

HAWAIIAN DREAM

HANA ESAKI & SAM NOWAKOWSKI

January 20, 2018 Waimea, Hawaii | Photographed by Chris J. Evans Photography

Though they were only a year apart at Vanderbilt University, it wasn't until Hana Esaki and Sam Nowakowski were both in New York City that they met. "I had been working in Hong Kong for six weeks and was returning to New York right before New Year's Eve without any plans," Hana explains. Her friend invited her to a concert she was attending with a few guy friends from college, and they met up with the group – which included Sam – before the show. "To this day, it was

one of the most fun nights of my life – I was so drawn to Sam's personality," reminisces Hana. "He was so confident, thoughtful, open-minded, and just loved life and wanted everyone around him to have a good time." Once it was time to go to the concert, the night was not quite as successful for Sam. "I was turned away at the door after being sold fake tickets," he laughs. Luckily, meeting Hana was more than enough to make up for it. "We were pretty smitten right away," he adds.



RESOURCES

Beauty
Meili Autumn Beauty

Bridal Gown
Louvienne

Bridal Salon
Lovely Bride

Bridal Stylist
Sew Elegant Bridal

Calligraphy
Miss B. Calligraphy

Catering/Cake
Mauna Kea Beach Hotel,
Autograph Collection

Consulting
Unveiled Hawaii

Entertainment
Island Kings Band
KCK Entertainment

Favors
Burke Candy & Ingredients

Floral Design
Grace Flowers Hawaii

Honeymoon
Andaz Maui at Wailea Resort
Four Seasons Resort Hualalai

Invitations/Paper Goods
Bella Figura

Jewelry
Michaels Jewelry Designs

Lighting Design
Inspiration Events Hawaii

Linens
ModMix Studio

Mothers' Gowns
Adrianna Papell

Photography
Chris J. Evans Photography

Registry
Zola

Rentals
Hawaii Island Events
Inspiration Events Hawaii

Veil
THEIA

Venue
Mauna Kea Beach Hotel,
Autograph Collection

Videography
Vacarti



They dated for the next four years, and Sam knew it was time to start preparing to propose. Since Hana's parents live in Osaka, Japan, he had to contact them remotely to ask for their blessing. "Her dad started crying when I was asking, which made me start to cry. It was pretty special," Sam reveals. Thanks to a folder detailing what she wanted in an engagement ring that Hana gave her beau a year into their relationship, Sam was able to work with her sister to find the perfect ring. The family of his beloved was also involved in the proposal plan. "He had convinced my parents to spend the holidays with his family that year. I had no idea that he, my sister, and our parents were all in on it," shares Hana, who admits she had hoped for an engagement that summer. "My sister even told me not to expect it at Christmas!" Early on Christmas morning, he popped the question while the couple was still lying in bed. When they came downstairs, both their families were waiting by the tree with Champagne. "It was the best day," she muses.

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The bride quickly knew she wanted to get married in Hawaii. “The Big Island is a place that my Japanese grandmother would take my family for vacation. It’s my favorite place on earth, and at the time I thought she might be able to travel to Hawaii for our wedding,” she notes. “Although she wasn’t able to, I still feel like the wedding was for her, and she loved seeing all the photos.” With the help of the planning team at Unveiled Hawaii, Hana was surprised to find preparing for the big day a breeze.

The father of the bride is a Presbyterian pastor and performed the ceremony in a hakama, traditional Japanese attire for men. “He never wanted to marry his daughters, both because English is his second language and he is very emotional when it comes to his family,” elaborates Sam. “I’d like to think I played a pretty big part in convincing him to do it and nobody involved would trade that experience.” The vow exchange was held outside overlooking the ocean. Hana was elegant as she walked down the aisle in a minimalist crepe gown paired with a cathedral veil embellished with polka-dot appliqués. Despite tears from both the groom and the father of the bride during the rehearsal, the ceremony went smoothly. “The wedding sermon was better than we could have ever imagined, and the video recording of it is something we’ll treasure forever,” confirms Sam.





A subtle color palette of emerald, white, blush, and gold created a classic aesthetic with influences of the beach for the alfresco reception. “All I wanted was a canopy of lights hanging over the entire space and dance floor,” affirms the bride. Guests enjoyed their meal under the night sky while sitting at long banquet tables showcasing small centerpieces of vanilla blossoms. The head table featured a lush runner of florals and greenery that cascaded to the lawn below.

After a week spending time with friends and family on the island before the big day, the celebration itself was a dream. Hana muses, “I wish we could get married every year.”

EMILY LASNIER

