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# SECRET GARDEN

LAUREN NICOSIA & WALKER MAY

May 7, 2016 Chicago, Illinois | Photographed by Carasco Photography



She was on the dance team; he was a football player. Lauren Nicosia and Walker May probably seemed like an obvious match to their fellow classmates at Vanderbilt University, and it's hard to argue with the results. After being introduced by a mutual friend, the pair hit it off right away. As the party where they met was at the end of the school year, the encounter could have easily been a case of bad timing. Instead, Lauren and Walker's connection grew stronger as they spent hours on the phone with each other during the summer, soon making their relationship official. Walker even traveled from his home in Alabama to visit his new sweetheart in Memphis, Tennessee. "We never turned back," Lauren muses.

**RESOURCES**

**Beauty**  
Erin Ahern - hair  
Rachel Reiman - makeup

**Bridal Gown/Salon/Veil**  
Vera Wang

**Bridesmaid Gowns**  
Jenny Yoo

**Cake**  
Elysia Root Cakes

**Calligraphy**  
Stacey Shapiro Calligraphy

**Catering**  
J&L Catering

**Consulting**  
Birch Design Studio

**Entertainment**  
Holy Name Cathedral Music  
Ministry String Quartet - ceremony  
Arlen Music Productions - reception

**Favors**  
Beaulieu Farms

**Floral Design**  
HMR Designs

**Formalwear**  
Burd Clothing; Menguin

**Honeymoon**  
The St. Regis Bora Bora Resort

**Invitations/Welcome Boxes**  
Smitten Boutique

**Jewelry**  
Mednikow Jewelers

**Lighting Design**  
FROST Chicago

**Linens**  
Tailored Elements

**Mother's Gown**  
Mira Couture

**Photography**  
Carasco Photography

**Registries**  
Bloomingdale's; Macy's  
Williams-Sonoma

**Rentals**  
Hall's Rental; Tablescapes Party Rentals

**Venue**  
Holy Name Cathedral - ceremony  
Harris Rooftop Terrace - reception

**Videography**  
Smiling Toad Productions



After five years of dating, the couple had not shied from marriage discussions, but that didn't mean the engagement was devoid of surprises. "Walker had convinced me that he was not going to propose until the fall," shares the bride. Instead, during a summer trip to Florida with Lauren's family, he took her to a rooftop overlooking the beach and asked her to become his wife. "I was shocked to see a photographer who captured the whole thing!" she exclaims. Both

families joined the affianced couple to celebrate. With the familial involvement, it would be understandable to assume that Walker had asked for a blessing from the father of his future bride – and he did, almost. "[Her dad] told me months later that I asked him if I could take our relationship 'to the next level,' but never actually asked for her hand in marriage," admits the groom. Luckily, Lauren's dad got the idea, but Walker still experiences some playful teasing.





“It was a little bit [*The Secret Garden*] whimsical with the perfect amount of elegance to match.”

When planning began, the groom made it clear that he knew Lauren had been dreaming of this day since she was a child. “The only thing I really care about is the food, the music, and marrying you,” Walker told her. The bride had always imagined an outdoor garden wedding, but since the couple elected to wed in their current home of Chicago, appropriate venues were scarce. Instead, she brought in HMR Designs to create their own garden for the tented cocktail hour. The standout feature was clearly the two trees framing the escort card display. Handmade, each tree stood 12 feet tall and featured smilax foliage among the dragonwood branches. Miniature chandeliers completed the stunning look. Though the tent at cocktail hour was transparent to bring the outside in, the reception ceiling was heavily draped. “We wanted to give the impression of being inside a beautiful ballroom that we created from scratch,” Lauren explains. Blush and ivory elements adorned the space, paired with metallic, mirrored, and crystal details. “In its entirety, it was a little bit [*The Secret Garden*] whimsical with the perfect amount of elegance to match,” says the bride.



Though the reception had more modern elements to it, the bride and groom chose to have traditional nuptials held in a church with intricate architecture and stained glass. “The church was so beautiful on its own that we decided to keep the ceremony simple, highlighting only our vows, the stunning ceiling, and tremendous organ,” Lauren states. Like many women who get married in a house of worship, the bride had a detachable portion of her dress that she could remove when the dancing began; however, this was not a basic lace piece purely for modesty. The custom-made bolero was encrusted in crystal – perfectly enhancing the halter neckline of her ball gown. As Lauren walked down the aisle clutching a bouquet of peonies, garden roses, and olive branches, she could feel her very special “something old”: wrapped around the base of the bouquet was the same rosary carried by her grandmother at her own wedding, 58 years prior. “She and my grandfather have been happily married all those years,” smiles the bride. Lauren and Walker had seen each other before the ceremony, though at first, they did not think they wanted to do a first look. “It was absolutely worth it, and needless to say, some of those pictures are my favorites,” confides the bride. The groom also agreed with the decision: “Words cannot describe that moment.”





It was later in the night, after dinner, when Walker's specialty came into play. The couple had hired a huge band for the reception, and it was a choice that paid off. "Everyone was out of his or her seat dancing nonstop. We even danced through the late-night snacks!" divulges the groom. All the partying in the world couldn't stop the newlyweds from enjoying their cake. The five-layer confection was covered with fondant for a clean finish, and embellished with fresh florals between the tiers. "I can't wait for our first anniversary

when our amazing cake baker creates a fresh replica for us to eat and celebrate with!" gushes Lauren.

After what felt like a blink of an eye, it was time for the guests to depart, each gifted with a jar of homemade jam from Walker's aunt. "I thought it would have seemed much longer, but it went by so fast," the groom reveals. Lauren concurs, advising engaged couples to "take at least a few minutes during the reception to take it all in. Truly look at every detail – it's over before you know it!"

EMILY LASNIER

