

Wedding

A Classic Love

*"If there did not exist someone who loved, the sun would become extinct."
- Les Misérables by Victor Hugo*

On the 15th of April 2015, as the clouds rolled away revealing an expansive azure sky, Natalie Lalage Grobler and Constantine (Dean) Divaris joined hands and exchanged their wedding vows in front of their close family and friends.

The couple met by chance at a dinner in Pretoria in 2005, and a decade later, enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on their lives together, strolling hand-in-hand as they took in the magnificent autumn hues on display in the vineyards of the Vrede en Lust Wine Estate in the Western Cape.

"We have always had a love for the Western Cape and wine estates," says Natalie. "Johan, our wedding planner, suggested that we get married at Vrede en Lust Wine Estate, the estate where they shot the Afrikaans romantic comedy, *Semi-Soet*. He looked at me and said, 'Nats, this is the place'. We booked the venue within that hour." Natalie smiles when she recalls Dean's proposal, "Dean and I went for a walk on the beach in Blythedale Beach. He knew that I would collect shells at a certain spot on the beach and hid the ring in a shell for me to find. I eventually picked up the shell, opened it and found this magnificent ring inside the shell. I was in utter shock. I looked at him and he said, 'Let's get married!'" It was such a special moment between us, one we will never forget."

Dean sourced the stone and designed the one-of-a-kind ring, which was manufactured by Arthur Kaplan's in-house jeweller. Natalie says that the design of the ring is very special to her because she can see that Dean really knows her and what she loves, "He sometimes knows me better than I know myself. The ring is absolutely magnificent. I could not have designed it better myself."

The couple felt privileged when their very good friend Johan Ungerer, who is also the public relations and events manager for Arthur Kaplan, agreed to help them plan their wedding. "We have known each other for many years. Our instructions to him were basic: plan us a wedding that is very laid-back, fun, informal but still elegant and sophisticated."

Natalie and Dean chose an elegant combination of black, silver and white for the wedding theme. World-renowned photographer and interior designer, Franci du Toit, was engaged to set the mood with





beautiful floral arrangements and the bride's bouquet. Natalie asked Franci to create a lightweight bouquet for her, using natural, soft colours, which would complement her personality, the venue and her beautiful Pronovias wedding dress. To achieve this, Franci selected seasonal flowers like Akito Roses, Lithiantis, Heather, Inca Lilies, Snow on the Mountain, Oriental Lilies, Mini Carnations, Lace flowers, Alstomeria, Miniature grey Brunia, Silver leaf, 'Lambs ears' and Dusty Millar. Natalie wanted to move away from age-old wedding rules, and many of the traditions were thrown out the window. "The end result was something we could have only dreamed of and we cannot thank them enough!"

Wearing two hats at their wedding, Franci du Toit was also responsible for translating the couple's vision of capturing moments rather than photographs. Natalie says, "The photographs were very important to us. We wanted "in the moment", paparazzi-style photos that documented our special day. Franci du Toit understood our vision and delivered. We can sit for hours looking at her images - they tell a most beautiful love story."

Natalie recalls being worried about the weather as it rained earlier that morning, "My sister, Gasha, told me not to worry and the weather would be perfect. And it was, in the most spectacular way I have ever seen! From the balcony of the Manor House I could see a full rainbow reaching across Vrede en Lust's vineyards. It was a symbol that our wedding would truly be blessed and that we would have nothing to worry about. The magnificent rainbow lingered long enough to welcome our guests to the ceremony."

While she couldn't wait to see Dean, Natalie says she took her time, trying to slow things down so she could take in and appreciate every moment of their special day, "When I looked at myself in the mirror hanging in the Manor House's entrance I wondered whether I would ever again look as beautiful as I felt I did in my wedding dress. My dress was the most exquisite that I have ever seen and I felt so lucky to be wearing it." Her hair and makeup were done in old Hollywood-style, by Follicle Hair Atelier, who travelled all the way from Pretoria to attend to the bride and her retinue. "It was a long walk from the Manor House to the lawn area where the ceremony was held. Even though I had butterflies in my stomach, I did not feel nervous because I had my brother, Ernst, next to me. He made funny jokes and made me feel at ease." Lezanti van Sittert played Franz Liszt's *Cantique d'amour* on a grand piano as the bridesmaids began their walk down the aisle. Natalie remembers how beautiful everything was, "My brother led me down the aisle and I was happy to see everyone in attendance. The atmosphere was magical and the surroundings, especially the blue Simonsberg Mountains, were spectacular. I could hear the fabric of my dress moving as if the fabric layers were doing a slow dance. The vibrant colours of the autumn vineyards gave me goose bumps. I stepped onto the white carpet and looked up at Dean and our eyes met. I will never forget how relaxed, happy and content he looked and I wanted to savour that moment forever.

My brother gave me away and Dean and I took each other's hands. It was an indescribable moment." Natalie shares that they personalised their vows, drawing inspiration from a line in *Finnikin of the Rock* by Melina Marchetta, which reads: "This hand says you spend the rest of

your life with me,' he said, holding out his left hand, 'and this one says I spend the rest of my life with you. Choose'. The couple also requested that marriage officer Barry Gray read excerpts from *The Bridge Across Forever* by Richard Bach and *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo, – two beautiful affirmations on the meaning of love. The bride's retinue included her three best friends, Dani Matthews (Maid of Honour), Helerene Christodoulous and Shan-Leigh Blignaut (bridesmaids) who all looked stunning, in individually-styled black dresses from Pronovias. Dean's brother Justin Divaris was his best man and Natalie's brother Ernst Grobler was his groomsman. Natalie says her nephew and godchild, Christiaan Vorster, did a fantastic job as a pageboy, "He was just too cute in his little suit. He wanted to look exactly like 'Uncle Deanie'!"

When the ceremony concluded and the photographs were taken, Jen and Nici from Zest Catering in Botrivier in the Western Cape, delighted the couple and their guests with delicious Greek canapés and a sumptuous set menu, featuring a tomato and goat's cheese tart or Parma ham and mozzarella salad as starters, beef fillet, chicken breast or wild mushroom ravioli for the main course followed by a decadent dessert table. Natalie and Dean were thrilled with the food and impressed with Jen and Nici, who even went the extra mile to ensure snacks were available at 23h00 to make sure no-one went home hungry. Some traditions are worth keeping, and as guests sipped on Mumm champagne, Natalie and Dean came together to cut the gorgeous four-tiered wedding cake embellished with cascading flowers created for them by Florentines Cakes in Cape Town.

Reflecting on the special day, Natalie concludes: "Our wedding day was one of the most special days of my life and certainly my favourite birthday of all time. One should enjoy the times leading up to this special day, especially the wedding planning, dress fittings, cake tastings, choosing the first dance song with your man, time with your friends and especially the time you spend with your mother. It really is priceless."

■ Lindsay Grubb

Photos: © Dean & Natalie Divaris, Photographer: Franci du Toit

