

HELLO!

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AND TELLS US
EVERYTHING**

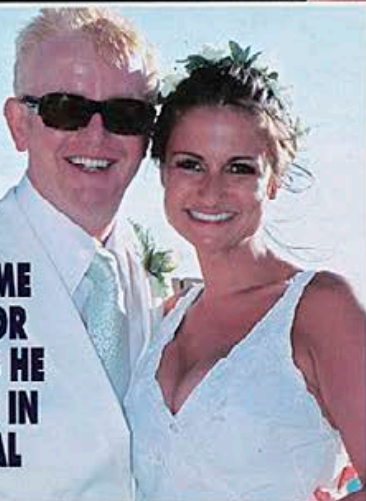
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**THIRD TIME
LUCKY FOR
CHRIS AS HE
MARRIES IN
PORTUGAL**



SOPHIA LOREN PLAYS MOTHER-OF-THE-GROOM AS HER SON EDOARDO WEDS ACTRESS SASHA ALEXANDER

'My son is so happy;
and Sasha was
gorgeous. Today the
real star wasn't me –
it was the bride'



It was just eight months ago that Sophia Loren weathered one of the saddest times of her life, losing her beloved partner of more than 50 years, her filmmaker husband Carlo Ponti. But last week the film legend saw one of her brightest days yet as she watched her movie director son Edoardo Ponti wed *X-Men* actress Sasha Alexander in Geneva, the city where her children were born, and that she and Carlo called home.

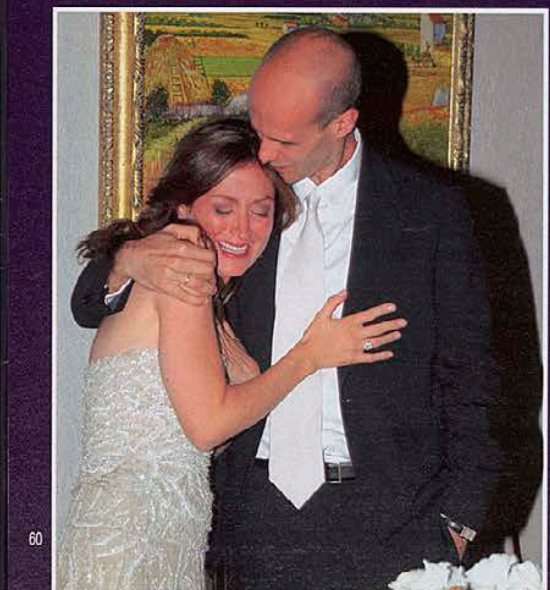
It was early afternoon on a sunny Sunday when Edoardo and Sasha married in an intimate ceremony at Geneva's Russian Orthodox Church, surrounded by a small group of family and friends. They'd got ready – separately of course – at the two homes Sophia owns, both in the same building: as Edoardo prepared in Sophia's original home, his bride, wearing her one-of-a-kind engagement ring by Orianna Sabrier, slipped into her beaded Armani wedding gown in the other.

The wedding party then made a glamorous arrival at the nearby church, pulling up in five Maseratis. The venue was Edoardo's late father's favourite – "He was Catholic, but this was the only church he liked to go into," he explains – and it also was a nod to the Orthodox background of Sasha, the daughter of Serbian-born parents.

Clutching a bouquet of white roses and dandelions, Sasha walked down the aisle on the arm of her uncle Misha, who was standing in for her late father. And when Edoardo, handsome in his Armani suit, saw her, he says: "I was so proud. She was beautiful, just radiant." For weeks he'd not peeked into the closet where Sasha kept her gown. "I wanted to have that surprise," he explains. ▶



'I'm so grateful...
thank you Sophia
for being such
a beautiful,
marvellous mother'
Sasha



"We didn't want a huge red carpet wedding," says Edoardo. "We wanted something small, and real." In line with the sentiment, Sasha fought back tears as she paid tribute to her new mother-in-law. The emotion engulfed everyone, and the legendary actress couldn't help but embrace Sasha (above) – one of many precious moments in a memorable day

new Dean Martin' – who has sung for President Bush as well as the Queen. "This wedding isn't like a door we're passing through to start our lives together," explains Edoardo. "It's more of a celebration of the life that we're already sharing, and of our future together."

As she welcomed Sasha into the family, Sophia shared her thoughts with HELLO!, revealing her most emotional moment, her opinion of her new daughter-in-law and the reason her joy was so bittersweet.

Sophia, how did you feel on your son's big day?
"Happiness mixed with the sadness that my husband wasn't here. I would have loved to have celebrated this day with him. Inside I'm a little bit melancholy."

During her speech, Sasha had some terrific words for you.
"She's wonderful. I've been so lucky that both my sons have chosen two fantastic women who love them so much. It's kind of a lottery – and Sasha and Carlo's wife Andrea are winning numbers, you could say!"

What did you think, seeing Edoardo and Sasha on their wedding day?
"He's so happy; and she was gorgeous. Today the real star wasn't me, it was the bride."

Have you given them any advice?
"The only thing that I always tell my children is that they should live an honest life, to find balance, and that they must absolutely love their family. You can always take refuge in your family."

What was the most emotional moment for you?
"When they exchanged the rings, because that truly represents their union."

Did you give your opinion on the wedding plans?
"No. Edoardo wanted them to do everything on their own because he wanted something that really reflected them. And everything went so well. I'm very pleased, he did a great job. I see that he's happy, so I'm happy."

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