

# Cellists' Corner

## Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

*prepared by David Johnstone from public information*

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## SPECIAL FEATURE on TOM CORA

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Birth: 14th September 1953 - Yancey Mills, Virginia, U.S.A.

Death: 9th April 1998 - Draguignan, France

Full Name: Thomas Henry Corra

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Thomas Henry Corra, better known as Tom Cora, was an American cellist and composer, best known for his improvisational performances in the field of experimental jazz and rock. He recorded with John Zorn, Butch Morris, and The Ex, and was a member of Curlew, Third Person and Skeleton Crew.

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He took up the cello surprisingly late - while an undergraduate at the University of Virginia and studied with cellist Pablo Casals' student Luis Garcia-Renart.

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In addition to performing with other bands and musicians, Cora began a solo concert career in 1986. The prospect of managing a concert-length solo performance single-handedly was a challenge with risks, but he learned to balance risk with intention and the results were solo performances across North America, Europe and Japan. Two live albums from some of these performances were released in 1987 and 1991.

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Tom Cora's cello was prepared, electronically modified and highly amplified. He developed the style of playing sawed chords and percussive riffs as if his cello was an electric guitar. He banged, scraped and twisted it and did whatever else was necessary to produce the sounds he wanted. On stage, his presence was striking.

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Cora explored non-idiomatic improvising and studied Turkish and Eastern European folk music. The influence of this folk music is evident in much of his work. His group Skeleton Crew once devoted an entire concert to playing only Eastern European folk tunes.

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Hear him live from 1994:

Improvisational classical/avant-garde, not just hear but SEE - what a character !

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9\\_oUW9oQKHw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_oUW9oQKHw)



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