The Montreal Jewish community is fortunate because the city is endowed with numerous establishments to hold weddings and special events. Nevertheless, finding a stellar venue that satisfies respective requirements presents a challenge. Prime considerations include adequate space, kosher quarters, modern amenities and obliging personnel.

The Chevra, located at 5237 Clanranald Ave., scores high in every area. Situated in the heart of Montreal’s Jewish community, the modern Orthodox synagogue is under the spiritual leadership of Rabbi Asher Jacobson, who meets with couples prior to their weddings to help enrich their overall experiences with meaning and spirituality.

The synagogue’s spacious layout lends itself to elaborate formal weddings, lifecycle events and fundraisers. However, the setup also facilitates modest, intimate simchas. The newly renovated sanctuary basks in natural light that filters through 18 large stained glass windows, and new cushioning and colour-coordinated carpeting complement the elegant atmosphere. In addition, the newly renovated upscale lobby enhances the ambience.

Brides have access to a long aisle and the recently refreshed bride’s room, which has a private washroom and other amenities, are a big attraction, points out Sara Miller, the Chevra’s event co-ordinator. “Every bride can experience a ‘Cinderella moment,’” adds Miller, explaining that each bride has the option of being hidden behind a retractable wall until her entourage is in the sanctuary. With the touch of a button, the wall comes down and she can make a grand entrance.

The Chevra offers a variety of turnkey packages, a choice of three halls and an aisle every bride dreams of!

- Newly renovated sanctuary, lobby and courtyard
- Grand ballroom for up to 600 guests (and a large stage)
- Kosher caterer of your choice
- Special package rates available

For more information, contact Sara Miller at 514-482-3366 ext. 224, or email sara.miller@thechevra.ca.
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RUTH SHACH
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

About once a month, and more frequently during wedding season, mail arrives at my house addressed to someone who doesn’t live here – and I’m not talking about previous tenants, although William Stein sure subscribes to a lot of opera magazines. I’m referring to “Dr. and Mrs. Noam Grysman.”

This is perplexing to me, because while Dr. Noam Grysman is my husband of nearly six years, he’s married to Ruth Shach. You see, neither is my last name Grysman nor is my first name Noam. And if I were going to get really pedantic, I’m on my way to becoming a doctor as well (although it will be by the PhD route).

Some of the blame for this confusion is on me. I colloquially use my husband’s last name in social settings, like in synagogue, because it makes it simpler for people to refer to us as a family unit – i.e., “We’re having the Grysman’s over for lunch on Shabbat.” So while “Dr. and Mrs. Noam Grysman” grinds my gears in a way I cannot describe without using harsh language, when I see “Dr. Noam and Mrs. Ruth Grysman,” it doesn’t rub against the grain in quite the same fashion.

Upon discussing the matter with my husband, he can relate to my frustration. While he is not a formal person – at work, he goes by his first name and is commonly known as Dr. G – he doesn’t like when mail is addressed to him as mister instead of doctor. Either use no title or use the correct one, he says.

I think that’s what it comes down to for women like me: when people use our husbands’ names in place of ours, they are not going by our “correct title.” Those of us who it bothers strongly see ourselves as a unit outside of our husbands, and want to be addressed as such.

Novelist Tabitha King recently wrote a sarcastic response to an Associated Press headline that read, “Stephen King and his wife donate $1.25M to New England Historic Genealogical Society” – despite the gift originally being her idea. In her retort, she questioned why she was referred to as “wife of” and not “OfStephen,” “His Old Lady” or “His Ball-and-Chain.” Although the majority of women still take their husbands’ last names – a holdover from the ninth century doctrine of coverture – the number of women who choose to hyphenate, keep their maiden names or do something non-traditional, like come up with a new last name, is on the rise.

Being the scientist that I am, I asked around in a very non-scientific way (we call this anecdotal evidence) to get a sample of other women’s feelings on the issue. Their reasoning ranged from sentimental to practical. One doctor stated that her parents paid for and supported her through medical school, so she wanted to keep their maiden name, so they kept it for continuity. Another category of women, of course, loved taking their husband’s last name, feeling that it made them a family unit. There were some who even looked forward to shedding their original last names and particular family affiliations. And this list doesn’t even include those who smushed their last names together to make a totally new one to express their equality to their husband.

By no means am I saying everyone is bothered by this. But some of us are. So what should you do if you’re planning a simcha and you don’t know someone’s preferred manner of address? I’d say, as with most things, the best solution is communication. Just ask. We’re more than happy to tell you.

Mrs. Noam Grysman, a.k.a. Ruth Shach, is a clinical psychology doctoral student at Saint Louis University.

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At **Le Windsor**, be a guest at your own celebration

The Windsor Ballrooms name has long been synonymous with luxury and prestige in Montreal. First created as an annex to the Windsor Hotel in the early 1900s, these magnificent ballrooms, located at 1170 Peel St., are as much an esteemed venue for celebrations and events now as they were a century ago. Although the hotel was transformed to Le Windsor office complex in the 1980s, the Windsor Ballrooms were preserved and continue to maintain the same level of elegance and sophistication that reflect its storied past.

There is no denying that anyone attending a simcha, gala or event at Le Windsor is impressed by its opulence and distinctive architectural details. However, planning an event there is also affordable due to the team's willingness to modify packages to suit your budget. Whether your celebration will be a large and lavish affair or a more intimate one, Le Windsor can accommodate your vision and desire.

“Don’t be intimidated by the grandeur of our ballrooms,” explains Dan Bensoussan, Le Windsor’s owner for the past 22 years. “Our goal is to make sure your event is beautiful and is a complete success, no matter the budget.”

The venue boasts the iconic Windsor and Versailles ballrooms and Peacock Alley, as well as their most recent addition, the Crystal Lounge, which was designed by architect Philip Hazan. The Windsor and Versailles can each accommodate up to 400 seated guests, and are a favourite for receptions, bar/bat mitzvahs and galas. Meanwhile, Peacock Alley, with its chandeliers and marble floor, makes a perfect backdrop for wedding ceremonies and cocktail or engagement parties.

“The Crystal Lounge, which has a contemporary style with high ceilings, a mirror wall and wood floor,” says Bensoussan. “It’s ideal for engagement or birthday celebrations, henna parties or even corporate events. Plus, it has a wonderful view of Dorchester Square.”

Possibilities for layout and décor are extensive, ensuring that no two events are the same. “We’ve had clients plan multiple events with us and each one is unique,” he says. “We can reconfigure the layout in all of our rooms to accommodate any size crowd and we will transform the space according to your décor selection.”

When you plan an affair at Le Windsor, what you can expect is a turnkey experience. From menus and décor to flowers and music, everything is co-ordinated in-house by their team of professional event planners. As well, there is a bridal suite available for the wedding party on site. Across the street from the building is Dorchester Square, which makes an ideal setting for wedding photos.

“We’re actually a one-stop shop,” says Bensoussan. “From beginning to end, we guide you through the entire process to make sure your experience is a memorable one. We want you to come as a guest to your own event.”

Whatever your simcha, Le Windsor ensures the entire process will be beyond your expectations. “Our motto is: The Windsor Ballrooms, where dreams come to life,” he adds.

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