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Broadway Bride

After an 11-year romance, Linda Eder and Frank Wildhorn, *Jekyll & Hyde*'s leading lady and composer, say "I Do!"

By Sheryl Berk

This was their moment. Standing beneath a blue sky, surrounded by rolling hills and lush green pastures, Linda Eder and Frank Wildhorn became Mr. and Mrs. on Sunday, May 3.

The setting was the couple's 1920s farmhouse in upstate New York, and they were surrounded by 200 of their closest friends and family. Some had flown all the way from Europe; others had raced to attend the reception after performing Broadway matinees.

"It was the best party of my whole life," Eder gushes. "Our home was filled with so much love."

Forgoing hotels and catering halls, the couple agreed the wedding would take place in their own backyard beneath a small tent. "We just closed on the house in January," Eder says. "It has an old grass tennis court and four acres of land, and we took one look and said, 'What a great place to get

married!' It felt comfortable and informal, which is very us."

But it wasn't the first time

time," she says. "We thought about it, then we got so busy, then we thought about it again."

And so it went for several years. The pair met in 1987: She was competing on *Star Search*; he was producing a record and thinking about staging *Jekyll & Hyde*.

"The chemistry was instantaneous," Wildhorn says. "Electric. I knew from the second I met her, she was *the* one — not just for my show, but forever."

Since then, Eder has been Wildhorn's muse. "When I'm sitting at a piano, it's Linda's voice I hear in my head," he says. Besides *Jekyll & Hyde*, he has written several original pop songs for her albums, including her latest, *It's Time* (Atlantic).

Next spring, Eder will star in Wildhorn's new Broadway-bound



Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wildhorn pose with their "flower dogs," Lucy and Trilby.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELKE ROSTHAL

musical, *Havana*. "It's such a joy to work together," she says. "Some people complain that they don't like to mix personal and professional, but we're a team, in all senses of the word. We complement each other."

Truth be told, the couple couldn't be more opposite. "Linda's shy — she won't even sing in the shower!" Wildhorn laughs. "I'm louder. She was raised on a farm in Minnesota, while I was a Harlem boy. Maybe that's why we're such a perfect match. We bring out the best in each other and we learn from each other. I've even learned how to ride horses. Not bad for a city kid! Linda makes me feel like there's nothing I can't do if we do it together."

Marriage, they both insist, was just a technicality. "We've been together so long, we've felt married," Eder says. "It was just a question of fitting it into our hectic schedule. I thought I would be done with *Jekyll & Hyde* and we'd get married, but after buying our house here on the East Coast, I decided to stay in the show till October when I start my concert tour. There was always something exciting happening for us. I didn't want to rush it, throw it together. I wanted it to be perfect — a fairy tale."

And it was, starting with Wildhorn's romantic proposal two years ago on a vacation in Maui. "I

details and wedding gown shopping ("A white satin Vera Wang sheath, the first one I tried on!") in between eight shows a week, recording sessions, and concert dates. "I made every single one of the invitations [a framed one now hangs in her dressing room at the Plymouth Theater]," she says. "I'm a hands-on kind of girl."

She also got by with a little help from her *Jekyll & Hyde* friends: Prop designer Michael Pilipski built a three-tier platform for the cake (created by a local bakery), and her dresser, Beth Durham, was appointed honorary wedding coordinator. Just hours before the ceremony, Eder was in the backyard arranging mini-chocolate mousse cakes ("Frank's favorite") and scattering roses on the buffet tables.

"She was tying silk flowers onto our two German shepherds, Lucy and Trilby, and picking out the soundtrack for the DJ," Wildhorn recalls. "What a woman! She does everything with such passion — singing, painting, even building a sidewalk in front of our house. If she wants something done, she makes it happen."

The weather, however, was one thing Eder couldn't control. When all the guests were seated, and her hair and makeup (by Miano Viel Salon) were picture-



The Eders (l.) and Wildhorns (r.) join their kids in front of the newlyweds' new home.



***Jekyll & Hyde* star Robert Cuccioli made it to the reception after his Sunday matinee performance.**



The bride cuts the cake. (Note the individual chocolate mousse cakes arranged underneath.)

woke up, and Frank had put the ring under my pillow," she says. So Eder got to work, squeezing in

Extended Engagement

Kristin Chenoweth and Marc Kudisch

As if planning a marriage between two people in show business weren't already filled with challenges, Kristin Chenoweth and Marc Kudisch have an overriding issue to address. "I would have loved to have a church wedding," says Chenoweth, "but I'm Christian, and Marc is Jewish. So we're going to have a rabbi and a minister marry us, but not in a temple or a church. Marc says we'll have two different kinds of guilt to deal with that day!"

Chenoweth is currently featured in *A New Brain* at Lincoln Center Theater, while her future spouse is playing George Kittredge in *High Society* at the St. James.

The couple met four years ago when they were set up on a blind date. "We had both just come out of other relationships," Kudisch recalls, "and I don't think either one of us was really looking for anybody. But we had both been told by a mutual friend that we were perfect for each other. For our first date, we saw *The Mask* with Jim Carrey. I still have the ticket stubs!"

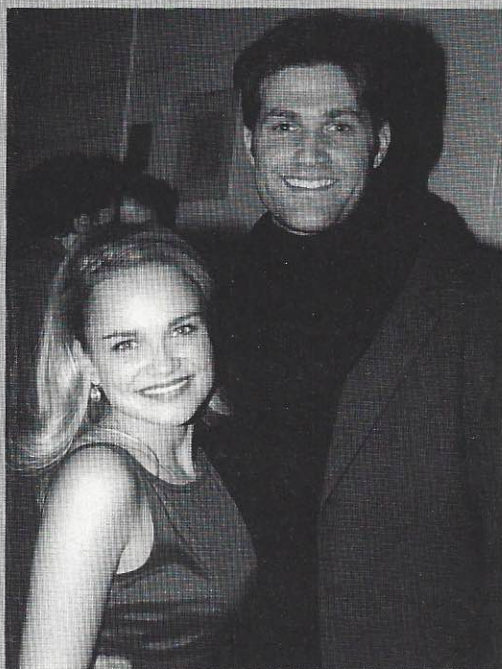
"We got engaged in January, and I immediately went into *Strike Up the Band*," says Chenoweth. "Then *High Society* came to

New York, and I started rehearsing for *A New Brain*, so it's been a busy time. We'll really start planning the wedding right after my show opens. Marc is picky, so I'm not going to make these decisions on my own; I'm the one who's, like, 'Just tell me where to be.' But it's nice to have someone who cares that much. He's not like most men."

With all that's been going on, they've tentatively chosen August 1, 1999 as their wedding date. And where will the nuptials be held? "My family is from the Oklahoma/Texas area," Chenoweth says, "and Marc is from Florida, so it wouldn't be fair to do it in either of those places. We'd like to have it here in Manhattan — though my mom said, 'You know, if you have a New York wedding, every relative in the world will want to be there.'"

Separate schedules notwithstanding, the couple seems happy enough that love will see them through. "I've been with this woman for four years, and I couldn't imagine being with anyone else," says Kudisch. "She is the most amazing, wonderful, unique individual I've ever met."

— Michael Portantiere

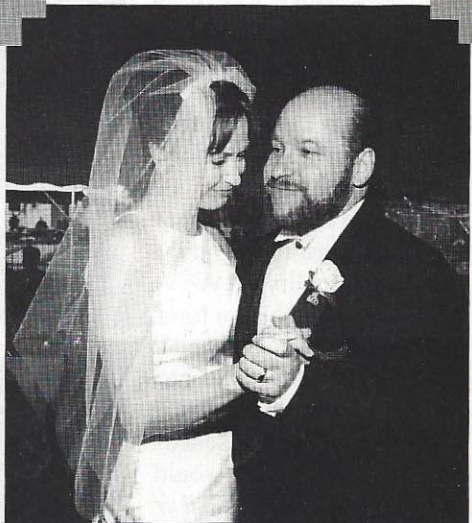


Kudisch calls Chenoweth "the most amazing individual I've ever met."

perfect, she peered outside. "The sky was black and it was starting to rain," she sighs. "My heart sank. Everyone was telling me to move the whole thing under the tent, but



Shedding her bridal veil, Eder boogies during the reception.

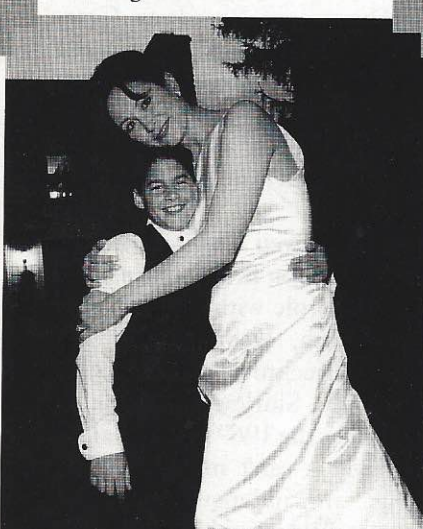


The happy couple shares a dance to Bryan Adams' "Everything I Do."

I kept saying, give it a few minutes, it'll clear." As she stepped outside, arm-in-arm with her father, and began the long walk down the aisle, the clouds suddenly lifted.

"It was unbelievable," Wildhorn says. "The sun came out and the birds were chirping. Everyone kept asking, 'Linda, how'd you do it?'"

The rest of the evening was just as magical. Music, naturally, played a major part. Eder walked down the aisle to one of Wildhorn's balletic compositions, "Natasha's Theme," and she chose Kenny Loggins' "For the First Time" as an interlude during the ceremony. "Our first dance was to Bryan Adams' 'Everything I Do,'" Eder says. "And my dad is from Vienna, so our father-daughter dance was to 'The Blue Danube Waltz.'" The bride, however, wouldn't take the stage, nor were any of her albums on the play list. "No way," she laughs. "I was off work for the evening!"



Mrs. W hugs her new stepson, 12-year-old Justin Wildhorn.

The Wildhorns took a three-week honeymoon in Maui, and are now embarking on a blissful future. Not that she's one to plug her projects, but Eder can't resist the irony of her recent album title. "I think Frank and I just finally said, 'It's time,'" she beams. "We're looking forward to spending our time and our lives together." ■

SHERYL BERK, the Entertainment Editor of *McCall's*, is a newlywed herself. She and her husband Peter were married January 24.

Atlantic Overtures

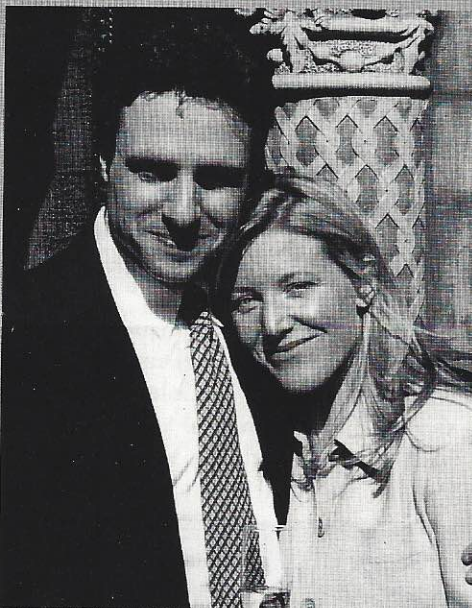
Mary McCann and Neil Pepe

As they prepare for their June 20 wedding, Neil Pepe and Mary McCann laughingly admit that they're "definitely taking advantage of all our theater friends." Among the wedding party: William H. ("Bill") Macy and wife Felicity Huffman, Rebecca Pidgeon (a.k.a. Mrs. Mamet), and playwright Tom ("Tommy") Donaghy. Eric Winterling, who just finished the *High Society* wardrobe, is building the wedding dress. And just about the entire Atlantic Theater Company gang is schlepping to the island of Put-in-bay, Ohio for the big day.

When they're not consumed with last-minute wedding details — "We might not have a cake," says Pepe; "I got the cake back," McCann assures — they spend their days at the Atlantic: Pepe as artistic director, McCann as head of the acting school (she's also a founding member). The Atlantic, in fact, brought the two together in the summer of 1987.

"Every summer, the company goes up to Vermont. That's where Mamet and Macy have their summer houses," explains Pepe. "I had gone up as an acting intern and the technical director, and she was a member of the company." Recalls McCann with a smile, "We built a lot of sets together back then."

For 11 years, the two have not only dated but also acted, produced, and administrated together. "The hard part is distinguishing between business



"I made him ask me three times," McCann says of Pepe's proposal.

and being a couple. The plus side is we really know how to co-exist in every possible situation," says McCann. "Maybe that's what took us so long," adds Pepe. "To figure out where the work and where the romantic side of the relationship was."

While he and she were celebrating 10 years together, Pepe finally proposed last summer in a lakeside inn in Burlington, Vermont. "It was very romantic," says McCann. "It was a surprise because Neil...It's sort of the same when he's choosing plays: You know he's thinking about it, but you never

know if he'll actually do it. I made him ask me three times just to be sure."

After two weeks in Italy (Naples, Rome, the Amalfi coast), it'll be business as usual for the couple at the Atlantic, which closes its season with *Once in a Lifetime*. Pepe — who directed *Mojo* last fall, produced the downtown *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, and saw McCann take the stage in *The Old Neighborhood* on Broadway — notes with satisfaction, "It's been a very good year for both of us."

— Melissa Rose Bernardo