

For I will have won and made you my slave

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Donovan Andrews

A MOMENT for even a moment

February 15, 2026

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The Lark, Hastings NE

7pm

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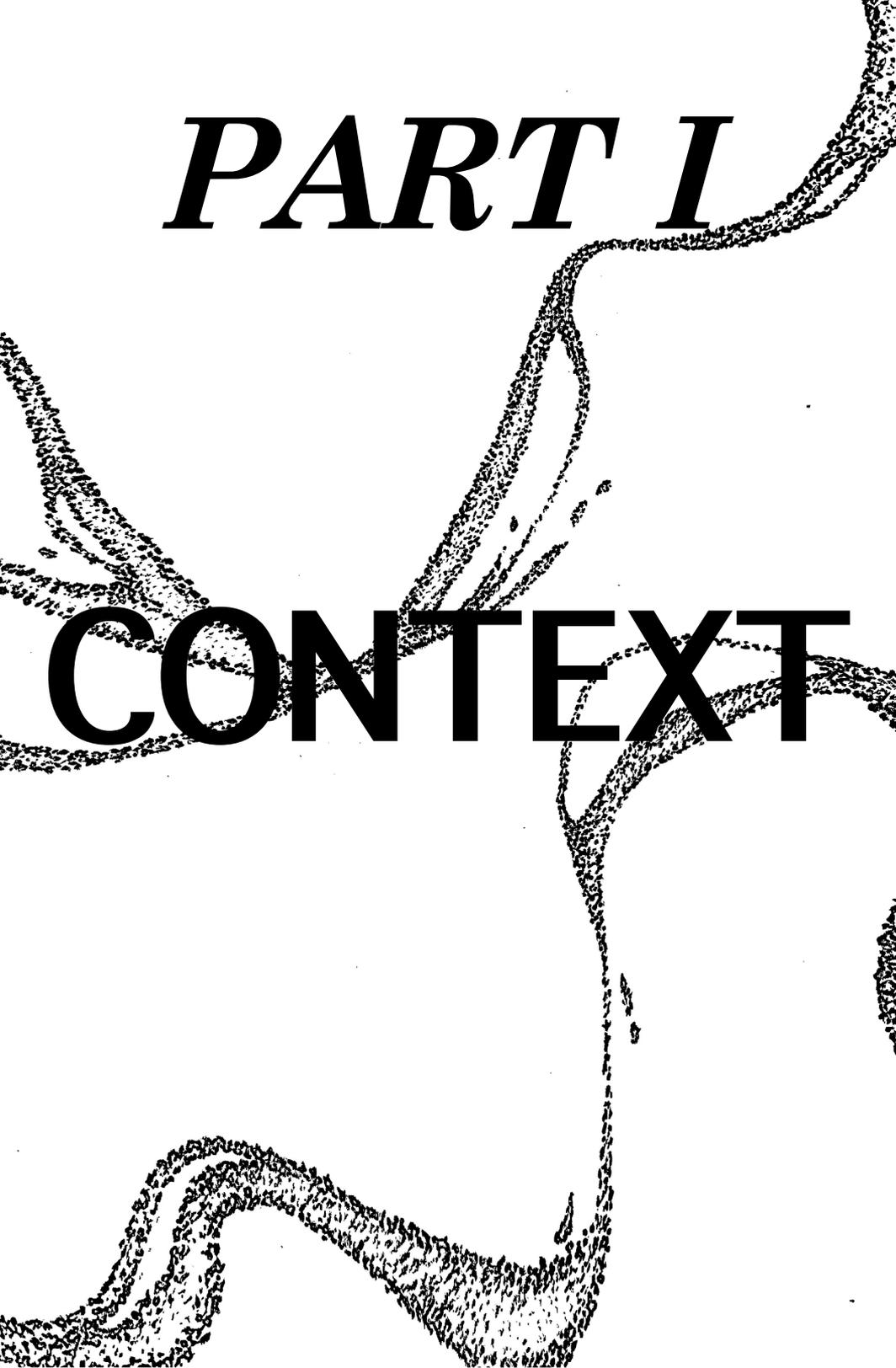
This project has persisted throughout a significant transitional period for me as a composer, musician, and human. I began working on this project in June of 2025, although the seeds for it had been planted sometime before then. It was initially intended to bridge my philosophical interests together, which were the topics/concepts that I had identified as trademarks of my pieces: Context, interaction, delicacy, spaciousness, and recycling. In essence, these elements are still present.

At the start of summer 2025, I read a book containing various writings by Christian Wolff, member of the New York School and student of John Cage. Wolff was a beginning influence on how I approach my compositions, which rely on performer's choice rather than the iron hand of the composer. Reading this book led to reading about his ideologies, which changed significantly after 1968 alongside Frederic Rzewski and Cornelius Cardew. All three composers experienced a politicization of their music (at least, purposeful politicization) that would ultimately change their compositions for the remainder of their lives. Cardew authored a number of inflammatory essays, in which he called out the avant-garde and how they do not serve to the benefit of the working class, but also denounced his previous avant-garde compositions. This resonated strongly with me, and coupled with conversations that I have had with other composers and topics I have been learning about, I have been battling with how to best approach creating music that marries my extramusical philosophies and personal taste.

I have easily spent over twelve hours writing these notes, including my deletion and revision of the topics I talk about. There is a lot I want to talk about: hedonistic usage of AI (and its relation anti-intellectualism and the decrease in support for the arts), the disastrous and capitalistic progression of conventionality, Marxist ideology in relation to music and its application, all of which I can talk about for hours... but I have sifted through and found the most relevant topics. I don't think I will ever get them into a place that best represents my feelings towards this piece, towards my emotions, or towards my politics, but they are presented in a somewhat satisfactory way. These are also a little out of the norm for me, as in the past I have opted to avoid giving audiences too much information in my provided program notes; however, for the sake of this work, its journey, and associated politics, I believe it is essential that I attempt to encapsulate what I am trying to achieve with this work. They will be divided into two parts, one on my initial interests, and the second on how it has changed.

PART I

CONTEXT



Do not lose focus for even a moment, for I will have won and made you my slave is an exploration of multiple topics that have interested me in my compositional journey: Context, delicacy, spaciousness, recycling, and interaction.

Fascinated by the differences in musical taste between myself and my peers, I was encouraged to explore why. I came to realize that my lived experiences, background, development, ideologies, and culture all informed why I enjoyed certain organized sounds more than others. To extend beyond music, this was why I enjoyed certain kinds of visual art more, needlessly long sci-fi movies, and Gilmore Girls. I began looking further, researching musical cultures outside of the Western canon, what the physical context does to a listener, depending on their placement or the size of a room, and especially on a fascination with noise, both literal and subjective. This raised psychological implications, which were another area of interest in previous works.

White noise is a series of randomly occurring frequencies across a spectrum, but depending on certain factors, such as the placement of an audience member or an aptly set bandpass filter, you can pick out timbres and tones. But noise can be found everywhere, white or background, such as when someone is typing program notes on a keyboard, interpreted as a purposeful sound to the one typing it, or a nuisance to the person wondering why the person across the room is typing so loudly. Within the middle is the person who does not notice and continues to focus on what they are doing, forgetting the background noise altogether. Where can this line be drawn, where a sound is taken into the subconscious and forgotten versus catalogued and remembered? A question emerged when attempting to answer this: How does the context of someone's lived experiences affect where that line is drawn?



This line that I attempt to mold and bend is also my attempt to put the notion and definition of music into perspective. Music has a seemingly infinite number of uses (good and bad), cultural contexts, styles, etc. The definition of music is different across many cultures, whether that be in its religious/ritualistic use, its cultural use, or its commercial use. Music can serve a different function depending on the society you find yourself enveloped in.



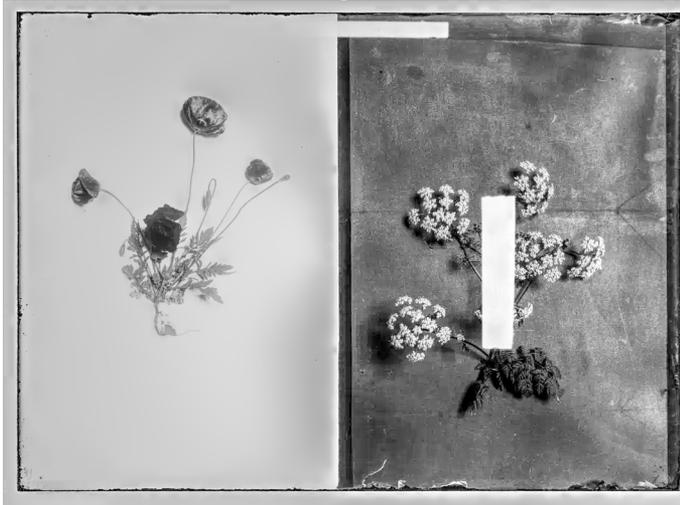
A very overused and prominent phrase that I hear is “music is a universal language,” and this is something I disagree with on the whole. The first twenty to forty minutes of this work will be challenging for many and may make you question whether or not what you are listening to is music. By my definition, it is still music. Assumedly, almost everyone in attendance at this recital has largely been exposed to music within the Western Canon, that is, music which operates in a tonic-dominant relationship and uses a twelve-tone diatonic scale of equal-tempered or just-intonated pitches. There are hundreds of cultures that use different scales, tunings, and philosophies for what music is or can be, hence why it is not a universal language, but rather a diverse definition that reflects one’s lived experiences.

Two more topics that engaged my interest were performance standards and stimulation.

I grew tired of the regular niceties of performance practice, that is, walking on stage, bowing, looking towards your accompanist if there is one present, gaining your composure, all while the audience watches your every move intensely. It elevates the musician to a level that is not equal to that of the audience. Within this work, I am just as clueless about how the piece will progress, only having the context of when changes will occur. I am reading from a graphic score and am interpreting things as they come; nothing is planned ahead of time.

I listened to an interview with Tim Hecker, in which he described not having lights on during his opening sets or performing alongside the mixer station. This aligned with the performance standard dilemma nicely: what if I removed all visual stimulus from a performance?

What happens with the audience is confronted solely with the audio, not the visuals.



This work is an experiment with psychology and music, in which I attempt to have

you, as the audience, engage as much as possible while working with the fact that you will not remember everything. What is the nature of the human brain.

Background to Part II

A significant change occurred between the beginning of this project until now. It found its roots in the writings and transcribed interviews of Christian Wolff, where he talked of the politicization of his music among other things. Wolff, Frederic Rzewski, and Cornelius Cardew were all friends in the 60's and 70's, with Wolff and Cardew being the most influential to my compositions. All three experienced the same sort of politicization, brought on by the seemingly global social revolutions that took place in the late 1960's. Wolff, by this point, was fairly established within the American avant-garde, although not as prominently as his peers and mentors, John Cage and Morton Feldman. There was a sort of separation between Wolff and the other members of the New York School due to Wolff's career in classic studies rather than music, further exacerbated by his politicization and Cardew's actions. The figureheads of the American experimentalists had separated themselves from the world of politics, only occasionally alluding to individual-anarchism or responses to the status quo. In itself, avant-garde/experimental music were protests to the status quo, resulting in an apolitical stance from composers already partaking in protest through the creation of their music, not always through the **intention** of their music. Wolff's music was similar in style following his politicization: audibly avant-garde/experimental in nature, just embedded with a flair of political ideologies, though sometimes ineffective in the execution, as pointed out by Cardew and Wolff himself. Cardew, Rzewski, and Wolff were all influenced by writings by Mao Zedong, and Wolff began incorporating political writings from the Chinese Revolution in his works, though since then the inclusion of his writings has broadened to other topics related to left-leaning ideologies.

Cornelius Cardew, most influential to my change, was far more drastic with his politicization. Not only was his music incredibly different following his politicization, so was his life. Cardew studied under Karlheinz Stockhausen for the majority of the 1960's, aiding in the production of *Carré*. Cardew devoted his life to the creation and cultivation of avant-garde music, composing his monstrous *Treatise*, text scores such as *The Great Learning*, and founding The Scratch Orchestra.

Then, Cardew published Cage: Ghost or Monster? and Stockhausen Serves Imperialism in the 1970s. Both of these essays called out the respective



composers, declaring a personal war on the avant-garde and denouncing all his previous works of that style, opting for romantic, folk, and popular styles. This effectively ostracized him from the music culture he was previously apart of in Europe. In the Cage essay, he speaks to the unrelatability of avant-garde music among working people and Cage's separation from politics. This music, he argues, only serves to benefit the "intellectual" bourgeoisie and does not aid in the unification of the proletariat. In the Stockhausen essay, he points out the mystic nature of Stockhausen's work, which promotes escapism. Mysticism, he declares, removes the audience from the real world, in which injustices, discrimination, and division occur, to a world of perfection without problems.

Intentional blank page?



PART II

INTENTION



The use of music and sound is complicated. It has been used for innumerable terrible things: torture in Guantanamo Bay, LRAD for crowd control, and propagandization by past and current authoritarians. The latter is the most commonly used and integrated into our lives in ways that we don't even realize. When the surrounding culture puts so much emphasis on the very nature of art being detached from politics and solely being commercial, we lose track of the fact that this idea itself is entrenched in political ideologies and the desire for profit. It is the intention



of the oppressive class that we observe art through the lens of a bystander, that it has no use outside of momentary dopamine releases and earning money for the artist. Of course, there is art that transcends this use into genuine and righteous political application and influence.

MARXIST THINKERS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY UNDERSTOOD THE APPLICATION OF MUSIC AMONG THE WORKING PEOPLE TO BE INTEGRAL TO THEIR REVOLUTION AGAINST THE OPPRESSIVE CLASS.

CORNELIUS CARDEW TOOK THEIR PHILOSOPHIES AND APPLIED THEM TO HIS OWN LIFE AND WORK. HE COMPLETELY SEPARATED HIMSELF FROM THE AVANT-GARDE AND FOUND HIMSELF IN VARIOUS REVOLUTIONS ACROSS EUROPE, WITH SOME OF HIS COMPOSITIONS NOW FOUND IN THE CULTURE OF THE AREAS HE AFFECTED.

My currently developing beliefs are shaped in large part by Cardew. Other composers, such as Pauline Oliveros, Julius Eastman, Christian Wolff, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, and Ludwig van Beethoven have all found their influence in what I am currently writing and feeling, but Cardew, with his unabashedly intense criticism and articulated arguments (and occasional hypocrisy), has made my change more significant. Cardew makes both statements that I agree with and disagree with, but more importantly, statements that I have to contemplate. Cardew framed his ideas as absolute, which made his ideas harder to swallow and take seriously. I don't think there is any stylistically correct way to approach creating music, especially in a world that is so heavily diverse in taste, nor did Lenin or Mao apply this thinking to their musical initiatives. Instead, it is the intention, and the intention's execution, that must be emphasized.

“Fourthly: what is the material of a composition? It’s not just notes and rests, and it’s not just a beautiful idea that originates in the unique mind of a genius. It’s ideas derived from experience, from social relations, and what the composer does is to transform these ideas into configurations of sound that evoke a corresponding response in the listener.”

Cornelius Cardew in Stockhausen Serves Imperialism

You may notice a similarity between this quote from Cardew and my application of context in my compositions. It is the social conditions and personal experiences that influence your reception to this piece, therefore making every piece of art that emanates from the mind of a creator a byproduct of the conditions surrounding them (and in modern history, all of it is inherently political). However,

Cardew speaks of the composer here, to which I suggest that there is a hierarchy of conditions and experiences, where the composer is least important, the audience is most, and the performer (not the composer-performer) is just below the audience. The audience is the



group that interprets the music and understands it, not the composer who creates it. It is then up to the composer to relay his intention, through the performance (and by that I mean through both in their own performance and their communication to performers), ambiguity, or program notes, and if it is executed well, the audience will understand the composer’s intent. It is all well and good that the composer had an idea that was beautiful, creating a wonderful work of art on the levels of the masters, but what are the surrounding conditions, experiences, context, and intentions? It is important that the intention of the piece is communicated clearly to an audience, whether through telling them outright or in subtle ways.

Cardew suggests that avant-garde music does not have applications among the working class, to which I disagree. It is about its execution, application, points that I have attempted to make thus far in Part II, and accessibility. Two conversations come to mind in relation to this. 1) In one of the many classes I took with Dr. Louie Eckhardt at Hastings College, he talked about how his father is a “regular” guy who dislikes the pomp of an orchestra concert. When it comes to live music in a venue where you can drink alcohol and engage with others in conversation while some weird stuff is being played, even on an instrument such as a “classical” trumpet, avant-garde music can be appreciated. It is important that avant-garde/experimental music is placed within the access of the proletariat and not solely among the bourgeoisie. 2) At New Music on the Bayou, I talked with composers D. Edward Davis and Justin Greene. The latter made an interesting point regarding music as a whole, but applicable to avant-garde styles, after discussing my composition, Pigs, in which I ask performers to embody a character that is in conflict with the other performer, often leading to comedic outcomes. The prompt of embodying a character is often in opposition to the theme, to which both composers (and my composition instructor a few months prior) rightfully called out. My response to them was that my goal was to make music that an audience enjoyed, regardless of what the style was... although, there was something about these conversations that has haunted me.



That conversation with these three composers has stuck with me since then, and by a stroke of misfortune, I happened to read about Cardew around the same time, followed by a consequential class on the French Revolution. I made a delicate and quiet piece with a flair of theatricality to draw audiences in, but utterly ignored the intention of the work, which was to put the nature of politics and power into a shortly contained musical experiment. Yes, audiences appreciated the work more, but what did they take away from it? That a clarinetist and pianist can squabble for fifteen minutes over how to progress the piece and get it over with?

There is an inherent contradiction with my compositional style and my desire to instill intent in my works. If I were to communicate the intent through program notes and how the performer should behave, I am filling the role of a dictator who is set out to force the performer and audience to feel or act a certain way. If I don't do this, it may go awry and the intent of the piece has a chance to no longer be communicated.

Where has this landed this work?

These influences all coagulated into a need to make something that avoided what happened in *Pigs* from taking place again. I spent the last eight months conceptualizing this piece to initially explore the five topics that I described in *Part I*, but also resolve the issue of intentionality. I initially believed that I needed to work towards removing visuals, as *Pigs* was dependent on the visual aspects of the performers. I realized too late that this wasn't the method to approach my dilemma, but instead, I needed to make my work more intentional about the topics at hand, currently happening with my latest compositions that are not on the program today.



This composition was originally titled *Something in the middle of nowhere*. The program notes from *Part I* outlined my intentions for the work from the beginning, which are still present, now with a stronger emphasis on avoiding stimulation. The title change was to move towards more intentional themes.

This avoidance of stimulation, as I have now realized, comes from a growing concern of myself and many others, which is the decline of intellectualism/increase of use of artificial intelligence, and rapidly dissolving attention spans, the latter being an issue I have personally struggled with. I am now challenging the audience to listen rather than hear the noises that are being given to them.

authoritarians, and politicians to **manipulate** us into complacency. We are given thousands of conventions every day to ease our lives, to promote their escapist agenda and remove us from the world. This mysticism, to which Cardew criticized Stockhausen on, is detrimental and catastrophic to the working class. It is their goal to make us okay with them converting where we live into a police **ethno-state** and publicly **executing** citizens (and to not realize they've been doing it for two centuries), to **gut** our economy for their tax write-offs, to **rape** children, and **corrupt** our lives inside and outside the home. They succeed in this by weaponizing convention, by giving us new and flashy commodities, generate art rather than create it ourselves, to decrease our attention spans, and to detach ourselves from the world so that we may feel comfortable in our corroding homes. The title change was because I wanted to invite a challenge and instill intention into the work. **No one wants to be in submission to another person, yet we willingly do so when it comes to matters of our comfort.**

For one hour, I ask you to be **uncomfortable** with almost nothing, to uncomfortably engage with what you are hearing and to listen to it, and to embrace this uncomfortability, to focus on it. As is the nature of a live performance, nothing can happen exactly as you want. The Lark is in downtown Hastings: there will be cars driving by, people next to you may breathe too loud, some might fall asleep and snore, but that is the sound. The sound is what you focus on, which I challenge you to be as much as possible, as all the sounds you hear are **intentional**.

Of course, there is a political side to this that I feel I must address (in case you haven't picked up a flair of politics already).

It is the intention of the oppressive forces that are working against us every day, of the bourgeois dictators, fascists,

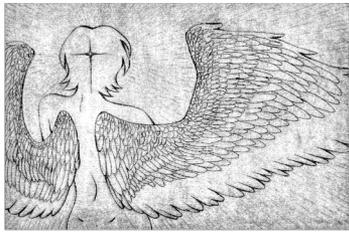
This work is not a place to feel comfortable, and neither are these program notes. It isn't even a place where I feel comfortable. This is the overall intention of the work. We can sit in our home and comfortably watch the newest episode of America's Got Talent and not care what is going on to our neighbors, or we can sit comfortably in our home and post on our Instagram stories that we are in solidarity with people who are struggling while doing nothing to work towards fixing that, or even the composer can sit comfortably and write about these topics for their program notes or compose a piece that they believe represents all the problems in the world; the point is that we are comfortable, no matter which political party you align yourself with. The only real way to make positive change is to get uncomfortable.

I see this project as a stepping stone, rather than a representation, of the direction I want to go towards in my compositional practice, but also how I come to terms with my personal interests and the interests of the audience. This task almost seems impossible: how do I, the composer with a taste for weird sounds and quiet textures, make an audience interested in what I am attempting to relay? To ironically quote John Cage, "...I will devote my life to beating my head against that wall."

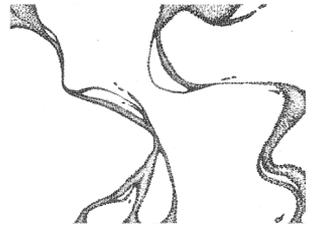
I hope you enjoy this program today (and I apologize for the lengthy read). Following the performance, I encourage you to talk to all the friends, new and old, in this venue, to tell them what you really felt about the piece, to come back and look at what I have set up and ask questions, and be curious. Of course, if you would like to disregard everything the idiotic and hypocritical composer has to say, feel free to do so. But just know that I have won and made you my slave.



9/12 Waldron 2022



Alavenn Wood



Anna Bryan



Sydney
Waldron



Donovan Andrews

All other images from the *Wild Flowers of Palestine* (1900-1920) by
American Colony

Special Thanks (in no particular order)

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My friends for being themselves around me and reminding me that life is alright sometimes (and also providing artwork)

My family for their never-ending kindness and help throughout my time at Hastings College

Hannah Vick for keeping me from going insane and listening to my rambles about this project

All my professors at Hastings College that have pushed me to read books, learn as much as possible, be serious about my practice, and do work that makes the world better

Christian Wolff, Frederic Rzewski, and Cornelius Cardew for changing my perspective

Due to the limited number of zines available, if you are not interested in keeping your zine, please return it following reading through the notes. Thanks!

*“It is not enough to
decorate the world,
the point is to
influence it.”*

Cornelius Cardew in Stockhausen Serves Imperialism