

# Extraordinary, Enchanting, & Elegant

*Many entertain, but few exhibit the grace and breadth  
of talent Kristin Chenoweth has*

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DESIGNER (GOWN & SUIT): CHRISTIAN SIRIANO  
DESIGNER (SHOES): CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN  
DESIGNER: (EARRINGS): CZ BY KENNETH JAY LANE  
DESIGNER: (NECKLACE & RING): BARONNESS  
STYLING: ANGELIQUE O'NEIL

**I**t's a sunny afternoon in late September when I step off the elevator and find a foyer fit for the pages of *Architectural Digest*. The moniker on the wall: Christian Siriano. I peek my head into the room to the right and find John, Christian's PR/VIP coordinator. He leads me to the other side of the New York showroom, brings me bottled water, then slips away behind the wall where Christian and his team are busy at work. I've never been one to fawn over couture (why pine for pieces I can't afford?), but as I wait for Kristin Chenoweth to arrive, that is exactly what I am doing. Now that I'm alone, I momentarily consider poring over the stunning collection at my fingertips, but I fear that might be intrusive, so I seat myself at the table placed off-center of the sundrenched space. Dresses in an array of hues, textures, and cuts hang pristinely on black rolling racks hugging the perimeter of the room. A headless mannequin modeling a bridal-white ball gown with a plunging back stands in front of me. Chic gold shelves hold a mélange of purses. Classics from Sinatra's time play softly. I am enchanted.



A couple of minutes later, Kristin arrives —accompanied by her publicist, makeup artist, et al— wearing a sleeveless black and gold sequined top, cuffed light-colored jeans, and gold-toned stilettos. Her shoulder length blonde hair is wavy and her blue eyes are darkly rimmed and balanced with a pale lip. In an effort to alleviate the multi-hyphenate's busy schedule, we're meeting at Christian's as he is designing and dressing her for *My Love Letter to Broadway*, her upcoming Broadway show. With such an impressive list of back-to-back projects on the horizon, I'm not sure where to start and I tell her that. "Vacation?" suggests the Oklahoma native. "I'm living for December 8th. Well, I shouldn't say that — I'm living to do all this cool stuff. And then I'm going to have a vacation." Her distinct soprano twang is ardent yet hushed, which surprises me since I know her as the actress with the elevated voice from films like *Four Christmases* alongside Reese Witherspoon and *You Again* with Jamie Lee Curtis. Her unexpectedly-quiet delivery makes me feel as though she's sharing intimate information with me.

While I associate Kristin with film, I am well aware that this triple threat is just as highly revered in the worlds of television, theatre, and music. Technically, she is one award away from being a part of the esteemed EGOT club —the grand slam of American show business. She has won an Emmy, Grammy (*Wicked's* cast received a Grammy for Best Musical Show album, on which she sang on 11 of the 19 tracks, allegedly the Grammy must be an individual one for it to count toward EGOT), and Tony award. The extraordinary range, talent-wise and vocally (she's a classically trained coloratura soprano able to sing the note F6), packed into this petite performer will surely fetch her a Grammy and Oscar one day. Mark my words.

This September, Kristen released her first album of American Songbook classics, *The Art of Elegance*, which debuted at #1 on Billboard's Current Jazz and Traditional Jazz Charts. The 13-song album features a list that includes George Gershwin's "Someone to Watch Over Me," Harold Arlen's "Let's Fall in Love," and my favorite, Charlie

Chaplin's "Smile." "When I was making the list of songs that I wanted to sing, it just kept going back to that era," says Kristin, who cut her teeth on this music. "And I thought, 'Well, I'll never be able to afford a full orchestra. I'll never get violins and French horns.' And somehow we managed to do that. This is a rare thing in today's time. I know Tony [Bennett] and [Lady] Gaga are doing it beautifully. I wanted to represent as well." She smiles broadly. "My mom always told me, 'Try to be as elegant in everything that you do as you are in your music.' And that's what I try to do and there's an art to it. That's how I kinda thought of the album title." Her words are steeped in modesty and as I listen, I find myself becoming more enchanted by her genuine sincerity.

## Follow Your Heart

Two weeks before the Oklahoma City University graduate was supposed to attend The Academy of Vocal Arts ("one of our country's top opera conservatories") on a scholarship, her plans were derailed when she tried out for the musical *Animal Crackers* on a whim and landed the role of Arabella Rittenhouse. "I had to decide what I was going to do. I always have been an actor first. I mean, I love singing and dancing as an extension of that but it's the character and I just wanted to do it." Though her decision disappointed a few, this was something she had to do. "It's important for people to understand that when your heart keeps telling you something over and over and over, there might be a reason. And mine kept saying, 'Go to New York. Go to New York.' So I did it."

Such a powerful and goose-bump-producing voice as hers must be heard live, and from November 2nd-13th the opportunity is available to all when Kristin returns to Broadway with her show *My Love Letter to Broadway* at Lunt-Fontanne Theatre. The show's name is a testament to Broadway being her favorite. "For me it's the live audience. It's always going to be Broadway," she sighs wistfully. "So, it's going to be music." *My Love Letter to Broadway* will feature songs from her new album and past Broadway productions, but every concert will be different —which she credits to her director Richard Jay-Alexander. "It just requires a little bit more of a challenge and little more preparation. But it's Broadway. It's worth it."

As I pepper her with questions about her career in entertainment, Kristin's unabashed affinity for Broadway has

her naturally circling back to the platform. The entertaining virtuoso has thrived in theatre. In 2003, Kristin originated the role of Glinda the Good Witch in the 3-time Tony Award-winning musical *Wicked: The Untold Story of the Witches of Oz*. "I had won a Tony for a show [as Sally Brown in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*] that closed the next day, so I always wanted to be in a show that people could actually come and see and would run. I knew that it would be a hit. I didn't know it would be a phenomenon," says Kristin, adding that she never tires of talking about this role. "It's a big part of my history. I'm honored." On Broadway is also where she played her favorite role

# DRESSED TO THE NINES

A big Broadway production calls for a wardrobe worthy of the spotlight, which is why Kristin called on fashion designer to the stars, Christian Siriano. "I'd been a fan of his from the reality show [*Project Runway*] 'cause, of course, I watched that too," says the reality TV fan. "I wanted to ask him many years ago, but I never did 'cause I never thought he would see us," she says modestly. Kristin gravitates to big gowns --the ones that make a statement. "Christian is a class act and he's elegant and that sort of ties into what I'm trying to do in my show."

"It's always a great, fun fitting. We have a blast," says Christian, in an impromptu chat with me before I leave his studio. "I think what Kristin is going to wear to the show is really amazing. Very different. It's not necessarily like costumes per se, it's more fashion, which I think will be a very nice change for a stage performance... Everything is about color... She's so petite and little but carries herself so she can really work a dress and that's always a great, great client you want to have."

EXCLUSIVE



to-date: Lily Garland in *On the Twentieth Century*, opposite Peter Gallagher. Her masterful performance last year garnered her rave reviews as well as a Drama Desk Award and a Tony Award nomination. “I had always known that I would want to play that role one day. The composers told me, before they passed away, ‘You gotta do it.’ She [Lily] is a diva of the utmost. It took all the skills I have to do her: major physical comedy, highbrow comedy, opera, and dance.”

Once Kristin finishes *My Love Letter to Broadway*, the bicoastal beauty flies to Los Angeles to rehearse for NBC’s musical *Hairspray Live!* The ensemble cast includes Ariana Grande, Jennifer Hudson, Martin Short, among other amazing performers. “I play Velma Von Tussle, who sings ‘Miss Baltimore Crabs.’ She’s the kind of woman who lives vicariously through her daughter and in the past. She’s kinda fun to love to hate or that’ll be my job: to make her fun to hate. I can’t wait to delve into her.” And next year, you can find Kristin on Starz in their new series *American Gods*. Created by Bryan Fuller (who also created *Pushing Daisies*, the TV show that garnered her an Emmy for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series) and Michael Green, it’s unlike anything else on TV, she tells me. Bryan invited her onboard to play the goddess of Easter. “In the book she’s really an interesting character and in the TV show it’s really amazing. So we shot it and I hope I get to come back. She’s a definite force of nature.”

Kristin shines in every arena she enters—from headlining on Broadway and performing at sold-out concerts to starring in highly acclaimed TV shows and films—which makes it hard to believe that the second runner-up of the Miss Oklahoma pageant’s highest hopes growing up were to simply be in the chorus of a Broadway show. A venerable star, her light is too bright—she was born to be in the foreground. “I just thought, if I could just work, pay my rent doing what I love. It never occurred to me that I would be able to make albums, and really get to be an artist this way. I’m really honored by it. People say, ‘You never stop.’ No, I don’t ‘cause I love it and life is short... The balance is a little bit of my Achilles’ heel ‘cause I’m still single and in my 40s. That’s OK. I love it. I just need a vacation,” sighs Kristin. Last year, Kristin was honored with a star on The Hollywood Walk of Fame in the category of Live Theatre/Performance. Her star was fittingly placed in front of Pantages Theatre. “It’s a definite bucket list moment, one that I never thought would happen.” A wide smile spreads across her face. “Sometimes I go by and go, ‘Yeah, that happened.’ I see it. It’s real.” **ML**

Keep up with Kristin at  
<http://www.officialkristinchenoweth.com/>  
 and follow her on Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/kristinchenoweth>,  
 Twitter and Instagram: @KChenoweth

## WE WANT MORE!

What is one word you would use to describe yourself?

“Oh, that’s interesting.” She smiles widely and pauses to think. “Dichotomy. I think it goes back to a little bit more what people think and who I am. For example, I’m a Christian. I have faith in the Lord. I’m also a gay rights activist. That’s a dichotomy. I’m from Oklahoma, but I love a good pair of shoes, not that everyone doesn’t there. I’ll drop some money on shoes. It’s a dichotomy. I’m 4’11” but I will wear the highest platform shoes and the biggest hair you got. You’re never going to find me in flats. I’m a dichotomy. There’s a lot of things about me that don’t seem to sync up with what you think.”

Is there something you haven’t done that you’d like to or someone you’d like to work with?

“I think about that a lot, especially making this album. I grew up listening to Johnny Mathis a ton because my mom and dad love him. I wouldn’t hate making a record with him, singing with him sometime. Renee Fleming is a great opera singer that I admire a lot. I wouldn’t hate singing with her one day.”

What about in TV or movies?

“I think Jessica Chastain is probably one of my favorite actresses – I just like everything she does. I’d love to work with her. I look at Leonardo DiCaprio, what he’s given us over the years and that’s a talent. You don’t deny that’s a gift. I would even love to work with Lady Gaga. I think there’s something interesting about her, not just as an artist, as a singer, as a person, and an actress. She’s really, really good. I saw her on *American Horror Story* and was like, ‘That girl can act.’”

What do you think people would be surprised to find out about you?

“I think there’s a misconception that I’m happy *all* the time. I’m happy, mostly. But I can wake up on the wrong side of the bed... And people are always surprised if I’m in a bad mood. It seems like I’m not allowed to be... I’m not a robot. I’m a happy person, but I can get pissed. I call it Gloves-off-Chenoweth,” she laughs.

What are you watching on TV?

“Unfortunately, I vacillate from really great, great TV to really bad, bad TV. I love *Narcos*, *Bloodline*, *Veep*, those are probably my favorite shows. *Game of Thrones* is my favorite. And then I go over to *The Housewives*, *Botched*, and *Below Deck* – I’m not proud of this,” she says with a guilty smile. “Sometimes I just need to veg out and I watch that and it helps me. Sorry, everyone.”