



INJIE PHOTOGRAPHY

ERICA & BRUCE

high school sweethearts turned lifetime lovers

Bruce and Erica met as kids one summer when Erica was visiting with relatives. Bruce was the cute boy next door and best friends with her cousin. They were mere acquaintances for years after the initial encounter, but the sparks were inevitable. They later became high school sweethearts, fanning the flames of romance through college and beyond. In 2014, Bruce was drafted to the NFL and his career moved the couple from state to state, but their foundation was firm. On the evening of April 13, 2017, Bruce took Erica to what she thought was a consolation dinner meant to sooth Bruce after a recent injury on the field. She had no idea that her beau was actually intending to ask for her hand in marriage. She said yes!

After carefully crafting the details of an elaborate ceremony for a little more than a year, the lovebirds hosted their nuptials on June 23, 2018, during the NFL's off season. They chose a venue in their hometown, the lowcountry of Charleston, South Carolina and tied the knot outdoors on a breathtaking terrace.

The couple chose Eliana Baucicault of Elly B Events to execute their theme of Southern Elegance. "I gave complete creative control to Eliana, our wedding planner, and her team," Erica shared, adding that she only requested an amazing event, complete with a few wow factors. Eliana delivered. Erica reveals that the feature that wowed her the most was a massive ceiling treatment constructed by Akeem Clayton, which was suspended above the dance floor in the reception hall. "It was a huge acrylic wheel with beautiful white and ivory flowers. [It] completely blew us away", Erica affirms.

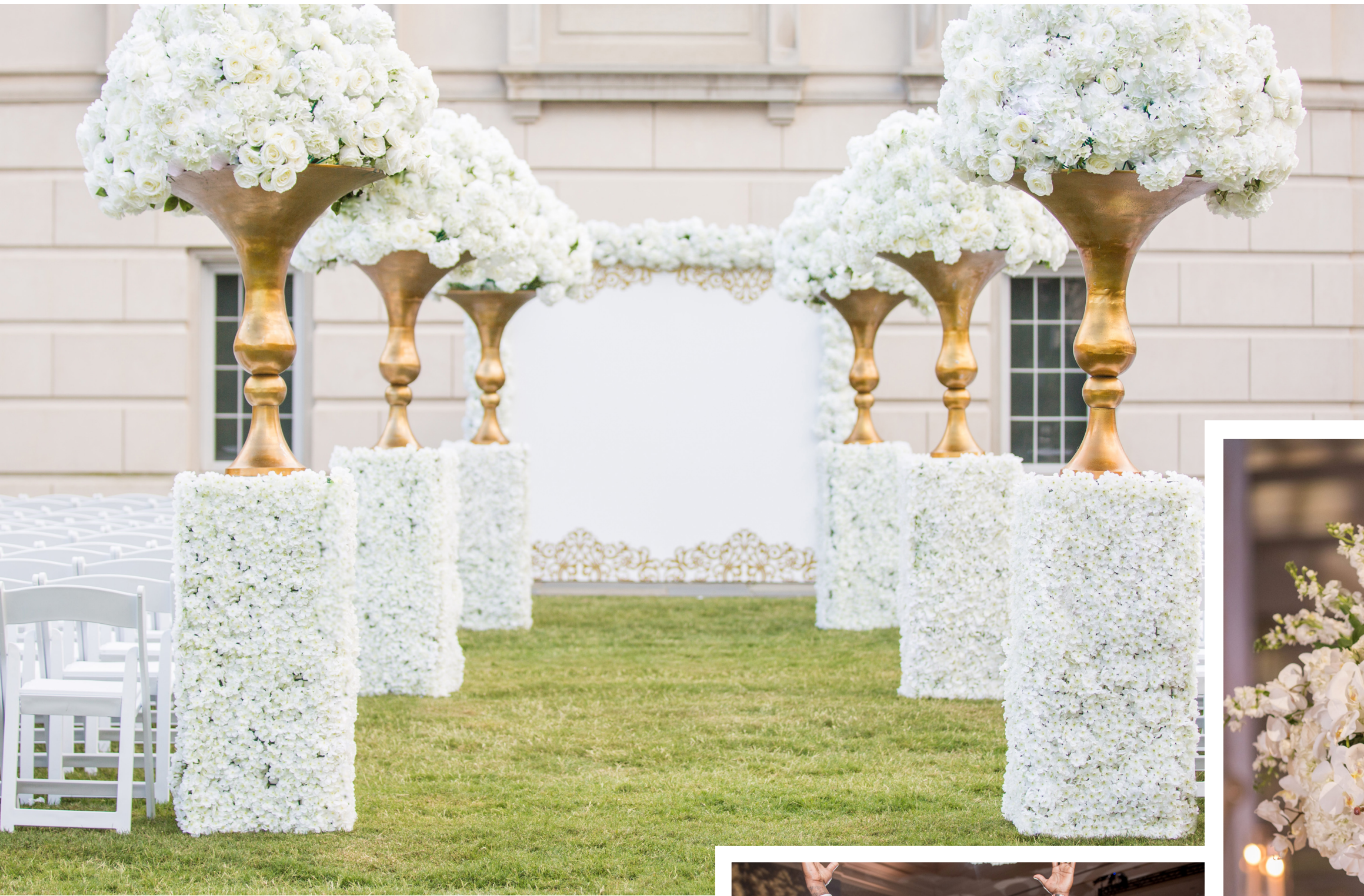
The outdoor ceremony was also set against a white and ivory floral backdrop, and matching arrangements lined the aisles, each resting atop a large gold vase. Bruce awaited his bride at the altar wearing a custom tuxedo with a delicately designed ivory coat and black pants. Erica describes her style as simple and sexy. She wore a mermaid form, fully laced gown designed by Matthew Christopher for the ceremony, and later slipped into a sleek lace number for the reception where she and Bruce shared their first dance to "You and I" by John Legend, with a transition into "Until the End of Time" remix by Justin Timberlake ft. Beyonce, two of the sweethearts' favorite songs to sing together.

The reception dinner served as an excellent opportunity to showcase the couple's deep Southern South Carolina roots. Guests were served town favorites like shrimp and grits, country fried chicken and beans and rice. "We wanted people to get a taste of the lowcountry and Charleston, South Carolina", Erica imparts.

Bruce and Erica even provided chicken n' waffles as a late night snack. The guests of honor enjoyed a wonderfully charmed celebratory evening and toasted to a wedding well done. They then honeymooned for nine days in Bali, Indonesia before returning home as Mr. and Mrs. Ellington.

For other couples who are beginning the planning process, Erica advises that the experience will be both exciting and stressful, and encourages couples to hire the perfect planner, and never lose sight of your mate while trudging through the trenches. In the end, the most important factor is making sure that "I will" graduates to "I Do!" **Story by Nikki Thomas**





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