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A marriage made in Scotland

Contact: Marianne Meadahl, PAMR, 0-[Phone removed] (Stirling, Scotland)

Earlier stories, photos and videos available

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Competing at the World Pipe Band Championships is reason enough to look forward to returning to Scotland every summer. But Simon Fraser University Pipe Band pipers Damien and Angela Burleigh share others.

Their first date was in Scotland. Two years later, they became engaged at the foot of a castle, at the approximate spot where they shared their first kiss.

Damien proposed to Angela on bended knee below majestic Stirling Castle, a former royal residence, which sits perched on a volcanic cone above the town where the band prepares for the Worlds.

The Burnaby couple wed a few years later - led out of the church by a procession of SFU pipe band members. They promptly picked up their own pipes - Damien's were a wedding gift from his bride - and followed them, to the surprise of guests.

'My best memory of our wedding was playing along with the band in my wedding gown,' Angela says.

Since then they've been on a winning streak. Angela, who had played with the Robert Malcolm memorial band, joined Damien with the Grade 1 band shortly after and the couple has since shared two straight world championships. They're hoping for a third on Glasgow Green on Aug. 14.

'There's no better feeling, and no way of explaining how it feels to be standing next to one another, celebrating that moment knowing we both contributed to it and achieved it,' says Angela.

'Playing in the band requires an extreme level of dedication, and that's easier to accomplish if your spouse happens to have the same commitment,' she adds.

'It would be difficult to do this without a partner who truly understands and accepts bagpiping as a major part of your life, whether they play or support what you do.'

The Burleighs are one of four married couples who play with the six-time world champion band. A few others are 'seriously dating,' says Pipe Sergeant Jack Lee.

'It's not that unusual to find people drawn to each other through a common love for something they're involved in,' says Lee. 'We all have a great passion for the music. I think in some ways it works really well for us.'

Pipers James and Kylie McHattie met a few times at highland games and at summer piping schools but didn't start dating until they were in rival pipe bands.

'It didn't take long before we decided we wanted to play together,' says Kylie. 'Since we know each other's tendencies well, we are both supportive and critical of each other's playing. We help each other with solos and we learn band tunes together.'

'We play together every day,' McHattie adds. 'I believe we each make the other better.'

A marriage made in Scotland

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Comments

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Rossi

That was nice to hear about your special wedding. Good luck! Long time not see!