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139

WEDDING
SPECIAL

RECEPTION



THE EXTRA FACTOR

The hand-beaded details on Fiona's dress (left) were designed to match her headpiece by William Chambers (williamchambers.co.uk); Fiona attached textured hearts from Victoria Health to the soles of her ivory satin shoes (below, bridalroguegallery.co.uk); her trailing bouquet was made of sweet peas, freesias and stephanotis.

LONDON IS FOR LOVERS

For their capital-city celebration, Fiona and Niels lined up a Routemaster bus and a church straight out of the movies

Fiona Sanson was sitting on the top deck of the number 139 bus when she realised she was falling for Niels Bellinger. The pair had met just a few hours earlier at the birthday drinks of a mutual friend and Niels had insisted on waiting with her until her bus arrived. "As the bus pulled away, I had a definite sense that he was different," says Fiona. "When I looked down and saw him I had a sudden urge to get off and carry on talking to him."

It was only fitting, then, that a red Routemaster would play a supporting role at Fiona and Niels' cinema-worthy London wedding six years later. On 30 May 2009, the couple married in a traditional ceremony at the Priory Church of St Bartholomew the Great, a breathtaking 12th-century structure that has appeared in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Shakespeare in Love*. Afterwards, the wedding party piled on to the bus, bound for a dinner reception on the city's South Bank. "As a surprise, I'd arranged for the bus to be mocked up as the 139, and Niels laughed when he saw it," Fiona recalls. "I told him that, this time, he wasn't allowed to put me on the bus home!"

Though Fiona, 37, and Niels, 39, didn't set out with a strict theme, quintessential London

elements began to define their day. "We simply created and organised exactly what we liked for each stage," explains Fiona. "In retrospect, the outcome was a classic London wedding, but one that reflected the aspects of the city that we have known and loved over the years."

The reception was held at The Swan, a restaurant attached to Shakespeare's Globe theatre that has sweeping views over the River Thames and across to St Paul's Cathedral. For the intimate, dinner-party-style meal, the group sat at a single large table so everyone could chat easily. "We wanted all our guests to feel included, and The Swan's ethos of serving British seasonal produce perfectly fitted with our love of entertaining at home," says Fiona. "I was also brought up eating family meals around the table, so sharing good food and wine in a relaxed, informal setting was just perfect for us." After dinner, party band City Strut (a recommendation from the venue) played pop tunes until the party wound down around midnight. "We filled the dancefloor until the very last song," says Fiona.

To aid her transition "from a jeans and Converse girl into a bride", Fiona called upon dress designer Jacqueline Byrne, who





fashioned a 1930s-style gown with delicate fluted sleeves. Swarovski crystals from Fiona's mum's wedding dress and satin beads were also used to incorporate a Scottish thistle, representing the bride's Scottish heritage, and a Danish marguerite daisy, emblematic of the groom's roots, on the back of her gown.

"We decided not to have bridesmaids or ushers, but my best friend Jill was dubbed my best woman. I asked Jacqueline to create Jill's outfit in any colour and style she liked," Fiona says. Jill chose a simple, long dress in soft blue, and teamed it with a matching bolero and corsage. "The night before the wedding, Jill and I were pinching ourselves at the dresses we'd chosen! I'm renowned for my love of a black wardrobe, and the thought of wearing a white wedding dress was a little bit daunting, but the whole process was the most exciting journey I've ever been on."

FIONA'S ADDRESS BOOK

Photography Polly Alexandre
(alexandreweddings.com)

Bride's dress Jacqueline Byrne
(jacquelinebyrne.co.uk)

Venue The Swan at the Globe
(swanattheglobe.co.uk)

Invitations Emily & Jo (emilyandjo.co.uk)

Church flowers Michelle at Feltons Florists
(feltonsflorists.co.uk)

Venue flowers Annie and Ann at
Paula Pryke Flowers (paula- pryke- flowers.com)

Cake Tina K (tinak.co.uk)

Routemaster bus ThisBus.com (thisbus.com)

Music City Strut (citystrut.co.uk)



Fiona & Niels

Spring Feast

Warm Baked Bread

Spring Vegetables & Charred Broccoli

Almond Salad

Smoked & Cured Fish

Pork & Vegetable Terrine

Stuffed Mussels, Braised Lamblets & Tomato Sauce

Baked Squash & Sage Gnocchi

Even-fed Chicken, Sage & Pearl barley stuffing

Roast Yelloweye Scump, Roasted Red Onion

Baked Potatoes, Garlic & Parsnips

Seasonal Vegetables

Cherry & Almond Tart

Tea, Coffee & Chocolates



LOCAL FLAVOUR

The Swan at the Globe's Feast menu (centre right) included locally sourced fish, and pork and vegetable terrine. Striking candelabra and chandeliers helped set the romantic mood.

WHO'S FOR SCRABBLE?

Fiona used vintage racks and tiles from the iconic game as place cards and favours, and made a Scrabble-style table plan with guests' names branching off their own.

