



A FAIRY-TALE ADVENTURE

TRACI MELSHENKER & DAVID KRAUS

August 24, 2013 Chicago, Illinois | Photographed by KingenSmith

As the author of a blog called *Confessions of a Professional Bridesmaid*, Traci Melshenker has happily supported her friends in dozens of weddings. But she was finally a bride herself after boyfriend David Kraus's clever surprise proposal. Traci had received the exciting news that she had been invited to appear in a Chicago wedding magazine to discuss her blog. But when she arrived at the offices where the interview was scheduled to take place, she was directed to a room that was set up as a glorious mock wedding, complete with candles, tables covered in ivory linens and centerpieces, and a floral arch. David stood at the end of the aisle and told Traci he wanted to spend the rest of his life

with her. "Time stopped when I walked into the room," the bride remembers. "It was honestly magical."

As Traci began the process of planning her dream wedding, she received another wonderful surprise: David wanted to be involved in all aspects of their big day. "Most grooms just leave it all up to the bride, but he wanted to be included as much as possible," Traci says. While wedding dress shopping, Traci's mother used a word to describe Traci's bridal gown that would ultimately inspire the rest of the wedding: ethereal. "We wanted our guests to feel that when you walked into our wedding, you were entering a dream," Traci explains of her vision.



RESOURCES

Beauty

Renee Feldman for Studio 110
Salon - hair
Stella Mikhail - makeup

Bridal Gown/Salon/Veil

Vera Wang

Bridesmaid Gowns

Wtoo

Cake

Alliance Bakery

Calligraphy

Pen Graphics Studio, Inc.

Consulting

Reva Nathan & Associates

Entertainment

Ken Arlen Orchestra - ceremony & reception
Redmoon - reception

Favors

Preferred Stock Gift Baskets

Floral Design

Burt Rubenstein for HMR Designs

Formalwear

Giorgio Armani; Ralph Lauren
Black Label; Tom Ford

Honeymoon

Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora

Invitations

JackE Custom Invitations

Jewelry

Louis Vuitton; MCJ Jewelers
Tiffany & Co.

Lighting

Frost Chicago

Linens

BBJ - Table Fashions

Mothers' Gowns

BHLDN; Vera Wang

Photography

KingenSmith

Registries

Bed Bath & Beyond
Bloomingdale's; Crate and Barrel
Neiman Marcus

Rentals

Tablescapes Event Rentals

Venue/Catering

Four Seasons Hotel Chicago

Videography

Poetic Productions



To that end, a ballroom at a classic Chicago hotel was illuminated with bright raspberry lighting and surrounded by white drapery. Flickering ivory candles and glass vases filled with bouquets of vanilla flowers lined the aisle, culminating in a spectacular chuppah. The custom-made creation was constructed out of tufted velvet and adorned with lace, crystals, and rhinestones – beautifully complementing Traci's chic dress: a ball gown with a skirt comprised of layers of soft embroidered tulle. The couple's 20 bridesmaids and 12 groomsmen remained onstage throughout the traditional Jewish ceremony, which Traci and David personalized

by memorizing Hebrew vows beforehand, so they wouldn't require the rabbi to prompt them. "It really made me feel like we understood what we were saying and it added all the more value to that moment," Traci says.

When the ceremony concluded, guests were ushered into the foyer for cocktail hour. There, Traci says, they were invited on a "fairy-tale adventure." Avant-garde performers, including a woman on stilts, a man riding an old-fashioned bicycle, and a woman whose voluminous dress doubled as a table, offered guests cocktails and appetizers inspired by dishes from the couple's favorite Chicago restaurants.

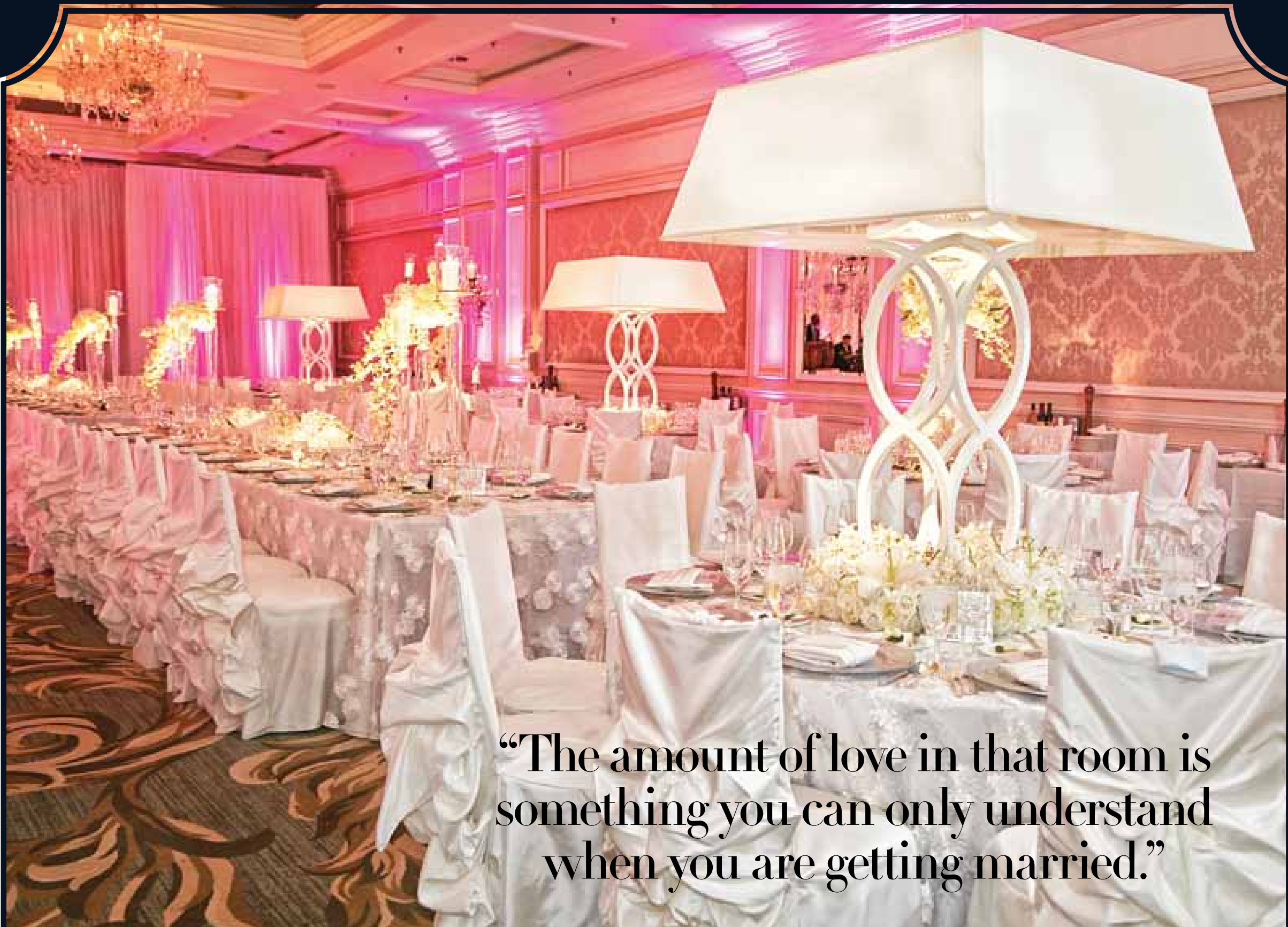






Then, guests entered a ballroom for the reception, which was designed to make them feel as though they were dancing under the stars. Pink lighting filled the room with vibrant color, and strands of crystals suspended from the ceiling reflected light in every direction. Chairs were covered with ruffled white fabric in the same shade as the sheer floral tablecloths. A variety of centerpieces adorned each table, including: tall glass vases spilling over with ivory flowers; candelabras wrapped in floral garlands; and oversized modern lamps. Crystals and rhinestones were seen throughout the décor elements. “We pretty much said wherever you could put crystals or rhinestones, please go ahead and do it,” Traci reveals. The unique tufted design of the chuppah also carried into the reception, as the custom-built bar featured a similar tufted pattern.







The couple planned an evening filled with extraordinary surprises for their guests. As a nod to Traci's love of singing competitions on television, *The Voice* contestant Jamie Lono performed several songs during dinner. In lieu of wedding cake, waiters wearing flashing sunglasses and chef hats served individual bento boxes that housed four avant-garde desserts: a candy apple that resembled a tuxedo; a flowerpot filled with mud pie mousse; a tiny bucket that contained s'mores, cotton candy, and a marshmallow-wrapped pretzel; and a small jar filled with cheesecake, blackberry jam, and pop rocks. As a late-night snack, guests received miniature pizzas served in boxes emblazoned with a photo of Traci and David's beloved French bulldog, Pizza. And at midnight, a performer wearing an astronaut costume and a backpack that sprayed bubbles appeared on the dance floor – an experience David describes as his *"Is this really happening?"* moment.

Despite the evening's extravagant design and entertainment, Traci admits that the most unforgettable aspects of her wedding day were the private exchanges between her and her new husband. "The moments when I took a step back and looked at David and just said something silly into his ear and he would laugh or vice versa, those were the best moments," she says. It is with this outlook that David offers simple advice to other couples: "Relax, have fun, and enjoy the person you love." He explains, "The day is the start of an unbelievable next stage in your life." Traci agrees, "It was honestly the most perfect day and night of my life."

ERIN MIGDOL