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# Wedding EXPERTS

*Our panel of experts answer your wedding planning, shopping and design questions*

## JESS BRICHTO

is founder of Start the Dance, which offers personalised first dance wedding lessons.  
[startthedance.co.uk](http://startthedance.co.uk)

**Q** *We are terrified about our first dance and don't know how we'll carry it off. What do you suggest?*

**A** You are not alone! We find couples fall into three broad groups. Many are terrified about dancing in front of a crowd. Some want guidance without looking as if they've had dance lessons. We also work with couples who have a big idea and would like our team's help to create an original choreographed routine.

Mastering the first dance is a confidence-building process. We consider what you are trying to achieve and also practical details, such as style of music, the size of the space and what you'll be wearing. We work on elements such as where to stand and how to hold each other. We also help you plan the start and end – for instance, cues to move onto the dancefloor and then cues for bridesmaids/groomsmen to join you or the DJ to up the tempo. Typically, within one to two classes couples tell us they have one less thing to panic about on the day. For a more complex first dance, our UK-wide network offers expertise in everything from ballroom to disco, street and Indian classical. Making time to work out your routine with a professional – whether you want a graceful waltz or a complex storytelling dance – is the best way to own that dancefloor.

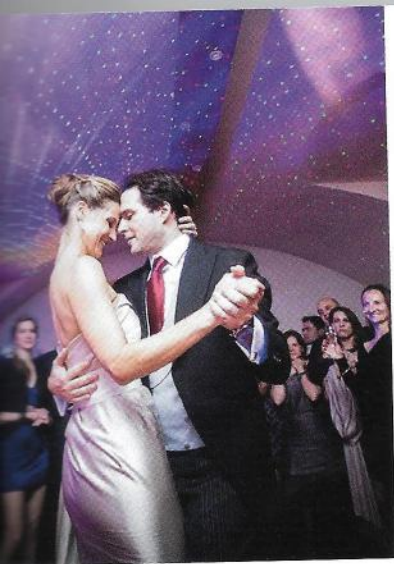
## TIM HANBURY

is founder of Apollo Event Consultants, which specialises in weddings, parties and events.  
[apollo-ec.co.uk](http://apollo-ec.co.uk)

**Q** *We're thinking of marrying in the country, perhaps a marquee at land near my family home. What are the key considerations?*

**A** Around 90 per cent of events we organise are held in marquees. They are a fabulous option, but there are a number of considerations.

Some venues have a marquee up on a semi-permanent basis. If you're considering this option, start by checking if there will be another event on the same day. Everyone



## CLAUS STIG CHRISTENSEN

is CEO of BookAclassic, which specialises in iconic and unusual vehicle hire.

[bookaclassic.com](http://bookaclassic.com)

wants to feel their day holds some exclusivity so this question should be top of your list, along with whether you can use your own planner and suppliers. Also find out how long the structure has been up and how often interiors – for example, carpets – are replaced. Similarly, do find out if linings, furniture and dance floor can be changed to suit your theme. And always make sure it has a wooden floor, just in case it rains! Other practicalities include finding out how long you get to decorate the marquee, if a duty electrician is included in the hire and if you have access to your own loos.

In my opinion, a private house or dedicated events space is always the best option as you have a blank canvas. As gorgeous as it looks, ensure the land is flat and not subject to issues at particular seasons of the year. You also need good access, parking for guests and room for a generator. While you should have free rein when it comes to style of marquee, do get a few quotes – cheaper is never better. In this instance, a planner is worth their weight in gold. We offer an unbiased opinion, will undoubtedly have been there and done that, can recommend suppliers and have solutions to any problems along the planning journey.

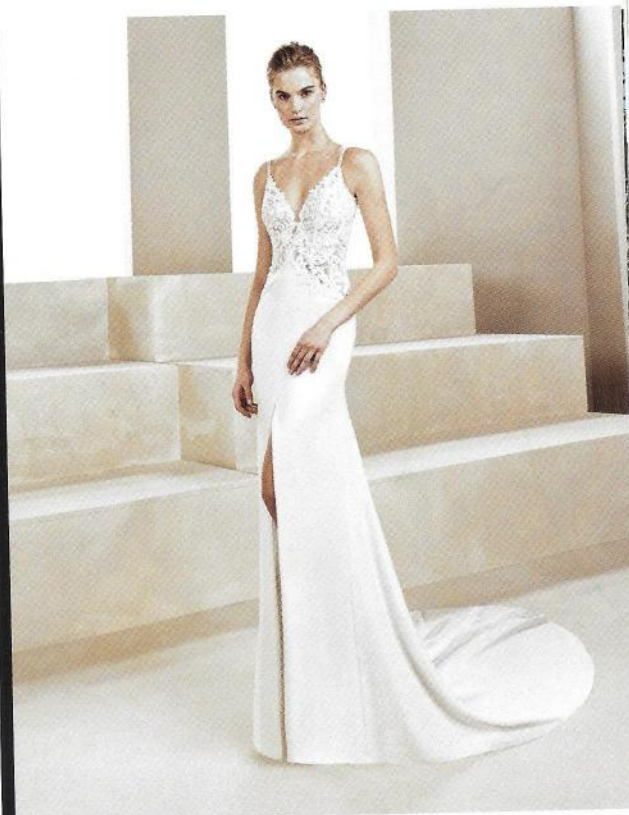
**Q** *I want to surprise my partner with an unusual wedding car. What are my choices and what about insurance?*

**A** We offer classic vehicles of all varieties and sizes. In the UK, the Ford Mustang has been particularly popular recently. American ‘muscle’ cars such as Chevrolet Impala, Dodge Charger and Ford Mustang have also seen a dramatic increase in popularity. We clearly see different trends, and for us this has been the year of US cars.

For something different, Fiat 500 and classic Volkswagen vans are popular. Wedding couples don’t seem to care that there is less than no space in a Fiat 500 for a wedding dress and two or three people – it’s just part of the fun! Couples are also hiring iconic London taxis, Golf GTIs – even big American trucks and real fire trucks. They are monsters, but certainly impress guests when you turn up at the ceremony.

Around 25 per cent of the cars we offer are available as self-drive. These tend to be rare or valuable models but the owners have special insurance. Other cars in our collection are chauffeured, so you can sit back, enjoy champagne and know that a skilled driver is behind the wheel. **19**

## Wedding Planner **ASK THE EXPERT**



## BOA Boutique

*Sheila Harding worked in fashion with stellar names before establishing BOA, home of international bridal designers and her own choice label*

I have always been passionate about fashion and worked with Selfridges and Bruce Oldfield, which I loved. But then the opportunity arose to take on these wonderful premises right on Richmond Hill, and the rest is history. We have three bridal rooms, and that means lots of choice for brides and members of the wedding party.

My own Sheila Harding label is strongly influenced by my experience listening to and working with brides. All gowns are made right here, using fine silks and French laces, and our way of working offers scope to get a really bespoke look. This in-house approach means we also offer flexibility with designer labels. We offer a made-to-measure approach with our British-made Lyn Ashworth gowns. We’re also very excited about the

new Alma Novia collection from Rosa Clará – exclusive to us in the UK. These are truly wonderful dresses, with excellent tailoring and fabrics. Here, there’s always the option to make subtle alterations, such as adding sleeves to a sleeveless dress.

Each of our bridal labels – which also include Olvi’s Lace, Louise Bentley and Ivory & Co – offers something different. My approach has never been to push any one label (including my own!), but rather to help people find the right gown. We offer free consultations lasting an hour-and-a-half, so lots of time for people to explore possibilities. My biggest advice for brides is to have an open mind – things never look the same on a hanger so it’s worth trying them on. Every bride is unique, and it is incredibly rewarding when we find their perfect dress. **20**



*BOA Boutique is located at 8 Richmond Hill, Richmond-upon-Thames. For appointments and to find out more about the collections, visit [boa-boutique.co.uk](http://boa-boutique.co.uk)*