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MenAlive salutes ‘The One’ in Elton John tribute concert

IRVINE, CA — When MenAlive, the Orange County Gay Men’s Chorus, takes the stage at the Irvine Barclay Theater to perform the music of Elton John, it will be more than another outstanding concert. It’s a way for the renowned choral group to say “thank you” to its own diva, The One who inspired so many of its members by validating the LGBTD community and opening the door to acceptance and understanding.

“I went to his concert at Dodger Stadium in 1976. By then, I knew I liked boys, but was scared to death by that attraction,” says Bob Gunn, MenAlive’s Artistic Director. “When I saw how flamboyant John was on the stage, and how much the crowd loved him, I began to feel better about myself.”

Robb Neale, MenAlive’s Creative Manager, adds that “Elton John is rock and roll and royalty. He’s one of the highest-profile gay men in the world, and he uses his fame in the most positive ways possible; to build bridges of understanding, and to fight AIDS.”

MenAlive will give a unique spin to John classics including Benny and the Jets, Rocket Man, Candle in the Wind, and many other popular tunes by Sir Elton.

John assumed a leading role in funding AIDS research after befriending Ryan White, a teenager who faced overwhelming discrimination after contracting the disease through a blood transfusion. Two years after White died in 1990, John started the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF).

Since then, the Foundation has raised more than \$321 million worldwide for the treatment and prevention of AIDS, with about \$45 million coming from one event; the EJAF's Annual Academy Awards Viewing Party. Now in its 22nd year, the event is one of the most popular after-Oscar parties among Hollywood A-Listers.

“The One” will be performed at the Irvine Barclay Theater Friday, June 26 at 8 pm, and Saturday, June 27 at 3 pm and 8 pm. Tickets start at \$35 and can be purchased online at TheBarclay.org or by calling 949/ 854-4646.

Gunn says MenAlive is more than an arts and entertainment group. Through its performances, community outreach, and friendship, it promotes understanding and acceptance for the LGBT community. It counters the blind fear and discrimination that threatens all of society, especially youth.

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, MenAlive's mission: “Through music, men's voices unite to entertain, inform, bring healing, joy, friendship and build bridges to the public at large.” Since its founding in 2001, the group has grown from about 30 members to be one of Orange County's largest and most respected choruses, and is an integral part of the southern California arts scene.

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