

Wavemakers

By Kerry Murtha

Award-winning talent Chris Tedesco has been playing on the same violin since he was 12 years old. Like an old friend, the Bavarian-made instrument has accompanied the versatile performer to many a gig. “I’ve played it in symphonies, honky tonks and even alongside [iconic fiddler] Charlie Daniels,” Tedesco reminisced.

The artist’s more than 25-year career took root in New York’s downtown music scene when he was only 22. He then worked with late great guitarist Gordon Gaines and regularly performed with The Downtown Messiah at The Bottom Line, the famed Greenwich Village club that defined rock and roll during the 1970s and ‘80s. The multi-instrumentalist went on to be a sideman—playing violin, guitar and mandolin—for many of the city’s best singers and songwriters, amassing a resume that spans a myriad of genres.

He’s done sessions and one-off performances with the likes of Kenny Loggins, Phoebe Snow and David Johansen and has written songs that have been heard in popular TV shows such as Blue Bloods, Heels and other Netflix and Amazon programs.

Tedesco said he got his big break when he joined the national touring company of the Broadway hit “The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas,” where he shared the stage with legendary star Ann-Margaret and met his future wife, Janelle, an actress in the production.

Soon after, the rising musician founded the Nashville-based country group The Ranchhands, a five piece band that held more than 800 concerts in 25 countries over a seven-year period.

“We were extremely popular in France and Switzerland in our heyday,” Tedesco noted. “I was traveling to Zurich like most people go to Costco,” he fondly remembered. He snagged one of three nominations in 2005 and 2006 for the French Association of Country Music’s in-

ternational musician of the year award, losing out to well-known entertainers Keith Urban and Brad Paisley.



Tedesco founded the country group The Ranchhands, a five-piece band that performed more than 800 concerts in 25 countries between 2002 and 2009.



Chris Tedesco and the Bavarian-made violin he’s been playing since he was 12.

In 2011, Tedesco and his wife traded in their digs in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, for a newly built condo in Arverne. “We didn’t know anyone here but when we found out we could buy an oceanfront condo for half of what we’d pay in our neighborhood, we were sold,” he said.

Today, the 49-year-old has added concert organizer, booking agent and entertainment consultant to his list of accomplishments, curating bands for venues mostly in the

Chris Tedesco:

Musician and Community Leader



Chris Tedesco and his then future wife Janelle in Miami in 2001 when they were touring with Ann-Margaret in the production of “The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas.”



Chris and Janelle with their sons Anthony and Roman during a recent dinner at Whit’s End.

Midwest. “My career has taken many twists and turns,” the veteran acknowledged. He’s opened his own recording studio in Rockaway, where he creates instrumental tracks and his wife records audio book narrations.

He prefers to keep his live performances closer to home these days to be near Janelle and his two young sons. In addition to shows at Long Island inns like the Ram’s Head on Shelter Island and the Baron’s Cove in Sag Harbor, he’s teamed up with The Big Squid for boardwalk concerts at the Caracas Arepa Bar and now has a monthly residency at Thai Rock.

For nearly a decade, Tedesco has been an outspoken member of Community Board 14 and serves as the chair of the board’s transportation committee. “I got involved in the community after Sandy,” said Tedesco. “I was really impressed with the important role the board played in the storm’s aftermath.” His gravitation toward transportation was

a rather organic move. “It was a natural progression I guess given that I’ve been on trains, planes and in automobiles for a good part of my life,” he quipped.

During the pandemic, Tedesco stepped up the work he’s been doing with several teaching artists, helping to develop and craft performing arts programs for libraries and other cultural institutions. Among the projects he’s been working on are Joey Leone’s “History of Blues in America,” Karlus Trapps’ “The Roots of Black Music in America,” and Kirsten Thien’s “Women in Music” series.

Educating through music is an effort he hopes to continue and one day roll out on the peninsula.

“Once we’re on the other side of this pandemic I’d like to work with the city’s library system and make programming available to its branches,” he said. “There are so many aspects to the music business, you just really never know where it will take you.”



Tedesco briefs community board members and meeting attendees on transportation issues.