

Clothing tips for mothers and others of the bride

BY SHEILA GARRETT

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As a recent first-time mother of the bride, I've learned a lot about the problems and joys of outfitting the "supporting cast" — the bridesmaids, groomsmen and mothers of the bride and groom.

Our particular wedding, which took place in Sydney, Australia, featured three bridesmaids who looked dazzling in the same style of dress, a classic long gown of blue and silver. They happily matched each other from their blue and yellow bouquets to their strappy silver sandals.

However, the trend toward individuality is most often noticed in northern Michigan today. Fortunately there are a number of ways to customize dresses to suit each bridesmaid, whether tall or petite, whatever her skin tones, hair color or body shape.

Often, each bridesmaid is free to choose her own style, while the bride may pick the fabric or trim to give a coordinated look. Many weddings use separates, with a

choice of tops and skirts. Popular designs include strapless tops, spaghetti straps, the halter look, cowl necklines, and corset and tank top styles, said Cindy Whitley, manager of the Petoskey Bridal Salon.

There are also many skirt designs to consider. Whitley added that there is a trend among bridesmaids toward a more fluid use of fabric, and softer lines. Some wedding parties choose the "rainbow look," with coordinating, rather than matching, colors.

The maid of honor is not usually set apart by a different style of dress this season, but rather by a more elaborate bouquet.

Stephanie Trombly, owner of Bridal Expressions of Cadillac, stated that no single most popular color is emerging for upcoming weddings because, she said, "Colors have just expanded. There is a huge array available."

There is new interest, though, in shorter bridesmaids' dresses, just below the knee for less formal weddings, as well as waltz length and tea length for all adult members of the wedding

party.

There is no rule these days, Trombly said, that all bridesmaids must wear the same shoes, although they may be asked, for example, to all choose silver or clear styles. Most weddings allow bridesmaids to select different heel heights, allowing for comfort.

Younger girls in the wedding, such as junior bridesmaids and flower girls, may wear color coordinated

dresses, with the styles depending on their ages. Occasionally small flower girls are still dressed as miniature brides.

Whitley said she recommends shortening the skirt length for little girls, whatever style is chosen.

"They're apt to be running and playing, and we want to keep the skirts off their feet!" she explained.

The custom of allowing the mother of the bride to

choose her color first is still widely observed, Trombly said, although blended families may add to the number of people waiting to choose their colors. The brighter, even exotic, colors available for weddings today may make choices more challenging for mothers, who may range in age from their 30s to their 60s.

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