



  
JOE & ARIEL  
WHEN November 7, 2010  
WHERE The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore  


# Best of Both Worlds

The wedding of Ariel Aili Huang and Joe Craven shows that the customs of two very different cultures can come together to make a most unique celebration



Nothing about the romance between Ariel Aili Huang and Joe Craven is typical. They had met in 2001 under unexpected circumstances in the now-closed Liquid Room (she gave him her number in a game of dare with her friends), didn't start dating seriously for a while at first because of a 14-year age gap between them, and after being an item for nine years, finally got engaged after a surprise proposal in a helicopter flying over the Niagara Falls).

Even their wedding on November 7, 2010, was an unconventional one. Ariel is a Singaporean Chinese graduate student, and Joe an American Jew working as an investment banker, which makes their "fusion" nuptials a new experience for many guests.



After a whole morning of photo-shooting, the wedding officially began in the late afternoon. They signed a Jewish marriage contract in front of a rabbi and witnesses. The traditional Jewish ceremony then began at The Gallery in The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore. It involved praying, singing, blessings by the rabbi, and an exchange of vows and rings. To symbolise the beginning of their marriage, Joe had to smash a glass by his foot. With the end of the Jewish rituals came the Chinese tea ceremony in a private room.

Meanwhile, guests were treated to an open bar, canapés and a live photo studio in a setting that was themed “The Enchanted Fantasy”. It featured a wishing tree for family and friends to pen their blessings, and a large wedding gazebo made of phalaenopsis, vanda and dendrobium orchids – the very ones grown in the farms of Ariel’s family, who owns Zion Orchids Enterprises.

The dinner banquet started as evening came, and 250 guests were welcomed into the Grand Ballroom, which was dressed as a magical world of orchids. Round and rectangular tables were configured to play on space, and they were surrounded with 2-metre-tall tree-like arrangements featuring dangling vanda orchids and tea-lights. The focal point of the ballroom was a huge dance floor encircled with tall floral arrangements. The food was a five-course fusion dinner with a sumptuous and colourful dessert spread, while entertainment was provided by a big band that played lively music for dancing.

During the banquet, the rabbi gave his blessings over food and wine, following which there were speeches by the best man and maid-of-honour. The guests had a nice









HAIR & MAKEUP TG Goh  
FLORIST FOR BRIDAL PARTY BOUQUETS  
AND BOUTONNIERES  
Boenga  
FLORIST FOR BANQUET  
Fiore Dorato Decorations  
WEDDING PLANNER AND CONCEPT DESIGNER  
Heaven's Gift  
PHOTOGRAPHY Wan Sheng/Feldberyl Images  
VIDEOGRAPHY Yang/Substance Films  
BRIDE'S OUTFITS  
Silhouette The Atelier, Tan Yoong,  
Qun Kua (Guangzhou)  
GROOM'S OUTFITS Canali

surprise when an acrobatic lion dance troupe gave a dramatic performance after the yam seng toast. And while the couple had decided against the full-fledged Jewish wedding hora dance, during which they would have had to sit on separate chairs that guests would lift into the air, the bridal posse felt the celebrations would not feel authentically Jewish and arranged for it to be done anyway. "There were moments when I thought I'd be thrown off, but I'm glad my friends took control. It was indeed unforgettable," says Ariel.

As for highlights that were personally memorable, Joe says he was pleasantly taken aback and deeply moved by a short video interview made by the bride, featuring interviews with his friends and family. A self-professed perfectionist, he was also impressed that the entire wedding, planned by Heaven's Gift right down to the minute details, went so smoothly.

For Ariel, great moments were plentiful. She admits to screaming in delight when she saw her beautiful bridal bouquet made by Boenga, taking many candid shots, and also being touched by an offer of a pair of cushion slippers from the banquet manager after she took off her heels and began to dance barefoot.

And of course, the high points on Ariel's wedding day include parading the four breathtaking dresses she'd spent so much time and effort in getting made. She travelled all the way to Guangzhou, China, to customise a red hand-embroidered *kwa* at Qun Kua. "This outfit alone is an exquisite piece of artwork and hopefully, I can hand it down to my kids," she adds.

Her white wedding gown was, on her request, adapted from Gwen Stefani's wedding gown design, and made at Silhouette The Atelier. The cheongsam she'd been dreaming of materialised after local couture designer Tan Yoong managed to source for a hard-to-find fabric design. Her most-loved dress was a short, sparkly dancing dress with fairy wings, also tailored by Tan Yoong. She says, "It was perfect for a woman who still believes in fairytales and yet pleases the flamboyant party girl." ❧

