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SUMMER 2006/SPECIAL ISSUE

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HIGH BUDGET

The Harold Pratt House, 58 E. 68th St., at Park Ave.; 212-434-9400; cfr.org

LOCATION

Once the home of Harold Pratt, son of oil tycoon Charles Pratt, the **Harold Pratt House** now houses the Council on Foreign Relations. Fees for the mansion start at \$5,000 for access to a three-room suite, ballroom, and library. The ballroom fits only 130, so you may also want to rent the adjoining **Peterson Hall** (which fits up to 170). For a European-mansion-style reception, start with drinks upstairs, then bring guests to the Hall for dinner and dancing; or, have drinks in the drawing room and later progress to the stately ballroom. Whatever combination you choose, you'll utilize the marble staircase, the house's most stunning feature.

CATERING

For cocktails, focus on high-end appetizers like foie gras truffles. Set up seafood on sparkling ice slabs. A caviar station, with waiters to hold your drinking glass while you spoon caviar into blinis, is a chic twist on "self-service." Break the dinner up into tasting courses. Caterer **Olivier Cheng** (212-625-3151), who has worked in the Pratt House, recommends the following: mushroom soup, fish en papillote (to be opened by waiters with silver scissors), and lamb. Later, serve dessert in the library; offer cheeses with port and fruit. For the cake, a croquembouche has European flair, but have a white buttercream cake from **Sylvia Weinstock Cakes** on hand as well (212-925-6698).

MUSIC

A soloist for the processional will bring tears to your guests' eyes. Or, for an ethereal touch, invite a children's choir (**Grace Church**; 212-254-2000). For the main event, bring in **Starlight Orchestras & Productions** (212-595-0999). Have them play jazz during cocktails and Continental music during dinner. The two marquee groups, led by **Valerie Romanoff** or **Marianne Bennett**, are fifteen-member orchestras, with four vocalists each, and they can play everything from Frank Sinatra to Beyoncé and the Black-Eyed Peas. Taye Diggs and Idina Menzel asked Starlight to play at their wedding, as did Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones.

FLOWERS & DÉCOR

A color scheme of silver and white is crisp and classic, say Hanlin and Zabinski. Long-stem white Dutch tulips are striking and refined. To create a powerful backdrop for the ceremony, use silver organza overlays and an arch extending the length of the aisle (courtesy of florist **Stonekelly**, from \$25,000; 212-245-6611). For the rest of the décor, show off your monogram. Print it on your aisle runner, menu, program, and favors—you can even display it on the dance floor using a gobo filter. Keep in mind that the only thing the Pratt House supplies is the space; for rentals, look for china rimmed in silver, crystal wine glasses, and linen hemstitch napkins.



MEDIUM BUDGET

632 on Hudson, 632 Hudson St., nr. Horatio St.; 212-620-7631; 632onhudson.com

LOCATION

Located on the edge of Greenwich Village, **632 on Hudson**, a 5,000-square-foot nineteenth-century Tuscan-style townhouse with three floors of fabulous antiques, is the individualist couple's dream come true. Two working fireplaces, an open kitchen with a twelve-foot trestle table, 40-foot atrium, palatial bedrooms and magnificent baths make it ideal for imaginative party configurations and offbeat elements. The rooftop garden with a gazebo, pavilion, and recently installed Japanese temple serves as the ultimate Zen locale to exchange vows. The entire house rents for \$7,000 to \$9,000 for one evening.

CATERING

A party needs to flow, so consider the vertical nature of the space and begin everything simultaneously. Pass hors d'oeuvre and run a buffet at the same time to avoid lines. Call on **Olivier Cheng** for morsels of bresaola with goat cheese and white-truffle honey and porchetta tonnato. Skip mixed drinks and stock the bar with various white and red wines and the couple's favorite champagne. Offer guests a cup of sake when they enter the roof garden. Later, unveil a dessert buffet of New York's "greatest hits" in the master bedroom: Try Billy's Bakery cupcakes, Beard Papa's cream puffs, and William Greenberg's brownies.

MUSIC

Eager to get the party started, this couple might want to mingle before the ceremony. Position four gospel singers, dressed in black denim and dress shirts, on the top floor to fill the house with celebratory spirituals as everyone arrives. Secure local talent through **MTA's Music Under New York** program (mta.nyc.ny.us)—whose musicians play about town, so you can see them beforehand. To kick off the reception, look to high-energy dance music by **Synergy** from **On the Move Events** (212-229-1009). As a band-D.J. combination, this ensemble features live musicians backed by great CDs, which means a big sound for a not-so-big budget.

FLOWERS & DÉCOR

This space is already exquisitely decorated, so continue with the Tuscan theme. Blum recommends florist **Stonekelly**, and choosing earthy botanicals: crates of clementines, enormous pots of herbs, terra-cotta planters with cascading ivy, and an artful cornucopia of pomegranates, kumquats, champagne grapes, love apples, and walnuts in their shell for the centerpieces. Bring it together with brown velvet Fruitwood Ballroom chairs and rosewood-handle flatware. For the rooftop garden, let the temple inspire you, and incorporate Asian accents: Welcome guests with the smell of incense and hand out silk kimonos if it's chilly.