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*W. H. ...*  
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*S. ...*  
New York Times, June 6, 1982

## MUSIC VIEW

JOHN ROCKWELL

# Striking a Political Note

**C**lassical music is conventionally encountered in cloistered halls, cloaked in the musty rituals of concert life. But sometimes music reaches out to engage the larger issues of the day, reminding us of the links between esthetic pleasure and political concern. Just now, several otherwise unrelated events have pointed up the curiously ambivalent relationship between art-music and politics.

Those events began on May 25 with a memorial concert at Symphony Space for Cornelius Cardew, a British composer killed in a hit-and-run accident in London last December. Mr. Cardew had evolved, with an inexorable, seemingly self-punishing logic, from the chilly rigor of total Serialism to the libertine anarchism of John Cage to a determined, neo-folkish simplicity inspired by Marxist-Leninism.

His music never made much of a dent on its own, and after the May 25 concert, it does not seem very likely that it will. But the concert attracted a wide range of new-music composers and performers both on the stage and in the audience. Mr. Cardew's appeal to them must have been more as a moral example than as a compositional model. No matter why they came, however, their presence focused attention on the growing accessibility and, hence, potential for politicization of the younger musical avant-garde.

The second event is this coming Saturday's nuclear disarmament demonstration in Central Park, to the support of which a remarkably wide variety of artists in every medium has rallied. Whatever one thinks of nuclear disarmament, no issue since the Vietnam war has united so many artists in the service of politics.

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