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## IS THERE A MAESTRO IN THE HOUSE?

**BRAMWELL TOVEY:**  
Vancouver conductor  
saves wedding day for  
British couple **NEWS A3**



Vancouver Symphony Orchestra music director Bramwell Tovey played piano at Lucy and Sam Taylor's wedding. PAUL SEWTER — THE ADVERTISER

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# Vancouver's maestro saves U.K. wedding

**MATRIMONY:** Bramwell Tovey fills in on piano after musician stuck in traffic

BY LAURA STONE  
STAFF REPORTER

It was a musical emergency.

A young British couple was without a soundtrack for their wedding. But Vancouver maestro Bramwell Tovey had the pitch-perfect prescription.

Last Saturday, Tovey, music director for the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, had just arrived in Norwich, in the east of England, when he received a phone call.

A young husband-to-be named Sam Taylor had just burst into the hall where Tovey would soon be conducting the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain, as part of a summer tour.

Taylor's wedding pianist was stuck in traffic and he was frantically looking for a replacement — or at the very least, a CD.

The youth band's administrator, Philip Biggs, knew British-born Tovey was in town. He called him up and directed him to nearby St. Stephen's chapel.

"I didn't think twice about it," said Tovey, who also conducts with the L.A. and New York philharmonics and has been married 12 years. "Music is something that really accompanies you in all the great moments in your life."

Without time to change, Tovey arrived five minutes before the scheduled nuptials — looking less than formal.

"I felt very sorry for the bridegroom, because I thought to myself, 'Here he is. It's the first important decision he has to make about his future married life, and he lets this very tousled-hair-looking eccentric, with a T-shirt and shorts play the piano at his wedding,'" said Tovey, who returned to Vancouver on Monday.

"And he's probably thinking, 'Oh my God. I hope he's not a loser.' Because otherwise, his wife wouldn't be very impressed."

Luckily, there was no time for judgments. Tovey was ushered into the centuries-old medieval church, past the guests in "gorgeous clothes," to the grand piano.

He was hastily told that the bride's lifelong dream was to walk down the

aisle to Cole Porter's "Night and Day." "I didn't have time to do anything other than sit down and get on with it," said Tovey.

As bride Lucy Taylor arrived in her handmade dress, Tovey launched into her desired tune. After that, the playlist was up to him.

"They wanted show tunes, love songs. Very unorthodox in a way. So I played, 'I Only have Eyes for You,' 'A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square,'" he said.

"When they were signing the register, I played some Rachmaninoff. 'Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini Variation 18,' which is a very famous romantic piano tune."

As the couple walked out of the hall, Tovey launched into the traditional Mendelssohn march, for the simple reason that he didn't know what else to do.

"I'd been given no instructions as to what to play when she walked out. And I thought, 'Well, I can't play the boogie-woogie.'"

Tovey played for about 25 minutes, on and off. After the ceremony, the Taylors shook his hand.

One woman asked him if he had ever made a CD. Tovey, who has won a Grammy and two Junos and has released a collection of Gershwin tunes, said he would send her one in the mail.

It wasn't until the couple Googled Tovey's name to find his e-mail address to thank him that they realized who the maestro was.

In an e-mail sent to Tovey on Thursday, Lucy Taylor wrote: "It was simply wonderful what you did for us, and you made the happiest day of our lives just that bit more special."

Local British newspapers picked up on the story, and Tovey and the Taylors have since been inundated by calls from the British media, including BBC and the *Daily Telegraph*.

"It's a bit bonkers, really," said Tovey. "Hoopla's fun and everything else, but it was her big day, not mine. The important thing was that the ceremony was so incredible."

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