Cameron in Ravello, Italy. Over 100 guests gathered at the Church of Santa Maria a Gradillo, including former costar and bridesmaid Jessica Biel with boyfriend Justin Timberlake. The cocktails and reception were held at the magnificent Villa Cimbrone, decorated with an array of candles, Vendela roses, hydrangeas, peonies and mini calla lilies. A star team flew to Italy to create Mitchell's special day, including celebrity event planner Michael Russo of Roses-n-Lollipops and photographer Anthony Vazquez. Russo and Vazquez were kind enough to share some of their "insider" tips with Social Life.



MICHAEL RUSSO

Celebrity event planner Michael Russo began his career more than fifteen years ago as a floral designer in New York. As the Creative Director for his full-service event planning company, Roses-n-Lollipops, Michael has worked in Europe and throughout the United States with offices in New York, California, and Florida. www.rosesandlollipops.com



What are some tips you can give us when picking a date and location for a wedding or special event?

1. One thing people should check before booking a place is that there is no major parade or marathon within 25 miles. This is a very important point that is often overlooked. Even if you think you have the ideal date and place, if a major event is taking place in the vicinity – change it. Not only will guests be late, but vendors can be too, which can be a nightmare!

2. This is a critical point: NO holiday weekends, DON'T assume your guests want to spend it with you. No reduction in wedding costs is worth a roomful of sullen, resentful celebrants. Unless you plan on eloping and it will just be the two of you – be considerate!

3. Most important – do your homework! Do thorough background checks on the venues, call around for recommendations, research places online, and read reviews. See how long your event spot has been in business and what kind of reputation it has. And read your contract carefully – especially the fine print!

ANTHONY VAZQUEZ

A new favorite among the celebrity event set, Anthony's gallery-worthy images push the limits of conventional event photography, providing each one of his clients with a personalized and visionary end product. Anthony sees clients in his Manhattan studio, and is also based out of Florida, available to meet with clients

from Palm Beach to South Beach. www.anthonyvazquez.com.

What are some of your favorite ideas for creative wedding photography?

1. I love doing anything that's really spontaneous and out of the box, and sometimes during a shoot we will come up with something fun and different and just run with it. I've shot brides in just about every setting – from running through vineyards to strolling in their wedding clothes in the meatpacking district. These are all creative and original ways to tie in the wedding location to the shoot. When we worked with Beverley Mitchell, the craziest idea was shooting the couple running in the Mediterranean and she did it...it was amazing!

2. Creating art out of wedding photography is something very special for me, and many brides enjoy the process of brainstorming with me on unique concepts. For example, one thing I really would like to try that I haven't done yet is shoot a bride under water in a flowing dress.

3. I have been receiving a number of requests lately for a "boudoir album" – gorgeous, elegant shots in bridal lingerie. This is not for everyone, obviously, but what a sensual and romantic way to surprise your groom and create an unforgettable memento of your wedding night!

