



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **MenAlive members share their stories in concert**

**IRVINE, CA** — “*We Are Family* is the perfect theme for what will be our most personal concert ever,” says Robb Neale, Creative Director of MenAlive, the Orange County Gay Men’s Chorus. “Our members, through song, dance and our usual boisterous comedy, will tell the world who we are, what we’ve experienced, why we do what we do, and how MenAlive has impacted our lives.”

In their 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert, MenAlive will perform songs by such diverse artists as The Police, Bruno Mars, Pharrell Williams, Billy Joel, and of course, Sister Sledge. One of the evenings highlights will be a musical version of Armistead Maupin’s touching letter from *Tales from the City* in which a young man comes out to his parents after learning they have joined an anti-gay group.

Throughout the concert, individual chorus members will share stories such as the one below about meeting their future husbands, coming out, personal losses and triumphs and more.

#### **Robb Neale**

“I met Sanford Liu at a dinner party thrown by mutual friends. There was an instant attraction and I managed to sit next to him at dinner. I didn’t see him for several months, but when I did, I felt that same attraction. I broke up with my

boyfriend and called Sanford to ask him out. He said yes. We had a great first date, so I asked him to go a party with me the very next night. He said yes. Then we shared a picnic on the 4th of July, where, on our third date, I got down on one knee and asked him to spend the rest of his life with me. He said yes.”

### **Lonnie James**

“Since I was just five years old, I knew I was special. But being born into a conservative Mormon family, I learned to hide my specialness. I dated girls in high school, then met and married Diana, my sister’s roommate. Finally, after a lifetime of praying for God to remove my feelings for men, I realized what I should really be asking; ‘What do I do with this attraction?’ After a tearful and angry but honest conversation with Diana, we decided to separate. When our four kids learned I was out, they refused to speak to me.

I moved to California and met Tom at the Main Street Bar in Laguna Beach. He was leaving soon to visit China and told me I could stay at his place until he got back. I thought anyone that trusting must be worth knowing. We’ve been together 12 years, and were married on our tenth anniversary. And today, my — I should say our — children love their “Pa” and “Faux-Pa”... as do our 16 grandchildren.”

### **Dan Martin**

I met my partner Marc while working at the long gone Broadway Department Store. He sometimes flirted with me when he shopped, and one day gave me his business card. After three months, I worked up the nerve to call him, but he was attached. Flash forward 15 years. I’m at the Boom with my ex and see a familiar face at the bar. I said, “I think I know you.” He replied, “I don’t think so. Who’s your friend?” He chased my ex all night, while I chased him and my ex chased someone else. By the end of the night, Marc got tired of the chase and planted a big

kiss on me. Not a little peck, a real kiss. We exchanged phone numbers and started dating. And we've been together for nine wonderful years."

"Some of these men literally found their voice through MenAlive," says Bob Gunn, the group's Artistic Director. "The family-like environment of acceptance and support has helped them reach their full potential not only as musicians, but as human beings."

Performances of *We Are Family* will be held Friday, April 1 at 8 pm and Saturday, April 2 at 3 pm and 8 pm at the Irvine Barclay Theater on the UC Irvine campus. Tickets start at \$39 and are available at [thebarclay.org](http://thebarclay.org) or 949/ 854-4646 Ext. 1.

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, MenAlive's mission is to "Through music, men's voices unite as a vehicle to entertain, educate, bring healing, joy, community 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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