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& DANYELLE HEAFEY & ADAM LAROSA

CASTELLO IL PALAGIO, MERCATALE VAL DI PESA, TUSCANY, 18 September 2005

PHOTOGRAPHED BY BEATRICE RAGGIO TEXT BY CATHY HOWES

WHEN IT CAME to writing their own wedding vows, Danyelle Heafey thought she would be the one most likely to put pen to paper, yet she admits it was mainly her fiancé, Adam LaRosa, who found the right words to express their love and commitment. Not that she should have been surprised, given the romantic nature of his proposal during their New Year break in Botswana. 'Adam had secretly designed the engagement ring himself and brought it on safari,' explains Danyelle. 'One night, after a long day's trekking with the San Men, he asked the camp staff to set up a table with a lantern and champagne on one of those never-ending saltpans so that he could propose to me at sunset.'

The couple gave themselves nine months to organise the wedding and, as one of their big passions – apart from a shared love of travelling and sailing – is Italy, there was no contest for the location of the autumn wedding. 'Neither of us is particularly religious, so we decided to cover the legal

formalities at City Hall in New York City [both are American-born] and have a symbolic ceremony and party in Italy. For us, that was the important part,' says Danyelle. The venue they chose was the 13th-century Castello Il Palagio in the town of Mercatale Val di Pesa, Tuscany.

However, organising a celebration in Italy while living and working in London (Adam works for Bloomberg and Danyelle is picture editor on *Wedding Day*) proved quite a task. 'It was the most exhausting thing I've ever done,' Danyelle admits, although they decided against involving a wedding planner. 'We toyed with the idea of an event organiser but we're both a bit crazy, you could say neurotic, and very particular about things, so it would never have worked. Instead we went to see Simone Coppi, who runs Il Palagio, several times and it was he, together with his wife, Manuela, who made most of this happen. Simone said we could have whatever we wished and we knew that was a big



party, not one of those uptight, formal weddings you sometimes get invited to. We're energetic, we love life, we love to celebrate and so do all the people we were inviting.'

And with most of their 100 guests coming from the US, they were leaving nothing to chance. 'We tried to make the travel planning very easy for our guests,' says Adam. 'We wanted things to be as stress-free as possible for them. We booked as many hotel rooms and apartments as we could

get in nearby San Gimignano. Then we placed each guest in the hotel or apartment in which we felt they would be most comfortable. It all worked out great. We helped with booking flights, rental cars and airport transfers. To finish it all off we set up our own wedding website, packed with travel information, and even sent out a 14-page travel itinerary to every guest.'

After checking into their respective hotels on the Friday, guests had a few hours to take in the local shops or museums, after which Danyelle and Adam hosted drinks with typical Italian dishes in the main square of San Gimignano until the early hours. The following day, Adam and the men shook off any after-effects of this with a golf tournament, while Danyelle and her friends relaxed on a pamper day, with two beauty therapists specially

hired for the event. On the Saturday night, Adam's parents hosted a four-course dinner with live music at the Bel Soggiorno restaurant – an evening Danyelle describes as 'almost like another wedding'.

The wedding itself was held on the Sunday. Celebrant Raffaele Pitari presided over the 40-minute ceremony, which included the couple's own specially written vows, violin music and a speech written and presented by Adam's sister, Michelle Simes. Guests were brought from San Gimignano on two hired coaches and greeted at Il Palagio by waiters serving refreshing drinks and men dressed as guards carrying spears. While the bride and groom put the finishing touches to their outfits in separate rooms in the castle, the guests swapped their cool drinks for something a little stronger on a wine-tasting tour of the candlelit cellars, serenaded by two harpists.

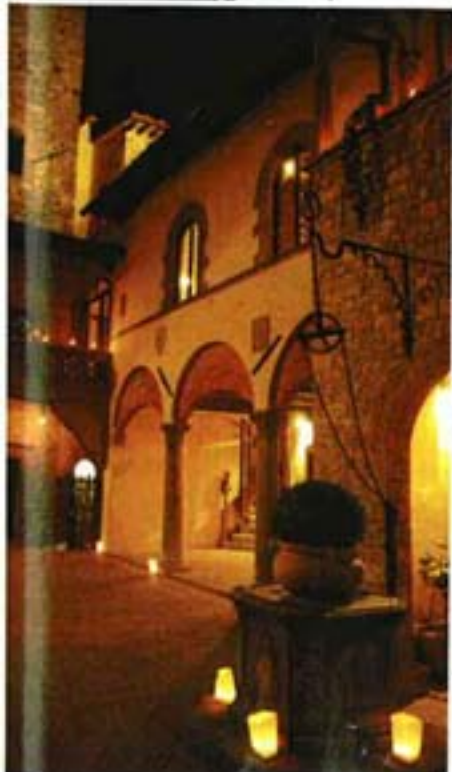
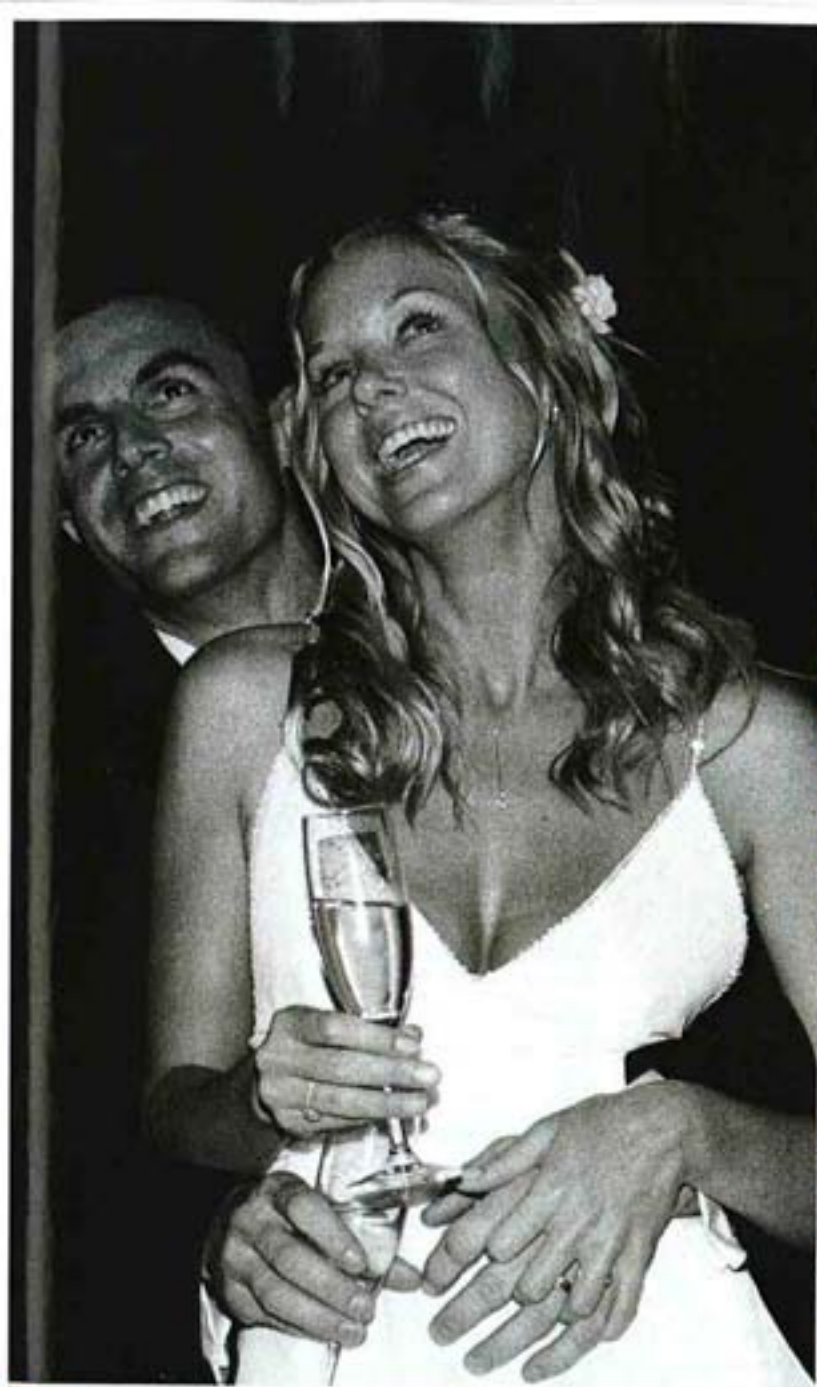
'After the wine-tasting, the actual ceremony was outside in the grounds, although freak cold weather meant we were absolutely freezing,' says Danyelle. 'We watched the



'WE TRIED TO MAKE THINGS AS STRESS-FREE AS POSSIBLE FOR OUR GUESTS' SAYS ADAM

weather reports as the wedding drew nearer and knew there were dark clouds coming, but Simone suggested we wait and see how the forecast looked a couple of days before and leave our final decisions to the day. As it was, some plans had to change. For instance, the meal was originally supposed to be in the courtyard but had to move inside, as did the two-hour cocktail party after the ceremony. Initially we were a little disappointed but it didn't make any difference to our enjoyment of the day.'

With the help of Simone Cotti and Danyelle's London-based friend Severine, who speaks Italian, the couple had managed to source some of the best wedding suppliers in the region. Simone arranged for a celebrated local chef Nicola Scura, known as Tiger, to come in from Florence, so that Danyelle and Adam could enjoy plenty of tastings beforehand. At the reception, the chef came out between every course and, with the help of an interpreter, explained each dish to the guests. 'The cake was amazing, too,' Danyelle enthuses. 'It was a traditional Italian *Millefoglie* with alternating layers of pastry



PREVIOUS PAGES Danyelle's natural-looking waves were created by Italian hairstylist Tafi Roberto. OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT The bride's mother, Ginger Heafey, enjoying the ceremony. The couple recited their vows in the grounds of Il Palagio. The lush green hills of Chianti. Danyelle dancing with friend Stephen Hoyt. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Adam and Danyelle in bubbly mood. After champagne and speeches, a firework display. During the drinks reception, guests enjoyed dishes of local produce. Table names were tied to olive oil produced on the estate. Each guest's name was tied to an olive branch. Wine from the Il Palagio estate. Danyelle's glamorous shoes. The castle's courtyards and balconies were lit with lanterns

and cream the size of a dining table. Even better, the chef made it before our very eyes.'

Simone also introduced the couple to Marta, of Italian floral designers Fioridea, with whom Danyelle liaised from London via email. Although Danyelle wanted to keep the styling natural, a Moroccan theme soon began to emerge. 'I wanted a rich blast of colour somewhere in the reception, so we asked for flowers in red and purple. Then Simone suggested adding a bright Moroccan rug and scatter cushions and the idea grew. We even had a waiter in traditional dress serving Moroccan tea and cakes and a Moroccan hookah pipe.'

Adam emphasises, 'We could have never pulled it all together if it wasn't for Simone's hard work. He's an amazing man. He plans the castle events, makes the wine and olive oil and hosts daily vineyard tours.'

Early on in their planning, the couple agreed that a traditional wedding party was not for them, so they had no best man or bridesmaids. Adam walked in by himself, followed by his mother escorted by his brother-in-law, then Danyelle's mother with the bride's brother and finally Danyelle with her father. 'It was pretty daunting,' she recalls. 'I felt very nervous just before we went through, because all those people were sitting there waiting for me. But my father really calmed me down. He was so relaxed.'

'Originally I didn't want a wedding dress, but really I just didn't want a meringue, so I looked for someone who could create my own vision. I came across Ana Cristache,

who took me around all the fabric stores in Soho until I found the perfect one. I gave her some pictures of dresses – or elements of dresses – I liked, and she was amazing. A few days later she sent me three drawings. I went back with my thoughts on them and within a couple of days she'd come up with the perfect dress – layer upon layer of silk, creating a rose-petal effect, with a low back and crystal beading.'

To complement the dress, Danyelle's friend Laura Swanepoel, a recent design graduate, created unique shoes with a big vintage blue stone to highlight the 'old, new, borrowed, blue' tradition. 'They were quite bling, which I'm not – usually,' laughs Danyelle, 'but then, I've never had shoes specially made for me before!'



Danyelle shares a laugh with her mother, Ginger

THE WEATHER WAS UNUSUALLY COLD, BUT IT DIDN'T SPOIL THEIR ENJOYMENT OF THE DAY

HOW IT WAS DONE

CEREMONY The couple enjoyed a symbolic ceremony, drinks reception and dinner at the 15th-century Castello Il Palagio in Mercatale Val di Pesa, Tuscany, Italy. Call 00 39 055 821630 or visit www.castellopalagio.it

FOOD After the ceremony, a two-hour drinks reception featured a meat corner offering Italian pastramis and salamis, a bread corner with local breads and olives, and a cheese table. The dinner menu included risotto with zucchini, shrimps and pecorino cheese, hand-made tortellini with spinach and ricotta, sea bass with capers and beef fillet cooked in Brunello wines. It was prepared by Tiger, a famous chef brought in from Florence by Simone Coppi, who runs Il Palagio.

CAKE Tiger also prepared the *Whitefoglie*, a traditional Italian cake comprising four layers of pastry and custard cream.

Danyelle enjoys the funky music with sax player Cristiano Pacini



Later in the evening, a traditional gelato cart from the famous Gelateria Vivoli in Florence (0039 055 292 334) offered guests five different flavours of ice cream.



FLOWERS The bouquet, buttonhole and table decorations included green and white hydrangea, roses, olive branches, white lily-of-the-valley and foliage. A separate Moroccan corner featured red, purple and orange flowers and all arrangements were created by Marta at Fioridea (www.fioridea.com).

DRESS The layered silk, sleeveless gown with plunge back and crystal beading was created to Danyelle's own specifications and brought to life by bespoke designer Ana Cristache (020 7352 2038, www.anacristache.co.uk).

SHOES Danyelle's shoes were specially designed for her by Laura Swanepoel (lauraswanepoel@yahoo.co.uk).



GROOM'S OUTFIT Adam wore a black tailored Paul Smith suit (www.paulsmith.co.uk) with a white shirt by Emmett (www.emmettlondon.com).

HAIR Danyelle's wavy style was created by Tam Roberts (Via Tancredi 2, San Gimignano, 0039 0577 940 601).

MUSIC Music was provided by local club DJ Savano and funk band Cristiano Pacini Quartet (both booked through Il Palagio).

PHOTOGRAPHY Beautiful Raggio (www.raggiofotografia.it), Marcy Marcy (00 1 415 50 5 05 45, www.marcmarcy.com).