

Two weddings and a big CLE celebration

By RITA KUEBER

Annie Duffy from Cleveland and Andrew Klein from Detroit attended college in Boston, then worked in Washington D.C. at the same time. They even attended some of the same events and parties, but didn't meet until 2017 while living in Chicago, just four blocks apart. In January 2018, the couple vacationed in Argentina, and in Ushuaia, a town called 'the end of the world' as it's on the country's southern tip. They took a tour boat to Isla Martillo, a penguin colony. There, surrounded by 'tuxedo-clad' aquatic birds, Andrew proposed, and penguins became one of their wedding themes.

Back home in Chicago, planning began for not one wedding, but two – a private ceremony in Vatican City and a larger celebration in Cleveland. The couple did all the planning. "There were language and time zone barriers to overcome but we are thrilled the way it came out," Annie says.

Andrew was just as involved. "The alignment between the two of us – our shared understanding was immediate. From getting engaged in a non-typical but comfortable way for us as travelers, and our shared love of bygone eras, working on the weddings just strengthened our relationship."

As a teenager on a family vacation to Rome, Annie happened to see a bride and groom, and a life-long dream of getting married at the Vatican was born. Working with her priest at Our Lady of Mount Carmel on Cleveland's west side, plus a wedding coordinator in Rome, the couple married at a small chapel, Sant' Anna dei Palafrenieri at the Vatican in September 2018 with 16 guests. Two days later Annie and Andrew participated in the Sposi Novelli, a newlywed blessing, administered by Pope Francis.

With the second celebration, the focus changed from the couple, to hosting 250 family and friends on December 1, 2018.

"It was important to have a celebration in Cleveland," Annie says. "We created a website to show off how special this city is." "You bring together a unique cross section of people from various times in your life, you want them to experience Cleveland the way you know it and love it," Andrew adds.

Annie's dad walked her down the aisle at Our Lady of Mount Carmel with music provided by children's chorus The Singing Angels. The reception was at the Ritz-Carlton's Silver Grille, a place Annie recalls fondly from her childhood when it was Higbee's.

Photos of the ceremony in Italy greeted guests. The Silver Grille's fountain had tall white candles in hurricanes, and a large white/ivory arrangement. The Ritz-Carlton special ordered the signature white cardboard ovens that kid's meals came in during the restaurant's heyday. Local guests also enjoyed an appearance by Mr. Jangling,



Annie Duffy Klein and her husband Andrew Klein married first in a chapel at the Vatican in Rome, then again on Cleveland's west side.

a costumed Santa's helper well-known to TV-watching kids in the '60s and '70s.

For her dress, Annie was inspired by the glamour of Grace Kelly. Annie used the same dress for both ceremonies, but with important changes. The custom-created ivory ball gown included long-sleeves, high-neck lace overlay, a wide cummerbund, and a short veil over a vintage beaded crown. In Rome, with a stringent dress code, she used a French Alençon lace cap sleeve top and coordinating cathedral length mantilla veil bordered the lace.

The colors changed as well. In the Baroque interior of the chapel Annie used light blue and pink for an ethereal look, then changed into a vintage ivory lace vintage dress for photos. In Cleveland she chose a long red mermaid dress with white elbow-length gloves. The party used colors from the Silver Grille itself, light and dark greens, and a black watch plaid also became part of the theme, with Andrew changing from a winter white dinner jacket to one in black watch plaid. The cake also matched the plaid, and penguins did appear on the wedding invitation. The level of detail came full circle.

As Annie says, "From the 'End of the World,' to the Vatican and back, we feel our journey from engagement

to marriage was a whirlwind of love and excitement. We thought through every detail and customized everything exactly how we wanted and in a manner that really spoke to our character, our style, and our love for one another."

Photos, details and more available at annieandandrew.com

Klein wedding details

Bridal Gown and Veil: Custom-made Sareh Nouri and Rousseau through Bella Bianca Bridal Couture (Chicago)

Groom Tuxedo and Shoes: Ralph Lauren

Florist: Stephen Tokar Event Design (Cleveland)

Wedding Cake and Desserts: Wendy Kromer Confections (Sandusky, Ohio)

Programs and place cards: Nico & Lala (Chicago & Nashville)

Cocktail and Dinner Entertainment: Sinatra in CLE Band (Cleveland)

Reception Entertainment: The Perfect Choice Band (Ohio and Michigan)



Brittany Matuska of Strongsville is having her mother's 1987 wedding gown redesigned by KSU fashion school alum, Laura Lynn Smith, of A Bride's Design in Avon.

KSU fashion alum continues her passion for bridal design

By PARIS WOLFE

Laura Lynn Smith always wanted to become a fashion designer. "Even as a child I was always making things," says the owner of A Bride's Design in Avon.

And so, after high school she chose the Shannon Rodgers and Jerry Silverman School of Fashion Design and Merchandising at Kent State University to reach her goals. "It has one of the top fashion schools in the nation and also offered the full college atmosphere and experiences," she says.

Not far into her freshman year she knew bridal design was her destiny. "I really enjoyed designing pieces that were sentimental, not just fast fashion. I wanted it to mean something and I really enjoyed the embellishment and decorative aspects in bridal."

She appreciated bridal design and was good at it. So good, in fact, her junior year, Smith won a design competition for her first bridal gown design. The contest had been sponsored by Simplicity Patterns Company. That pattern quickly became a top seller worldwide.

In 2003, a year after graduating from Kent State, Smith opened a bridal shop in Avon. A few years later, she combined that career path with designing the "Laura Lynn Collection" for Simplicity.

"I was able to work with Simplicity for about five years creating a few dozen dress designs," she says. "It was neat to see my designs were bought all over the globe."

Today she focuses her creative energy to design custom bridal gowns for women in Northeast Ohio. Brides have many choices today, she says. "For some brides a dream dress is regal like a ball gown and can make her look like that princess. For others it is a sexy, form-fitting dress that shows off curves and makes it easy to dance. Every body looks different in each dress. And my job is to make sure each bride gets exactly what she wants."

Custom design makes that possible. And, while many brides go with a more traditional look, Smith has created dresses using vintage doilies, tie-dye techniques and black-and-white stripes.

The possibilities are endless. "A designer can sit down with the bride and talk about everything that will make a perfect dress for her," says Smith. "We can also tweak or redesign an existing dress or make one from scratch."

Working with a family heirloom dress is quite common. In fact, some folks consider it good luck to do so. "Even if the dress cannot be reused it can be incorporated into another dress or used to make something simple like a belt."

Perhaps the most unusual heirloom reuse story is the following:

"There was one bride who, at 12 years old, saw her mother throw away her wedding attire. When her mother wasn't looking the young girl went dumpster diving to save the dress. Years later the bride used the dress to surprise her mother. We were able to clean it and redesign it for her on her wedding day."

Flutter Social pairs couples with wedding professionals

By CYNTHIA SCHUSTER EAKIN

When it comes to planning a wedding, couples can use all of the help that they can get. Flutter Social is the first social network developed to connect engaged couples with wedding and event professionals.

"Planning a wedding, or any large event for that matter, can be extremely stressful," Kaleigh Gallagher, the Cleveland-born-and-bred co-founder of Flutter Social said. "The stakes are high. Not only is the expense significant, but brides and grooms often feel a tremendous amount of pressure to execute a flawless event."

Gallagher said that she and co-founder Marcie Reilly met at Cleveland Clinic Innovations, where they were using their skills to help other people launch new products. "Marcie and I were both at a point in our lives where we were involved in planning a lot of weddings. I was maid of honor in two weddings at the same time. Marcie was planning her own wedding. We quickly realized that planning a wedding is like taking on a second job," she said.

"We noticed that ultimately you rely on your network to make a lot of the major decisions and we saw an opportunity to really streamline that process," Gallagher noted. "So, we started by building relationships. We built a strong network of event professionals and talked to thousands of people to really understand the pains associated with planning a wedding. We built a matchmaking algorithm that allows us to make personal recommendations on the best vendors for a couple. What we learned is that there is so much involved in planning an event and that giving couples access to a real professional planner, who works around their schedule, and all online, is really a game changer. We're used to on-demand, personalized experiences in all parts of our lives. Working with an event planner shouldn't be any different."

"Flutter Social is an online event planning service that delivers a truly personalized wedding planning experience," she explained. "Couples complete an event survey and hop on a video session to kick things off with their personal planner, who will work with them from beginning to end to help manage all of the pieces and parts that go into hosting a great event." Gallagher said this includes finding and hiring the best local businesses and managing all of the "to do's" through "day of" timelines. Flutter Social employs a network of professional event planners and clients are matched up with a professional who specializes in their style of wedding.

Couples fill out a form with the vision for their wedding, identifying their budget, the expected size of their guest list and the type of vendors they are looking to hire. In addition to the basics of cost and size, couples can choose words like modern, romantic or elegant to describe the style they want to see. They can also indicate whether there are particular business values, such as a commitment to marriage equality or local sourcing, that they want in a vendor. For couples, the platform is free. For vendors, there is a three-tiered subscription model.

"Flutter Social allows every couple to tap into the expertise of a professional event planner to help them plan their wedding day, like Stitch Fix for event planning. Your personal wedding planner is like having your own virtual assistant to help you throughout the entire wedding planning process," Gallagher added. "Flutter planners have industry expertise, insider connections and because they take the time to get to know you and your needs, they're really your secret weapon to help you and your inner circle of friends and parents enjoy the planning process and ultimately your wedding day."

In addition to event planners, Flutter Social matches

clients up with local businesses that best meet their needs and that they are most likely to hire. "We have 700 businesses on our website. This is a very creative industry. There are many female entrepreneurs," Gallagher said. "We started out by talking with hundreds of couples that had recently been married and asking for their recommendations. Then, we invited the businesses they recommended to work with us. We followed up by asking them to invite other businesses to join our site. We value the opportunity to work with these wonderful businesses and to share them with other people"

Gallagher and Reilly launched Flutter Social in Philadelphia, where Reilly is from, in 2016. Gallagher said that starting in the Philadelphia area made sense because it gave Flutter Social a larger footprint from which to start. A number of the vendors in Philadelphia serve a large area that includes Delaware, New Jersey and New York. Flutter Social then came to Northeast Ohio in Sept., 2018 and Gallagher moved back to Ohio to manage this segment of the market. "We are a remote team," she noted. According to Gallagher, they would like to expand their network to include other events and encompass other areas of the country.

"A wedding is the first major event a couple plans. This is our chance to work with couples as they grow into other social events," she explained. "We would like to expand to planning Bat and Bar Mitzvahs, and then to working with non-profits and corporate groups. We are really grateful to the people in Northeast Ohio and Pennsylvania who have helped us realize the success that we have seen so far." Gallagher said that Flutter Social has worked with more than 1,500 couples to plan their weddings.

Learn more about Flutter Social by visiting www.fluttersocial.com, or you can connect with Flutter Social on Pinterest, Instagram or Facebook.



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