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# Revolutionary Romance

KATHERINE INGE JOHNSTONE  
weds BERNARD MICHEL CHRIQUI  
10.01.2011

DRESS DESIGNER GWEN RUSSELL  
TOOK INSPIRATION FROM HER WORK  
ON THE FILM DANGEROUS LIAISONS  
TO CREATE KATHERINE'S DRESS.  
SOME OF THE STITCHING ON THE  
SLEEVES IS SO FINE, RUSSELL HAD  
TO USE TWEEZERS TO PULL THE  
THREAD THROUGH THE BROCADE.

BY GILLIAN HEARST SIMONDS  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHAWN CONNELL  
CHRISTIAN OTT STUDIO



It was February 2008, and Katherine Johnstone's friends had dragged her to a party where, feeling antisocial, she decided to camp out by the cheese table. Which served her purposes—until a chatty man approached. “So, you like cheese, do you?” asked Bernard Chriqui, a trader who was raised outside Paris. And so began a courtship that included weekly opera visits and candlelit dinners for as many friends as they could fit in their Paris apartments. In October 2009, standing in the fog high on Scotland's Old Man of Storr rock formation, Bernard asked for Katherine's hand.

The couple share a love of period styles, and one day, as Katherine was trying on modern gowns, Bernard said, “I don't want you to wear any of these. You should have a stunning *robe d'époque* made for you.” Soon afterward, says Katherine, who works for the France Tourism Development Agency, “I was watching a Metropolitan Opera production of my favorite opera, *Don Giovanni*. In it, he wears 1700s traveling clothes but is stunning and elegant.” The couple decided that Bernard would dress like the sans culottes of the French Revolution and Katherine would wear the traditional French gentlewoman style of the period, complete with sac back, panniers, and a corset. They turned to Scottish dressmaker and *Dangerous Liaisons* costume designer Gwen Russell.

“The corset was a copy of an 18th-century pattern,” Russell says. “The top was pure silk damask, and original petticoats were made in Marcel, France, and a copy of the silk fabric design used in an 18th-century gown in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.” She worked into the design original 1700s handmade fly braid that had been used on Michelle Pfeiffer's gown in *Dangerous Liaisons*.

The couple chose the fairy tale-like 19th-century Château de Challain in the Loire Valley as the setting for their throwback affair, for which they wrote their own vows, had a menu designed by Michelin-starred chef Michel Cudraz, and—fittingly—served an extensive postdinner cheese course.




THE BRIDE WOKE UP AND IMMEDIATELY PUT ON HER GOWN TO GREET THE SUNRISE FROM ONE OF CHATEAU DE CHALLAIN'S WINDOWS, 40 FEET ABOVE THE GROUND.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: A CELEBRATORY FROLIC ON THE CHATEAU GROUNDS; HEADING IN FOR DINNER AFTER TWILIGHT COCKTAILS IN THE GARDEN; KATHERINE ENJOYS A GLASS OF LOIRE VALLEY WINE IN HER CUSTOM MASQUERADE/DANCING MASK; THE 42 GUESTS AT THE CANDLELIGHT-ONLY DINNER, WHERE THE GROOM PERCHED ON A THRONE.







KATHERINE IN THE REAR PARK  
OF CHATEAU DE CHALLAIN.  
HER VINTAGE 1890S  
ENGAGEMENT RING, FROM  
FIRESTONE AND PARSON  
ESTATE JEWELERS IN BOSTON,  
IS A CEYLON CABOCHON  
SAPPHIRE SURROUNDED BY  
EUROPEAN-CUT DIAMONDS.



THE BRIDE SPENDS A  
RELAXING MOMENT WITH  
HER BRIDESMAIDS BEFORE  
THE CEREMONY.





TABLE ARRANGEMENTS WITH THISTLE, PARROT TULIPS, AND ROSES. LEFT: THE PROCESSION FROM THE CHATEAU'S ENTRANCE TO NEARBY ROCHEFOUCAULD TOWER, WHERE THE CEREMONY TOOK PLACE. THE BRIDESMAIDS CARRIED WHEAT BOUQUETS, REPRESENTING FRIENDSHIP AND FERTILITY.



A VILLAGER INQUIRES ABOUT THE WEDDING, AND IF THEY WILL HAVE FIREWORKS. LEFT: SHOES EMBELLISHED WITH ROSETTES TO MATCH THE BRIDE'S DRESS.



THE BRIDE AND GROOM, JUST AFTER THE CEREMONY.

#### THE DETAILS

##### PHOTOGRAPHER

Shawn Connell of Christian Qth Studio  
212-634-7949, christianqthstudio.com

##### DRESSMAKER

Gwen Russell, gwenrussell.com

##### LOCATION

Château de Chailain  
chateau-chailain.com

##### FLOWERS AND STYLING

Hellfire Kowles  
matthew@teatromundi.com

##### SUIT

Rosi Zingales, studiourouge.com

##### CATERING

Michel Cudré  
Auberge de la Diligence, diligence.fr

##### MUSIC

Nima Ben David, nimabendavid.com

##### HONEYMOON

Kuda Huraa, Four Seasons Maldives  
fourseasons.com/maldives