

A TIMELESS AFFAIR

Vanish Entertainment adds medieval grace to Bryce Courtney's newest historical epic



The launch of Bryce Courtney's newest novel *Sylvia* brought together 150 guests in a darkened Paddington NSW church illuminated in true 12th century fashion; by candlelight and beams of natural sunlight through the stained glass windows.

"We wanted to make guests feel they were inside the setting of the book," says Simone Karp of Vanish Entertainment Group. "In particular, we wanted to surprise guests; our goal was to bring the main character, Sylvia, to life.

"The book is based on the medieval ages, therefore a church had to be selected to entirely capture to essence of the book," she adds.

And capture the essence of the time-period they did, with distinctive entertainment, costuming and cuisine also reflective of the theme. Vanish worked closely with The Cuisine Group, developing a suitable menu that paid specific attention to the style of food from the time period.

"Food in the Medieval ages was very different from the food of today," Karp explains, "We had to present it in a modern form, however retain its medieval presence."

The result was a hearty menu included items such as: ham off the bone and corn fritters; chargrilled chicken drumettes marinated in mead, served with a caramelised onion mayonnaise; old English custard tarts; natural oysters with stout and shallot dressing; individual herb crusted lamb cutlets with a mint vinaigrette; and much more.

Additionally wine was served in goblets and wait staff were dressed in peasant outfits to complete the theme.

And while religion and music were both heavy influences to life during the 12th century, event organisers enlisted an organ player to provide musical entertainment. The highlight of the entertainment program could arguably be an entertainer cast to play the part of the book's title character, Sylvia.

The character, pictured on the book's cover, was described in the event brief as: "Blonde with blue eyes with a distinctive fish-shaped birthmark on her back. Can charm the birds from the trees and has the most beautiful voice, known best for singing 'Gloria in Excelsis'. Sylvia is devoutly religious – spends time with the nuns in a convent and can speak many languages including the bible languages of Latin, Greek and Hebrew."

Karp says that while managing the event as a whole was done with ease, it was the casting of Sylvia which proved challenging.

"The difficult part was trying to find the right person to play Sylvia," she admits,



From left: Simone Karp, Bryce Courtney, Laura New and James Karp.

"We had to cast for a singer and actor. The chosen character had to be what Bryce envisioned whilst writing the book."

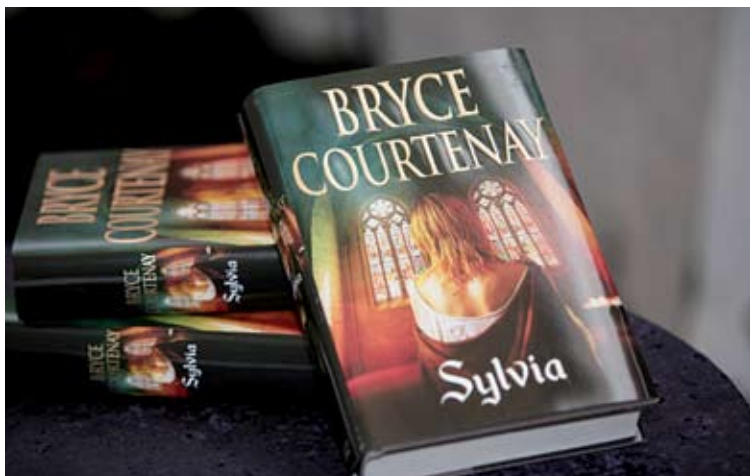
The character of Sylvia, played by Laura New, was adorned in the matching attire of her cover art counterpart and professionally styled by AXIS Paddington's hair and makeup team before enchanting the crowd with an acapella rendition of 'Gloria in Excelsis'.

"Singing without instrumental accompaniment was an essential part of any church service. Therefore it required Sylvia to sing in acapella," says Karp, who added that the overall response of the guest to the event was spectacular. "Loved the food, the feeling of the church, and the complete surprise and wonderment as Sylvia began to perform."

Working alongside such a well-known writer was definitely a plus for Vanish Entertainment, which is no stranger to managing prestigious events for major national and international organisations. Karp also says that using his imagination to create this event was certainly one of the most rewarding aspects of managing the launch.

Visit www.vanish.com.au for more information on Vanish Entertainment Group. **ME**

By Gwen O'Toole



The Paddington venue.

