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Think Pink: Heartland Men's Chorus Goes Hollywood

Kansas City, MO—Hooray for Hollywood! After traveling the globe for its last concert, Heartland Men's Chorus spends a little time in Tinseltown for its summer production, *The Pink Carpet: Gays, Lesbians & Hollywood* (June 9 & 10, 2007, at the Folly Theater). This original concert production combines film clips, narration, production numbers and the unforgettable voices of Heartland Men's Chorus to trace 100 years of Hollywood history, and the experiences of gays and lesbians in the cinema culture.

Joining the men of HMC for *The Pink Carpet* will be Emmy Award®-winner Leslie Jordan, star of television's "Will & Grace" and the cult hit movie *Sordid Lives*. With a script by Chorus member Ames Hall, Jordan will guide the audience from the silent film era to *Brokeback Mountain*.

The issue of gays in film can hardly be addressed without the "were-they-or-weren't-they" questions about famous stars. *The Pink Carpet* will venture into that territory, examining the rumors swirling around personalities such as Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Rudolph Valentino and Cary Grant. From studio-arranged marriages to the gossip columns of Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons, the concert will examine the attempts made to keep actors' sexuality shrouded in secrecy.

HMC will also introduce audiences to The Production Code of 1934, an explicit set of rules governing what acts could (and could not) be shown on the screen. In a musical sequence called "Doin' the Production Code," the Chorus will combine the actual text of The Production Code with a tap dance number, illustrating Hollywood's often hilarious attempts at self-censorship.

The Pink Carpet will examine the rise of The Sissy as a stock character in films during The Golden Age of Hollywood. "Oh, you've seen the type," Hall notes. "The Sissy was the smart-mouthed maitre d', the snooty

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hotel manager or the hero's hapless, and oddly devoted, 'bachelor' friend." These sexless, non-threatening portrayals were often Hollywood's only way of acknowledging the existence of gay men.

Of course, Hollywood could sometimes be a drag: cross dressing has a long history in film. Marlene Dietrich created a scandal in a top hat and tails; Jack Lemon and Tony Curtis donned dresses for laughs in *Some Like it Hot*. *The Pink Carpet* will salute these gender-benders in song and dance. Famous tunes from the silver screen will also be highlighted in the concert, including "Secret Love," "As Time Goes By" and "You Oughta Be in Pictures."

Adding variety to the concert's glitz and glamour will be a investigation of Hollywood's reaction to the AIDS epidemic. In dealing with the crisis, Hollywood produced films such as *Longtime Companion* and *Philadelphia*, finally offering realistic, contemporary portraits of the gay and lesbian community.

The Pink Carpet is the latest in a line of "musical documentaries" created by HMC. It follows the success of two other issue-oriented concerts: *The Few, The Proud*, which examined gays in the military, and *All God's Children*, which explored the spiritual experiences of the GLBT community.

"This type of topical concert has really become our niche," says Joe Nadeau. "Gay and lesbian choruses have often been called 'cultural warriors' as a positive voice for the GLBT community. Topic-driven concerts like this prove we are still a relevant voice."

The concert also boasts two additional events of interest its audience: a free film festival and the annual wine raffle.

In the weeks leading up to the concert, HMC will partner with The Kansas City Gay & Lesbian Film Festival to present "The Pink Carpet Film Series." This one-of-a-kind free film series showcases four seminal movies featuring GLBT themes. The films presented include *The Celluloid Closet* (May 3), the award winning documentary that served as source material for *The Pink Carpet*, *The Gay Divorcee* (May 9), *The Boys in the*

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Band (May 17) and *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (May 23). All the films begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Tivoli Cinemas in Westport. For more information about the free film series, visit www.kcgayfilmfest.org.

During the concert, the Chorus will present its annual wine raffle. For \$5 per ticket, audience members will have a chance to win “The Wall of Wine,” more than 100 bottles of fine wines. Proceeds from the wine raffle benefit the GALA Travel Fund. This fund allows members of Heartland Men’s Chorus to represent Kansas City at the international GALA Choruses Festival.

Heartland Men’s Chorus performs *The Pink Carpet* Saturday, June 9 at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday June 10 at 4:00 p.m. at the Folly Theater, 300 W. 12th Street. Tickets starting at \$15.00 are available online at www.hmckc.org or by calling 816-931-3338.

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