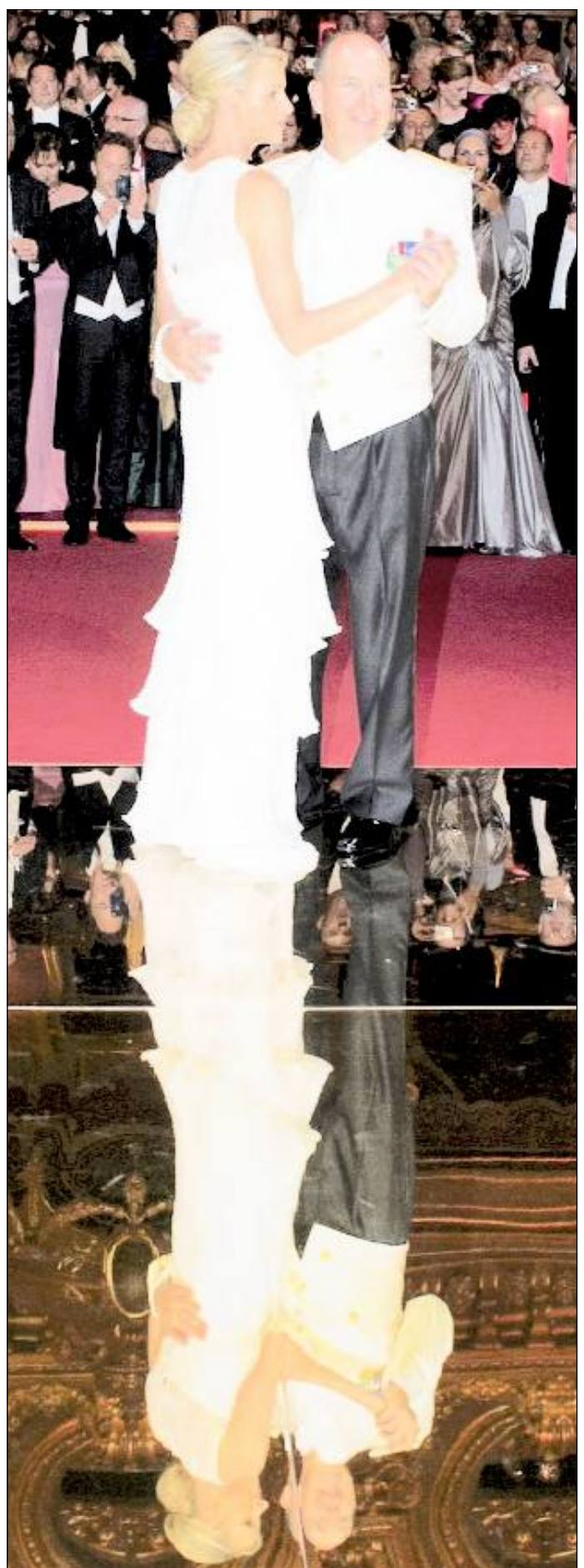




A combination of four images taken from video shows Princess Charlene of Monaco wiping away tears as she listens to an emotional rendition of a song at the Saint Devoté church in Monaco after their religious wedding ceremony on Saturday. PICTURES: REUTERS



Prince Albert opens the gala ball with Princess Charlene at the Opera Garnier.



The newly married couple cut their wedding cake at the gala dinner at the Opera Garnier in Monaco.

The tears of a new people's princess

Monaco's new princess, South Africa's Charlene Wittstock, began her reign with an outburst of emotion that endeared her to the principality's people

Claire Lathbury
The Riviera Times

WAS IT the sheer magnitude of her commitment; the ecstatic reception by hundreds of scouts, Red Cross and other volunteers at Sainte Dévote; the beauty of the mother-daughter's duet rising up in this pretty church where she had come to lay her bouquet; or coping with persistent rumours that she tried to run away?

Whatever the reason, the tears produced an outpouring of affection among her people for whom the Grimaldi clan she has chosen to join represents the head of a large family.

Monaco and its new princess excelled themselves at the weekend with an intensely moving and lavish religious ceremony in the main courtyard of the principality's palace, which had been turned into a consecrated "church" for the occasion.

Charlene looked every inch a princess as she walked down the red carpet to the palace on the arm of her father, Michael Wittstock. Her mother, Lynette, and brothers Gareth and Sean were also present. The off-the-shoulder white satin dress, designed by Giorgio Armani and embroidered with 40 000 Swarovski crystals and 30 000 seed pearls, enhanced her natural elegance while the 5m long train of silk tulle added drama and pageantry to the occasion. She

wore no jewellery and no tiara; just a diamond-studded hair-piece lent by her sister-in-law Princess Caroline.

Her prince looked equally dashing in the cream summer uniform of the palace guards (Carabiniers), the sleeves embroidered with oak and olive leaves, and his chest emblazoned with medals for the Order of Saint Charles, the Order of the Grimaldi and France's Legion of Honour.

The catholic ceremony and mass was led by Archbishop Barsi and ended on a superb rendering of *Ave Maria* by Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli. The world-class Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra and choir provided the music.

As the couple left the palace, they were showered with rose petals as they walked through the 3 000-plus guests who were seated in the square watching the service on giant screens.

The couple were then driven in an open-topped, low-emission Lexus car down the road from the Rock to Port Hercule, past crowds lining the road to cheer them on, to the Sainte Dévote church.

It was here where Charlene followed the tradition of placing her bouquet inside for the patron saint of Monaco. For 15 minutes all the pomp and ceremony were left behind as the prince and princess got out of the car to give this homespun crowd of volunteers a chance to take photos and greet their new princess.



Prince Albert II gazes at his new bride with concern as she wipes away tears during an emotional rendition of a song at the Saint Devoté church. Charlene dropped off her bridal bouquet at the church, named after the patron saint of Monaco, following their wedding at the palace.

This tiny symbolic church tucked away at the bottom of a ravine is a very spiritual place at the heart of the principality's religious tradition. *The*

Song to the Virgin Mary sung by Marie-Clotilde Wurz-DeBaets in a duet with her daughter Juliette, 11, provided an unexpectedly moving inter-

lude, away from the tumult of what had gone before – a moment for the bride to reflect on the significance of what she had committed herself to in

the eyes of the church. The marriage represents a new beginning for the principality and the fervent hope here is that it will succeed.

Ducasse's right royal banquet

RENOWNED French chef Alain Ducasse prepared what he termed a "finely crafted festive menu" of local seafood and vegetables for Saturday's royal wedding banquet in Monaco.

Albert II and Princess Charlene gave 800 honoured guests a meal that sought to flatter the prince's reputation as an environmentalist. The meal was described as a "sincere, appropriate cuisine that pays tribute to a rich and generous land".

The tiny principality is almost entirely built over with 1970s concrete blocks of flats,

gaudy casinos and luxury hotels, but Ducasse ransacked kitchen gardens and nearby waters for ingredients.

The first course was a Monaco family favourite, traditionally eaten with the fingers, "barbagiuani". Served warm in a fabric presentation box, it is a stew of vegetables, egg, sheep's milk and cheese served under rissoles.

The guests then enjoyed Potargue or Bottargo – marinated golden mullet served on an oval dish of tomatoes, olives and vegetables. Carbohydrate came in the

form of small spelt, an ancestor of wheat still grown in the Provençal highlands looming behind the principality, and cooked with carrots, onion, celery and mushrooms.

Local fish were served in a delicate bouillon over new potatoes in saffron broth and wrapped in "sunshine-covered spice" from the same hills.

Milk from the Rocagel district had been made into ice cream served with strawberry jelly and wild red fruits. The wedding cake was currant and vanilla, and wines were from South Africa. – Sapa-AFP

Right hand – wrong hand

PRINCE Albert II of Monaco accidentally tried to slip Princess Charlene's wedding ring on to the wrong hand as they exchanged vows.

Charlene offered him her right hand – the wrong one – as they stood at the altar in the courtyard of their palace on Friday, and the prince gamely began to put it on before the couple realised, smiling at their mistake.

The ring eventually went on the left hand and the service continued. – Sapa-AFP



After getting their hands mixed up, Albert eventually puts the wedding ring on Charlene's correct finger.

'It was like winning the World Cup'

PRINCESS Charlene's marriage to Monaco's Prince Albert II felt like winning the World Cup, her father, Mike Wittstock, told South Africa's Sunday Times newspaper.

"It's just such a proud moment that I cannot describe. We are so happy for them," he said. "It feels as if we've just won the World Cup."

But the pageantry was dimmed by reports on rumours that the 33-year-old had been intercepted trying to flee home to South Africa earlier in the week.

"I am so disappointed that people believe this nonsense. I am also very disappointed in the South African media who picked up on the story and ran



Mike Wittstock escorts his daughter, Charlene, on the red carpet at the Place du Palais for the religious wedding ceremony.

with it before finding out the facts for themselves," her father said.

"It's rubbish. I was with

them the entire time until late at night. It did not happen," he said in an interview. – Sapa-AFP

Benoni's goal was to watch sport

LOCALS in Charlene Wittstock's childhood home wished her well in her marriage to Monaco's Prince Albert II, but many seemed more interested in the rugby.

Much of Charlene's family still lives in Benoni. But no viewing parties were planned.

In the streets, the only sign of the event was the occasional poster for the local newspaper proclaiming "Benoni's royal wedding".

"It's fantastic for her," said Wendy Liebenberg, whose son was one class above Charlene at high school. "My family will definitely watch it on TV while having a cup of tea."

But at the Bunny Park, a bucolic expanse loved by rabbits where the new princess of Monaco used to spend time, Carl de Villiers did not seem quite so enthused.

"We are very happy for her. We'll probably switch on the TV," he said, tossing carrots to rabbits. "But there's rugby too."

Born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, in 1978, her family moved to South Africa when she was 10, settling in Benoni. Seven years later she moved to Durban to pursue her swimming career full-time.

The SABC devoted hours of commercial-free airtime to show the wedding live, but Charlene faced stiff competition with many televisions in restaurants and pubs following Wimbledon or the Durban July. As the bride began walking down the red carpet came the kick-off of the Super 15 semi-final between the Stormers and Crusaders in Cape Town.

Among the few wedding watchers was Karyn Themistocleous, manager of Portuguese

restaurant Trinchado's. "We usually have rugby on a Saturday, but not today. We have the wedding," she said in her near-empty venue. Not far away, the much busier McGinty's ignored the wedding.

The Grid and Grill, a pub favoured by Charlene's father, had announced that her friends would gather to watch the wedding over a pint. But all its screens were tuned to rugby.

"We don't broadcast the wedding," said owner Don Milligan.

"There were only one or two people who were interested actually. There were more people who booked for the rugby."

Two older women walked out towards their car. "It's only rugby inside. We're going home to watch the end of the wedding on TV," one said. – Sapa-AFP