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The Men Are *Dancing in the Streets*

By Stan Jenson

Orange County's Gay Men's Chorus, Men Alive, just keeps on delivering. These 120+ men, under the artistic direction of Rich Cook, continue to surpass themselves with virtually every show they present, and it looks like this month's offering will be no exception.

Dancing In The Street, March 20 and 21 at the Irvine Barclay Theatre, is a fusion of jazz, soul, and that famous "Motown Sound" as the men bring new life to the music of The Supremes, Smokey Robinson, Aretha Franklin, The Four Tops, Nat King Cole, The Temptations, and more.

In their first few years, Men Alive always presented a concert of "serious music" in the spring. However, the audiences repeatedly said that they wanted music they could tap their toes to, so Men Alive has managed to retain their musical excellence while performing such familiar tunes as "Midnight Train to Georgia," and "What's Goin' On?" The result is that their Orange County concerts sell out faster, and they are acknowledged

across the country following festival performances with gay choruses from all over North America. No other activity has brought such national pride to Orange County's gay community.

Broadway veteran Michael Misita has choreographed the majority of Men Alive's concerts over the past eight years. He has been away recently working on other projects, but re-arranged his schedule to stage the dance numbers for Dancing In The Street. The group's movements are divided between small dance groups and general chorus movements. The small groups audition, attend numerous extra rehearsals, and dance in front of the chorus on selected numbers.

The chorus movements – referred to as "chorusography" – sometimes add a very difficult load on top of tricky harmonies and rhythms, but what gay man doesn't love to move? The effect of watching 120 gay men, spanning several generations, all moving together is infectious.

Misita is able to pull out steps he learned from Bob Fosse and Michael Bennett, and pass them on to our hometown men. The audiences howl!

Artistic Director Rich Cook is a magician in his ability to balance humor, movement, and musical integrity, while consistently surprising and delighting audiences. He is renown for combining show-stopping numbers into incredible medleys, such as the opening combination of "Welcome to the Apollo," "Reach Out," "Get Ready," "Baby I need Your Lovin'," "Little Bitty Pretty," "I Can't Get Next to You," and "Sugar Pie Honey Bunch."

While the chorus men are dancing in the streets, it won't be surprising to find the audiences dancing in the aisles. A Men Alive concert is a delight for all audiences, young, old, gay, and straight. You can bring your family and friends with pride, but

book today – the concerts do sell out!

“Dancing In The Street” plays March 20 at 8 p.m. and March 21 at 3 and 8 p.m. at the Irvine Barclay Theatre on the UCI campus.

Tickets are \$25 - \$47.50 and available at www.TheBarclay.org, or 949-854-4646.

More info at www.MenAliveChorus.org.