

Jesse Manno One Page Biography

Revised 2026

Jesse Manno was born into a performing arts family in New York City in 1966 and grew up there and in Fort Collins, CO. He is a multi-lingual singer, and plays lutes, flutes, folk reeds, keyboards, accordion, vocal cords, and percussion instruments, often as a one-man acoustic band, and often with assistance from a laptop computer. He began improvising and composing music as a teen and has since accompanied thousands of dance classes and created hundreds of original scores for modern/ post-modern dance/theatre, film, circus arts, site specific, and special events, including 30+ evening length works. His happy place and natural talent is to read dance, not music, and to buoy images with sound.

A lifetime of curiosity spent in support of others' creative visions has fostered a broad stylistic range, from Indonesian and African diasporic traditions to electronica, musique concrete, jazz, pop/rock, minimalism, and neo-romanticism, blended as appropriate. His deepest training is in Turkish, Greek, Arabic and Balkan music. He co-founded the Balkan- Middle Eastern Music Ensemble SHEREFE in 1995, which plays festivals, weddings, conferences, and special events in Colorado and beyond. Other bands include Boulder Klezmer Consort, Trio Ojaleo, Turkish Massage Owl, The Buzz Band, Barbellfish Balkan Band, Kailin Yong Peace Project, and The Lost Angel Stone Ensemble (instruments of resonating stone).

Performances with his live/recorded music have been presented in all fifty U.S. states, The Netherlands, Germany, France, Switzerland, the U.K., Hong Kong, Cuba, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia at venues including the John Houseman Theater and Lamb's Theater (Off Broadway), BAM, Joyce Theatre, Pacific Place (Hong Kong), and Luna Park (Riyadh). Presenters include Bates Dance Festival, Sacred Mysteries Productions, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, West America Turkic Council, Salt Dance Festival, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Dance Improvisation Festival (Chicago), PBS, and many others. He's received three grants from NEA's Meet The Composer, Inc., and two Kennedy Center Certificates of Merit for new music for Shakespeare and Euripides plays. Music for the film Quantum Qi, which he co-composed, has received 7 Best Original Score awards from various film festivals, and a Silver Medal from Global Music Awards. He is the only musician to receive Colorado's Legends In Dance award.

Collaborating Choreographers/Directors include David Dorfman, Nancy Stark Smith, Onye Ozuzu, Darrell Jones, Kathleen Hermesdorf, Sharron Rose, Nancy Smith/Frequent Flyers, Chris Aiken/Angie Hauser, Michael Foley, Claudia LaVista, Marianela Boan, Lonnie Hanzon, Robert Cohen, Tamara Meneghini, Peter Davison, and a host of Colorado based artists. Musicians/Producers include Michael Verdick, Mickey Houlihan, Mohammed Alidu, Kailin Yong, Amy Denio, Albert Mathias, Tom Wasinger, Robert Een, Beth Quist, Mike Vargas, Egemen Kesikli, Latif Bolat, Nawang Kechog, Sheldon Sands, James Hoskins, Peter Jones, Tigger Benford, Vickie Dodd, Dave Willey and Ty Burhoe. Jesse has also been a session musician on >60 different albums and has produced >25 albums in his project studio.

Jesse received musical training, and a BA in Asian Studies, from the University of Colorado, Boulder. His other music teachers include Ergun Tamer, Bob Beer, Christos Govetas, Naser Musa, Georges Lammam, and I Wayan Dibia. He taught music composition at Naropa University, and teaches workshops at many Universities/Festivals. He is a perennial Artist in Residence at Bates Dance Festival and at American College Dance Association conferences. Since 1991, he has been Music Director of the CU Boulder Dance Program, a part time position where he teaches, hires, manages equipment, does committee work, advises students in musical matters, and loves to play for dance classes.