

Blending of Cultures at Vanderbilt



It is always a great learning and refreshing experience when planning a wedding with a couple from two very different cultures. Recently, I had the honor to plan the American/Indian wedding of Elizabeth Vargis and Nick Roberts. The couple's rich cultures and traditions blended together so perfectly that it created a unique style that was 'Over the Top' yet very personal.

When beginning the planning process, I took into consideration that the majority of the guests were from out of town and that this would be their first time visiting Nashville. For the out of town guests, Elizabeth and Nick wanted to create a fun yet elegant atmosphere where their guests could relax and enjoy the conveniences of the Nashville area. They chose the Vanderbilt area since both Elizabeth and Nick met at Vanderbilt attending Graduate School.

The kick off for their wedding weekend was a Mehndi Party on Friday afternoon at the Marriott Vanderbilt Hotel. During this party henna was applied to the bride's hands and feet. For this afternoon festivity, Laura Deane of the Marriott Vanderbilt arranged for a menu of assorted tea sandwiches, cavatelli pasta salad, cheese and fruit display, crab avocado tarts, sirloin meatballs, mini pizzas, petit fours and mini cheesecakes. This was a great opportunity for guests to get an introduction to one of the Indian wedding traditions.

The Sangeet Party followed the Mehndi Party later that evening.

At the Sangeet Party, Elizabeth and Nick wanted to give their guests a more non-traditional evening where they would be encourage to meet new people, eat different food, and dance! The seating was arranged so more people could sit together (like family style). They wanted to give their guests a taste of India with their choice of décor and menu.



The décor was full of vibrant colors and texture. Cerise (fuchsia), turquoise, and gold served as the color palette for this event. The draping by Visual Elements, lighting by Nashville Event Lighting, and custom linens by Graceful Tables transformed the room into the bride and groom's vision. Long banquet tables with cerise shantung linen lined the center of the room. Intermixed were round tables adorned with gold shantung linen and custom embellished overlays with fuchsia flowers and gold sequence. Turquoise linen covered the tall cocktail and buffet tables bringing the complete look together. The centerpieces by Village of Flowers were uncomplicated and tasteful with floating candles and coordinating colored rose petals. White panels of draping with turquoise up lighting created a partition between the dining area and the dance floor, giving the space further dimension. Additional draping in the middle section of the ceiling created a multi-colored, tent-like affect as guests were seated for dinner. Amber up lighting around the perimeter gave the space a warm glow. Textured pattern lighting for the dance floor and spotlights on the buffets and bar gave the room additional pizzazz.

As for the evening's menu, all the food was customized Indian catering, which the Marriott did in house. The eve-

ning began with passed hors d'oeuvres including masala idly, vada pav, and chicken 65. The dinner buffet included a variety of Indian cuisine including undhiu with sev and chutney, malai kofta curry, beef vindaloo, and mughalai chicken. Traditional Indian accompaniments such as naan bread, papadum, and cucumber raita rounded out the meal. Gulab jambun bread pudding in martini glasses and hot chai tea was served for dessert.

Friday evening's celebration was followed by a Christian/Indian ceremony at Vanderbilt's Benton Chapel followed by the reception at the Loews Vanderbilt. The locations for Friday and Saturday's celebrations followed Elizabeth and Nick's vision of having guests enjoy and explore the Vanderbilt area.

At the end of this wedding weekend celebration, guests took home RC Cola and Moon Pies as Nashville favors, the rich experience of the Indian culture, and the special memories that Elizabeth and Nick have for the Vanderbilt area. It was delightful planning with Elizabeth and Nick and incorporating each of their heritage and family traditions by the blending of two families.

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