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ALEXANDRA & NICOLAS

AUGUST 17, 2013

*Home is at the heart of a romantic
Lake Forest wedding.*

By Amalie Drury
Photography by Julia Franzosa

It was a backyard wedding like no other. When Alexandra Bernardin emerged from her parents' house on a brilliant summer afternoon and began her walk across the lawn toward her groom, Nicolas Stahl, it was a scene framed by the greenest of grass and the bluest of skies. Warm sunlight filtered down through the branches of the giant weeping willow that presided over it all, the V of its trunk draped with a lush floral garland.

"That tree!" says wedding planner Beth Bernstein of SQN Events, who worked with Bernardin and her mother to bring the bride's vision of an ethereal, elegant and classic outdoor wedding to life within a quick, seven-month time frame. "It was just unbelievable. It formed its own altar."

Getting married at home in Lake Forest was important to Bernardin, a public relations senior account executive who now lives in Austin, Texas, with

A LOVELY DAY
From top left: Groom Nicolas Stahl and his bride, Alexandra Bernardin, embrace on their wedding day in Lake Forest and Lake Bluff; the bride's lush rose-sprinkled bouquet was created by Molly Flavin Floral Design.



THE LIST

CEREMONY Private home, Lake Forest	TENT Partytime-HDO Productions	SHOES Jimmy Choo
RECEPTION Shoreacres, Lake Bluff	RENTALS Hall's	BRIDESMAID DRESSES J.Crew
WEDDING PLANNER SQN Events	LINENS BBJ Linen	GROOM'S ATTIRE Indochino
INVITATIONS Helanders	CEREMONY ENTERTAINMENT Artistrings	HAIR Livia Caparole
CAKE Shoreacres	RECEPTION ENTERTAINMENT SWAY Chicago	MAKEUP Andie Cumber
FLOWERS Molly Flavin Floral Design	BRIDAL GOWN Lazaro	REHEARSAL DINNER Market House on the Square, Lake Forest
FURNITURE & DECOR Event Creative		VIDEO I Do Films



DETAIL-DRIVEN Clockwise from top right: Bernardin's family's backyard held the sunny ceremony; Event Creative crafted a chic-yet-comfortable space for guests; the Shoreacres reception; a simple three-tiered confection by Shoreacres.



Stahl, who works in private equity. (The pair met at a friend's birthday party and began dating when she was a junior and he had just graduated from the University of Denver; they were engaged during a wintertime trip to New York for Bernardin's 25th birthday.) "I wanted to be comfortable on my wedding day," says Bernardin. "I didn't want to be getting ready in surroundings that felt unfamiliar, and this way my whole family was together all day. That was maybe my favorite part."

The morning of the nuptials dawned clear and bright—no need for Plan B, which, had it rained, would have moved the ceremony to a tent at Shoreacres country club. Bernardin dressed in her parents' bedroom, watching out the window as flowers and chairs were carried into the yard, and responding to love notes and gifts from Stahl. (He sent them across the house in care of the bride's cousin.)

Post-ceremony, the couple and their 120 guests reconvened at Shoreacres in Lake Bluff, where celebrations began with signature drinks overlooking a pristinely blue Lake Michigan. (Stahl made the special ice spheres for Boulevardier Français cocktails himself, freezing them a batch at a time in the days before the wedding.)

Bernardin and Stahl are self-proclaimed foodies, and they had worked closely with the club's chef to create a dinner menu that highlighted local meat and fish—bison from Wisconsin and walleye from Michigan—but a special amuse-bouche was a surprise even to them. "My parents are in a hunting club," explains Bernardin. "In May, they and their friends had collected and saved a bunch of morels in northern Michigan, and a dish made with those morels was the first thing we ate."

Later, to cap off a wedding that had gone without a hitch, the newlyweds danced as their band played Ray LaMontagne's "You Are the Best Thing." "It was a day straight out of central casting," says Bernstein. "Not too hot, not too cold. I swear I saw a hummingbird fly by during their vows, as if we were in a Disney movie." ■