



Guidelines For Hiring a Musician or Group

Here are a few tips on hiring musicians for any event. It probably won't cover every element of the players' contract, but it will provide a number of elements regarding things to expect and things the musician will probably need to know. It will also give you guidance in choosing the right musician for your job.

Style of Music:

What type of music do you want at your event.? A band or soloist that plays traditional, Celtic, old-time, ancient or classical music will be completely different than a group that plays contemporary or pop music.

First, ask the musician or band leader what type of repertoire they play, and this will let you know if this is the right music for your event. I play many styles of traditional music....Celtic, Old-Time American music, Contradance music, Royal Scottish Dance Music, Renaissance, Victorian, Medieval, and a limited number of Classical selections. I play all of these styles when I come as a solo act, but I also play in several different groups that specialize in one style or another. As a soloist I will ask you to choose tunes from my lists that reflect the style of music you desire.

Do you want music that stays quietly in the background while guests are eating or socializing, or do will you have a sit-down audience with the performers presenting a full show? If the event is a wedding, the musicians will be in the background visually, but the music is such an important part of the ceremony that you must make sure you hire musicians that understand your needs and requirements.

If the same musicians are to play for the reception, or if you need them for the reception only, will they play only background music, or will they play for dancing as well? If so, what type of dance do you want.... ballroom dancing, folk dancing? A band that plays for contra dancing or any kind of folk dancing should be able to provide a caller who will teach the dances to the guests.

Solo or Group?

Be aware of the space requirements for your musicians. A solo hammer dulcimer needs only about 4 or 5 sq. ft. of space. A duo with guitar, flute or violin will need about 7 sq. ft. Add 3 sq. ft. for each additional group member. My large string ensemble which includes hammer dulcimer, lap dulcimers, guitar, fiddle, autoharps and folk harp needs a minimum space of about 15' by 6'.

Information Required by the Musician:

You should provide the musicians with information they will need in order to quote a price.

They will need to know:

- * If the event is indoors or outdoors
- * How long you want them to play
- * How large is the event?
- * Will the music need amplification? If so, will a sound system be provided?
- * What music is desired? Example: a stage show? background music during a reception? music for a party or dance? Prelude music for a wedding, funeral or other serious occasion? Processional music for a wedding? Special music for a religious or community event? Educational presentation?
- * If you have specific pieces you want played this should be discussed before a price is quoted.
- * If other musicians are involved, in what capacity?
- * How close is the desired location to parking or a loading zone? Is there a long distance to carry the instruments? Are there stairs?

Some Things to be Aware Of:

If the musicians are hired to play for more than one hour, expect them to take a 10 - 15 minute break every hour after the first hour.

The musicians will probably need to arrive at least a 1/2 hour before the event to tune and set up. They will need to be informed of where to set up when they arrive and the facility must be available at that time for them to set up.

Acoustic instruments (harps, violins, dulcimers, guitars) cannot be located in direct sunlight or in a misting rain. The surface must be level, and should not be directly in front of an open fireplace or directly under an air conditioning vent. These locations affect the tuning and damage the delicate wooden soundboard.

If the event is outdoors don't expect the musicians to play without an adequate cover if it is raining, even if the rain is only a light mist. You should be prepared with alternative sites for the musicians in the event of rain.

If you have specific desires regarding the musicians' attire, you should address this

If the event is outdoors don't expect the musicians to play without an adequate cover if it is raining, even if the rain is only a light mist. You should be prepared with alternative sites for the musicians in the event of rain.

If you have specific desires regarding the musicians' attire, you should address this before hand (I.e. if you want Renaissance or Victorian dress, or pioneer outfits, or Western attire, or DON'T want them to wear the traditional formal black attire).

Some Special Information About Wedding Ceremonies:

You will need to make certain that the type of music will be allowed at the location of the event. Some churches and ministers are very particular about this and won't allow non-approved musicians or instruments to play at their churches.

Typical places within the wedding for music include:

- * Prelude (specify how long)
- * Seating of the mothers or other family
- * Processional for attendants
- * Processional for the bride
- * Candle Lighting ceremony
- * Communion
- * Hymns
- * Presentation of Gifts
- * Special Musical Selection
- * Recessional
- * Postlude

Be sure to specify all of the places within the ceremony where you want music when you first discuss the event with the musician. Adding new points for music at a later date could add to the price of the service. Also be sure to specify if another musician will be providing some of this music so that there won't be any confusion about who is covering which parts of the service.

If you expect the musicians to be present at the wedding rehearsal this should be specified before a price is quoted. If the musicians are to accompany a vocalist who doesn't regularly sing with them, an extra rehearsal will probably be necessary, and this will affect the price quoted.

If the musicians are playing processional and recessional music, they will need to be located where they can see when people are ready to begin and end these parts of the ceremony, or have someone to tell them when to begin and end.

Be sure to tell them how many mothers or other family members are being seated, how many attendants (male and female) are processing, and other information that will help them know when to begin the processional music for the bride's entrance. They will also need to know their exact cue to start the recessional. (Frequently the end of a prayer or the announcement of the couple.)

Give the musicians as much information as you can, and the service will go more smoothly. Ideally, provide them with a complete order of service for the ceremony.

I would like to help you plan your special event. Please contact me by email or by phone (281-370-9495). Peggy Carter

