

OKLAHOMA ACTRESS & BROADWAY STAR



KRISTIN CHENOWETH
SINGER AND ACTRESS

Kristin Chenoweth is an American singer and actress, with credits in musical theatre, film and television. She is best known on Broadway for her 1999 performance as Sally Brown in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, for which she won a Tony Award, and for originating the role of Glinda in the musical *Wicked* in 2003. Her best-known television role is Annabeth Schott in NBC's *The West Wing*. As Olive Snook on the ABC comedy-drama *Pushing Daisies*, she won a 2009 Emmy Award. She also starred in the ABC TV series *GCB* in 2012.

Adopted as a baby, Kristi Dawn Chenoweth was born and grew up in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, a suburb of Tulsa. She has said she is one-quarter Cherokee. At an early age, she performed gospel songs for local churches. A performing highlight of her childhood was a solo appearance at the Southern Baptist Convention national conference at the age of 12, where she performed the Evie song *Four Feet Eleven*. The chorus begins, "I'm only 4 feet 11, but I'm going to Heaven." Chenoweth is 4 feet 11 inches tall.

She sang gospel music as a child and studied opera before deciding to pursue a career in musical theatre. In 1997, she made her Broadway debut in *Steel Pier*. Besides *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* and *Wicked*, Chenoweth's stage work includes five City Center Encores! productions, Broadway's *The Apple Tree* in 2006 and *Promises, Promises* in 2010, as well as Off-Broadway and regional theatre productions.

Chenoweth had her own TV series *Kristin* in 2001, and has guest-starred on many shows, including *Sesame Street* and *Glee*, for which she was nominated for Emmy awards in 2010 and 2011. In films, she has played mostly character roles, such as in 2005's *Bewitched*, 2006's *The Pink Panther*, and 2006's *RV*. She has also played roles in made-for-TV movies, done voice work in animated films and the animated TV series *Sit Down, Shut Up*, hosted several award shows and released several albums of songs, including *A Lovely Way to Spend Christmas* in 2008 and *Some Lessons Learned* in 2011. Chenoweth also penned a 2009 memoir, *A Little Bit Wicked: Life, Love, and Faith in Stages*.

After graduating from Broken Arrow Senior High, where she participated in school plays, Chenoweth attended Oklahoma



City University. She earned a bachelor's degree in musical theatre and a master's degree in opera performance, studying under voice instructor Florence Birdwell, who also trained Miss America 1981 Susan Powell and three-time Tony nominee Kelli O'Hara. It was Birdwell who suggested to Chenoweth that she add an "n" to her first name. While at OCU, Chenoweth competed in beauty pageants, winning the title of "Miss OCU" and was the first runner-up in the Miss Oklahoma pageant in 1991.

Chenoweth participated in a number of vocal competitions and was named "most promising up-and-coming singer" in the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions, which came with a full scholarship to Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts. Two weeks before school started, however, she went to New York City to help a friend move. While there, she auditioned for the 1993 Paper Mill Playhouse production of the musical *Animal Crackers* and got the role of Arabella Rittenhouse. She turned down the scholarship and moved to New York to do the show and pursue a career in musical theatre.

Kristin Chenoweth was inducted into the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame November 10, 2011, in Muskogee.