



WEDDINGS

This Wedding in Lake Como Was Inspired by the Couple's Russian Heritage—And Burning Man

44 SLIDES



BY ALEXANDRA MACON

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won her heart over in the end. "Everything about [Villa Balbiano](#) was right—the vistas, the gardens, the size, but it wasn't available for the weekend that we wanted." They were hoping to include the summer solstice in their celebrations.

Then, suddenly everything fell into place, and three months before their wedding date, the villa became available. The couple jumped at the opportunity.

"We wanted more than just a wedding," Margarita says. "We wanted to bring our friends from across the globe to celebrate love and to make them even closer. After all, these are the people that we will be living our lives with! Having serendipitous initials ['IM'], we created a tagline for the weekend. 'IM IN LOVE' became the common theme for the three days of celebrations." To imbue this feeling throughout the weekend, the couple worked with [Design Anarchy by Chic Weddings in Italy](#).

It all kicked off with the couple showing love for their home country with a Midsummer Night welcome event at Villa Gastel in Cernobbio. "We celebrated our Russian heritage with a feast of Ivan Kupala—the ancient Slavic rite of purification and love, something that we felt was so right for the eve before our wedding," Margarita explains. "According to the old Russian tradition, on the summer solstice people stage flamboyant celebrations centered on purification, fertility, and joy, which felt fitting." The summer solstice event was filled with eclectic performances by Nuart Theater actors and actresses, which were all perfectly captured by wedding photographer extraordinaire [David Bastianoni](#) and [Waterfall Visuals](#), traditional games, molecular cuisine by [Bibendum](#), the Russian tradition of jumping over the fire, and the couple's favorite DJs. "Burning Man costumes with a Russian twist put our guests in the mood to celebrate," Margarita says. The bride and groom were both dressed in costumes with Russian patterns, while still embodying the flamboyant self-expression of Burning Man. For jewelry, Margarita chose earrings that she'd actually worn on the playa the year before. For her second look of the evening, she wore a sequined

Temperley London dress.

The next evening was the wedding. Ilya, embracing a flair for the dramatic, arrived at the ceremony in a hydroplane with with his best man, Vivake.

Meanwhile, Margarita made her own grand entrance with her stepfather Michael on a traditional “Lucia” row boat that had been lavishly decorated with blooms by floral designer extraordinaire Vincenzo D’Ascanio. The dress code called for black tie or formal national attire, and guests from over 20 different countries gathered in kilts, qipao, a bisht, and other traditional garb.

Just before the ceremony, the bride emerged from the row boat in a classic lace Monique Lhuillier dress. “Once I tried it I knew straight away that this is the dress I’d always dreamed about,” she says. “Long sleeves and open back were always my priority when thinking about the perfect dress—and of course lace.” Ilya wore a classic midnight blue Tom Ford tuxedo. The ceremony’s two focal points were a giant floral arch and Ilya’s wedding day surprise for Margarita: a replica sculpture of Michael Benisty’s “In Every Lifetime I Will Find You” that he had had commissioned—a reminder of the special spot where he’d proposed. “The service was very beautiful and at the same time a nerve-wracking experience for both of us,” Margarita says. “To tell the most important promise of our life to each other in front of everyone in such a stunning setting made our voices tremble and eyes wet.”

After the ceremony, Margarita changed into a silk suit by Elizabeth Fillmore that was easier to move in for the first dance. Then dinner was served, and Ilya gave a touching toast. At the end of the meal, the San Giovanni fireworks served as a spectacular backdrop as the couple cut the cake. “The fireworks were just by the villa and some of our guests thought that the 30-minute show was a part of the wedding,” Margarita notes. “We danced all night to music by of our favorite DJ and friend Max Lemurian. At the very end, the setting of the lake, the moon, the mountains, and the gardens of Balbiano reflecting in the sculpture that Ilya gave

me could not be any more beautiful.”

The third and final night of celebrations was appropriately themed “I’m in love with Italy.” “Italy is our favorite country, and we have so much connected with it,” Margarita says. “We felt that a Dolce Vita-style party by the pool of Villa Balbiano and against the sunny backdrop of the lake and the mountains would round out the celebrations well.” Guests wore colorful Italian summer clothes—think linens, floral dresses, and lots of hats—and enjoyed the chilled atmosphere and food from the couple’s favorite restaurant in Como, Momi. Chef Momi himself even cooked up freshly caught lake fish. Guests then wrote well wishes on a getaway car that had been arranged by Ilya as yet another surprise for the bride, and at the end of the party, newlyweds had a phenomenal send-off that made for the perfect photo op.



1/44

We decided to welcome our guests on Friday with The Midsummer Night – Ivana Kupala celebration at the Villa Gastel in Cernobbio. It is believed that only on the shortest night of the year, the fire burns in both the real and mystical worlds, thereby connecting the two. Overall planning was done by our planners and designers from Design Anarchy by ChicWeddings.



Photo: David Bastianoni

2/44

Both of us wore custom-made costumes with Russian patterns.



Photo: David Bastianoni

3/44

Even though we put the wedding together in just three months, we still focused on the details. My costume was made by one of our close friends who put her soul into it.



Photo: David Bastianoni

4/44

Though the dress code was not easy, our friends did their best and made this evening very colorful and very Russian-looking with their beautiful costumes and accessories.



Photo: David Bastianoni

5/44

Girls just want to have fun!



Photo: David Bastianoni

6/44

Everyone was so in the spirit of the event.



Photo: David Bastianoni

7/44

Sweet moment with my family.



Photo: David Bastianoni

8/44

With an extravagant vision, Nuart conceptualized a beautiful Russian folk dance for us followed by extraordinary performances including a fire show and other surprises!



Photo: David Bastianoni

9/44

A beautiful Nuart performer.



Photo: David Bastianoni

10/44

Us, our guests, and the performers.



Photo: David Bastianoni

11/44

Preparing mentally for our jump over the mystical fire. As per the Russian tradition, if you manage to hold your partner's hand during and after the jump, it means that you will be together forever.

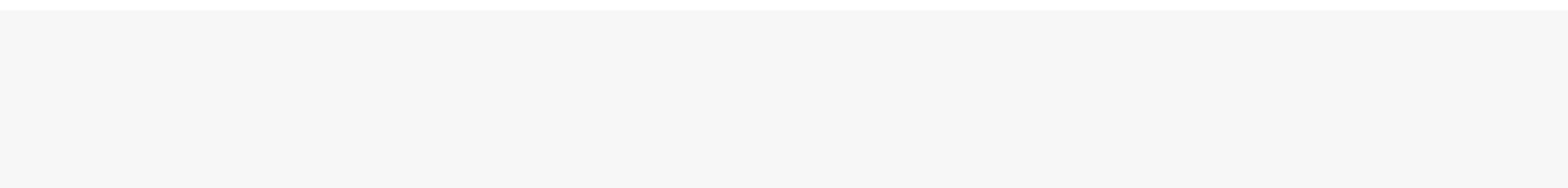




Photo: David Bastianoni

12/44

I cherish this memory. After all the dancing, the fire performance, and jumping over the fire, we were enjoying “our” moment.



Photo: David Bastianoni

13/44

Russian tradition meets Italian style.



Photo: David Bastianoni

14/44

Awed and dazzled. The courtyard was transformed by [Blunotte Eventi](#) with captivating lights that glistened as Nuart performers danced around us.



Photo: David Bastianoni

15/44

I chose a classic lace Monique Lhuillier dress for the ceremony. Once I tried it on, I knew that this was the dress I had dreamed of.

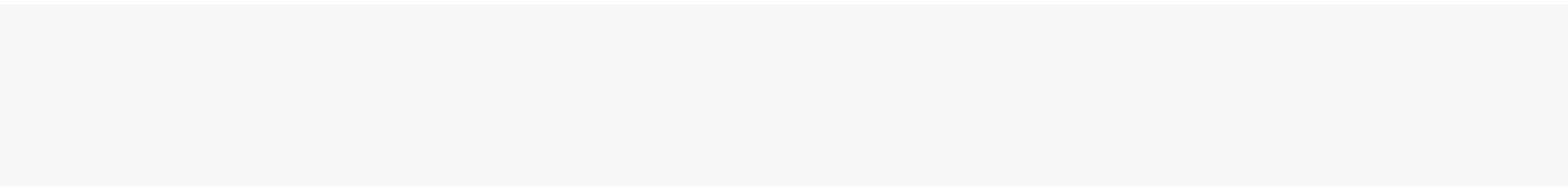




Photo: David Bastianoni

16/44

Whimsical characters from Nuart put my bridesmaids and me in the festive mood.



Photo: David Bastianoni

17/44

The last few moments of calm—the opportunity to contemplate the gravity of what was to come.



Photo: David Bastianoni

18/44

Being veiled by Tamara who introduced Ilya and I was meaningful and moving.



Photo: David Bastianoni

19/44

Piloting a hydroplane in what probably is the most scenic lake in the world, Ilya and his best man Vivake approach the villa in an iconic Riva.



Photo: David Bastianoni

20/44

Guests taking in the view and waiting for the ceremony to start.



Photo: David Bastianoni

21/44

With my step father on my way to my husband to be.



Photo: David Bastianoni

22/44

Long sleeves and an open back were always my priority when thinking about my perfect dress...and, of course, lace.



Photo: David Bastianoni

23/44

The ceremony was conducted by our close friend Bryan Christie, under a spectacular floral structure by [Vincenzo D'Ascanio](#).



Photo: David Bastianoni

24/44

“I’m in love” was the motto that connected all three days of lavish celebrations.



Photo: David Bastianoni

25/44

Yes, there were tears of joy. Both of us were overwhelmed by emotions.



Photo: David Bastianoni

26/44

The end of the ceremony and the beginning of the journey of happiness together.



Photo: David Bastianoni

27/44

Next to the surprise wedding present that Ilya commissioned for me. This is the sculpture that a year ago was the backdrop to our engagement.



Photo: David Bastianoni

28/44

The start of the reception!



Photo: David Bastianoni

29/44

A quiet moment under the arch which was our altar. [Vincenzo D'Ascanio](#) floral designs are never the same but always so stunningly him.



Photo: David Bastianoni

30/44

With our dear friends Chiara and Federico.



Photo: David Bastianoni

31/44

Ilya with his gorgeous daughter Kristina.

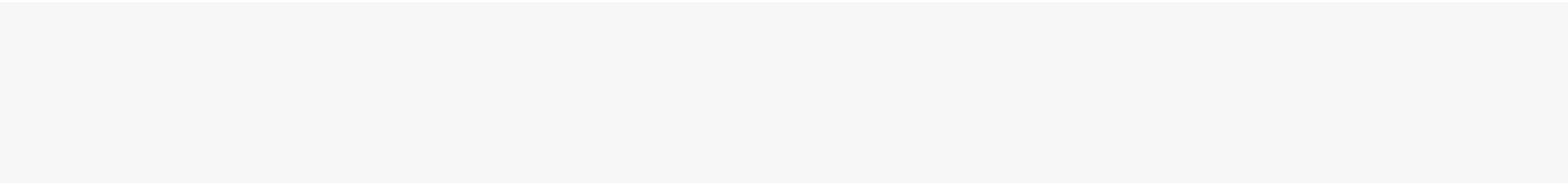


Photo: David Bastianoni

32/44

So many distractions in the beautiful gardens of Villa Balbiano.



Photo: David Bastianoni

33/44

A moment with my beautiful mother and loving step father.



Photo: David Bastianoni

34/44

A beautiful setting for an exquisite feast. Our meal was created by [Bibendum](#). Tables were adorned with bright florals from [Vincenzo D'Ascanio](#).



Photo: David Bastianoni

35/44

[Vincenzo D'Ascanio](#) pulled all the stops and created this beauty under a downpour in the first half of the day.



Photo: David Bastianoni

36/44

Thanks to Nuart, even serving grissini was a show on its own.



Photo: David Bastianoni

37/44

Welcoming guests and keeping me entertained



Photo: David Bastianoni

38/44

The cake is ready but we just can't get enough of each other.



Photo: David Bastianoni

39/44

The famous San Giovanni fireworks were spectacular.



Photo: David Bastianoni

40/44

More wedding night fireworks.



41/44

The Dolce Vita party begins. I wore a flowy Zimmerman dress to fit the mood.



42/44

Having fun in the sun.



43/44

No formal photos here.



44/44

This was one of our last moments together with our friends. Ilya's creative surprise is ready to take us across Italy. What a phenomenal send-off!

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