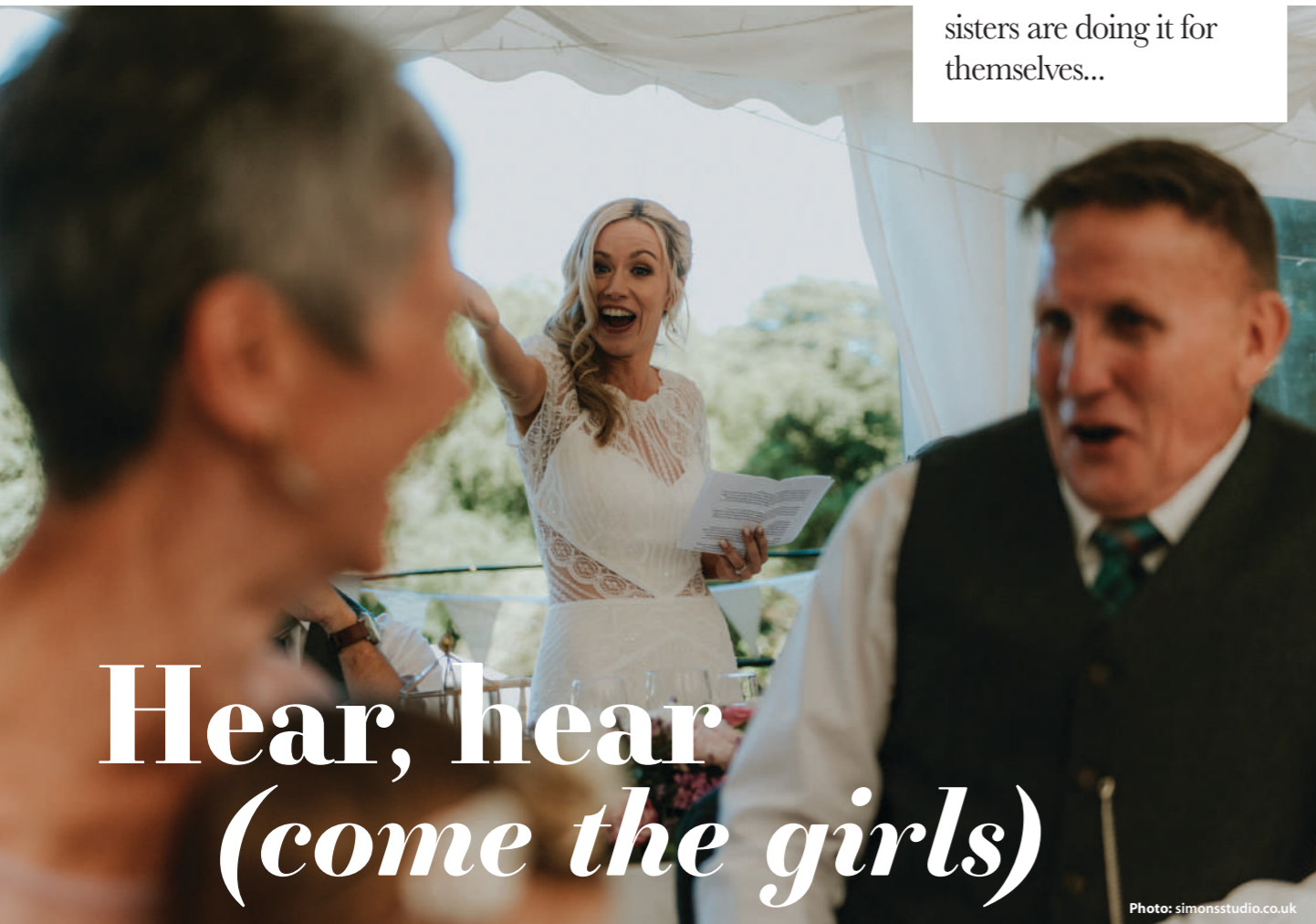


Talking point

THE HOT TOPIC THAT'S GRABBED OUR ATTENTION: THIS ISSUE, WE LOOK AT WHY A GROWING NUMBER OF BRIDES WANT TO MAKE A SPEECH ON THEIR BIG DAY

Best man, father of the bride, groom: the voices from the top table are all male – it's tradition, right? Actually, finds *Zoë Boothby*, it seems more and more sisters are doing it for themselves...



Hear, hear (come the girls)

Photo: simonsstudio.co.uk

It has been a rollercoaster couple of years for the female half of humanity. The dawn of the #MeToo movement saw women across the globe take to social media in their thousands to share their experience of sexual harassment and abuse; the 'Silence Breakers' went on to be collectively named *Time's* Person of the Year. Then, in Ireland last May, women spearheaded the historic campaign to legalise abortion, while a record number of female candidates were elected to the US Congress this past autumn. The message is clear: we won't stay silent any longer.

And it seems that the same is true when it comes to the top table. Just last year, Meghan Markle challenged royal protocol by making a speech at her wedding to

Prince Harry: she reportedly thanked her mother and her in-laws for their support, before telling her new husband she loved him with all her heart.

But Meghan is not so much leading the charge as she is reflecting the new climate of standing up and speaking out. "When I got married, I decided to give a speech as my husband Donald and I have always been 50/50 with everything in our relationship," says one newlywed, Lynsey Sangster (pictured above), whose gorgeous summer wedding at Tullibole Castle was featured in our November-December 2018 issue. "I felt it was only fair that we both got to voice our happiness and thanks. Besides, we're living in the 21st century – it's high time we broke away from expecting to only hear from men at weddings."

SAY IT LOUDER

According to the pros, it's no surprise that more and more women are choosing to ditch tradition and pick up the microphone. "Long gone are the days when the bride would sit at the top table and keep quiet," says speech-writer Carole Spiers of the Wedding Speech Expert website. "Brides today want to be more publicly involved with their wedding – they want to share the things that are really special to them, and speaking from the mic is the way to do that. This is their moment."

In fact, as a bride, one of the best things about giving a speech is the complete freedom you'll have with the content – you don't have to follow convention in the way that men are expected to do. "The bride's

speech need not follow a time-honoured format the way the groom's does," agrees Carole. "He will have the traditional address to deliver. The bride, though, can talk about her parents, her siblings, friends, future family – anything she fancies."

Expert advice

Is there such a thing as the 'perfect' wedding speech? If it does exist, it probably follows this trusty formula from Carole herself: "Don't speak for too long. Make sure your speech is engaging. Sound like the real you and don't try to be someone else. And make sure you have a beginning, a middle and an end."

the wedding, and I don't want to have to worry about making a speech," she told us. "I'd like to relax and take a back seat, and let some of the others involved shoulder that role on the day."

For Taylor, it's all about the t-word. "Tradition is very important to me," she emphasises. "My partner and

I are not religious, so that won't be incorporated into our day. However, I'd still like to include some traditional elements, but making them more light-hearted to better represent us as a couple."

Besides, when you've spent the best part of two-and-a-half years planning your celebrations, isn't it nice to not know every single detail of what is going to happen that day? "Exactly," agrees Taylor. "I quite like the element of surprise and not knowing what's coming."

If you too aren't keen on making a speech yourself, there are plenty of other ways you can personally thank your loved ones without taking to the floor. "The bride could give a gift to the special celebrants – if she doesn't want to take to the mic, the groom could always do this, or the MC," suggests Carole. "And, of course, handwritten thank-you cards are always perfect."

Lynsey also firmly believes that it's entirely up to each individual bride to decide if she wants to make a speech or

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it really witty in order for it to be good and memorable," she says. "After a few failed attempts at including some cringey jokes, I decided to just write in my own tone and style, which was much more natural and genuine."

KEEP IT REAL

Ultimately, as we always say, your wedding day is all about you, so don't feel compelled to get up and give a speech if you don't want to. Bride-to-be Taylor Henry, due to get married at GG's Yard in June 2021, has no intention of grabbing the mic. "I will take on most of the planning in the lead-up to

not: "It's a matter of preference. I don't think anyone, regardless of gender, should feel pressurised into doing it. Giving a speech in front of a crowd is a terrifying thing for a lot of people." However, she does point out that your wedding could be just the thing to help cure you of any public-speaking phobias. "If you want to, I'd say go for it! I was so busy beforehand – and on cloud nine on the day itself – that I simply didn't have time to feel nervous!" she laughs.

It'll be a special, magical day whatever you decide, so do what makes you happy. Gosh darnit, it's 2019 – you don't need anyone's permission. Can I get an amen? ♥

CAROLE'S top tips

Even the least confident person can give an address to impress – if they follow these expert guidelines

- **Practice makes perfect** This one won't surprise anyone, but you'd better swot up. "Prepare, prepare, prepare," Carole insists. "There are no shortcuts. Just make time to do it. It always pays dividends."
- **Charm and charisma** Your guests are there because they love you – so stay true to who you are when it comes to giving that all-important speech. "Smile and engage as soon as you stand up in front of the mic," says Carole. "Your audience will want you to be a success – and you will be!"
- **Take your time** Just like the tortoise and the hare, when it comes to speeches, slow and steady really does win the race. "Don't talk too quickly," advises Carole. "Allow for some pauses and even a small silence as it will give your brain time to think."
- **Emotionally charged** Your speech is bound to be moving, so don't act like you're reading the shipping forecast. "Think about voice tonality," suggests Carole. "Make sure your voice is not monotone but goes up and down. This will help you convey expression in your words."
- **All joking aside** We know you love to wind up your pals, but you shouldn't use the mic to take the mick. "Don't make jokes at anyone's expense," Carole warns. "In fact, be very careful if you're not a natural comedian. Jokes can fall flat and that can produce an embarrassing silence." That's us telt.
- **The big finale** In the world of speeches, it's all about how you finish – that's what your audience will remember, after all. Carole certainly agrees: "Make sure your speech has a strong close – then everyone will know you've finished and all you'll have to do is listen to the applause!"

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