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simchahs

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stresses Ryan. "The lessons were a nice reprieve for the four to six weeks leading up to the wedding. It was a great bonding experience. It was a great way to step away from the insanity of planning the wedding," says Ryan, an attorney, who describes himself as a "bit of a showman."

"When we did our first big spin, the crowd cheered. You feel like you are the romantic lead in a Hollywood movie," he says.

For Rachael, the first dance evoked a connection to "Dancing With The Stars" for the simple fact that she wore white satin shoes created by the very firm that outfits dancers on that hit TV show. "I actually wore ballroom dancing shoes as my wedding shoes," says Rachael. "They were very comfortable, looked great and the lessons helped break them in."

No doubt lessons serve many needs. Among them: adding confidence on the dance floor. "Most wedding couples like to do a dip at the end of their first dance. The key is how you get into the dip," says Pikesville resident Sofi Feeushehenko, a Towson Dance Studio instructor who teaches what the studio calls "Wedding Survival Dance Lessons." She taught Danielle and Bruce Shapiro a series of dance lessons prior to their September 2007 nuptials in front of 130 people at The Belvedere.

"Even though we hadn't picked our song by the first lesson — and we changed our music three times — Sofi was patient and enthusiastic," says Danielle. "She helped us with the flourishes." The couple learned a medium tempo fox trot to go with their final music selection of "Our Love Is Here To Stay" by George Gershwin.

Danielle, who enjoys dancing at clubs, knows ballet and African dance. She describes Bruce as a novice.

Those offering wedding dance lessons include:

- Towson Dance Studio (towsondancestudio.com)
- Arthur Murray (arthurmurray.com)
- Beginning Ballroom (beginningballroom.com)
- Two Left Feet Dance (twoleftfeetdance.com)

Some firms like Wedding Dance Specialists exclusively target the prenuptial market (theweddingdancespecialists.com)



PHOTO: ARTFUL WEDDINGS/SACHS PHOTOGRAPHY

However, he's not alone. "Ninety-nine percent come new to the dance world," says Ms. Viner, speaking about couples who sign up for prenuptial dance lessons.

Dance background — or lack thereof — hardly matters. "We had a lot of fun together," says Danielle. "I knew there'd be a lot of laughing and stepping on each other's toes. We relaxed. We practiced at home. We saw improvement."

They even tried out their footwork at the shop where Danielle purchased her wedding gown. "I had bought a sheath dress — hemmed close to my toes with a small train in the back. But I was worried that I'd step on the dress during the first dance. So Bruce came over to Vassari, where we danced a few fox trot moves around the store."

Bruce gives words of wisdom to other grooms. "It was a lot of hard work, but it was fun. My advice is to take lessons if you are going to have a wedding."

Although it's most often the bride's idea to take lessons, grooms take it in stride. "I thought a lot of guys were not going to be too interested, but most want to learn," says Ms. Viner. "They may be afraid at the beginning, but for ballroom dance the man leads. They enjoy that." □

Calling Card

Invitations offer a packed house of options.



PHOTO: PHOTOS.COM

Lauren Geldzahler
 Proofreader

Custom designers are introducing clever alternatives to the basic bi-fold wedding and b'nai mitzvah invitation. Multi-layered and folder style invitations are very becoming, as is the lesser-seen scroll style.

One new idea is the invitation that features different layers of paper. "One layer will announce the ceremony, another will announce a party, perhaps another will announce a brunch or extra celebratory dinner or get-together, and the last layer will be the RSVP card. It will be detachable,

designer Judy Sugar Bloom. "Another reason is that a lot of people are having destination weddings."

According to Ms. Block, another popular idea, for both weddings and b'nai mitzvah, is the folder style. "Everything fits into the pocket, all the cards," Ms. Block explained.

"Pocket-folds are very popular right now," agreed Ms. Taylor. "We use different funky envelopes that fold open to multiple pieces tucked inside. There's room for the reply card, return envelope, reception, directions and so on."

Popping up more and more is the use of scrolls as invitations. "We make

"The growing trend is to go to a boutique because invitations are always so expensive and when you go to a bigger company they often come out wrong."

— Ellene Pomerantz

with a perforated edge for easy tearing," said Ruth Block of Classic Calligraphy Design and Print.

Destination weddings, in exotic and faraway places, call for the multi-layer style. "There are a lot of destination weddings right now, so brides are getting multiple pieces to their invitations," said Melissa Taylor, owner of the Simply Noted boutique.

"Save-the-dates are big, because families are living farther away from each other than before," echoed invitation

handmade scrolls, mailed in boxes, tied together with either a bow for weddings and bat mitzvahs, or with paper for bar mitzvahs. We use wooden finials and dowels," said Ellene Pomerantz, owner of Write Style Inc..

The difference between the invitations for the two types of ceremonies, according to Ms. Block, is in the paper — different colors and

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