

## 4'33. Music or not?

As we all know, 4'33 is a masterpiece that changed the way the world looked at music. This piece a long time to create, and it has a lot of controversy around it. The reason why? There are no notes played on any instrument throughout this piece, and also no vocals. When the world heard this piece for the first time, everyone was asking themselves if this was truly music. I aim to answer that question, though it's not going to be easy. Let's get into it.

So firstly, to decide if 4'33 is music or not we have to have an understanding of what music is in the first place. That alone is pretty hard to answer, since there are many things that can be classified as music. A basic definition that I found on Google states that music is "vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion." From this definition, you can't say that 4'33 is not classified as music, as it doesn't have vocals or instrumental sounds. I think that everyone would agree with this definition, as if you look at music today and even in the past, this is basically what music is and has been for a very long time.

So if 4'33 doesn't have vocals or instrumental sounds, then can it be classified as music? I would say that the answer is no. So if 4'33 isn't music, then what is it? When John Cage made the piece of music, his intention was that the piece was not only played by the performer, but also by the audience. Everything from the slight tapping of a finger to someone walking out of the theater was considered "part of the piece." This piece made any and every sound that could be heard into part of the piece. Every single time that this piece was performed, it was re-written in a sense, where 1 performance would be different from another, and yet they were both 4'33. If you haven't realized, I have been using the word "performance" a lot. That's because 4'33 isn't really music, but instead a performance, done by both the performer who is at the musical instrument and the audience who is watching the musician.

Now you may be thinking "what was is the point of 4'33?" When John Cage created the piece, many people were very confused. I mean, there were no instrumentals or vocals in the whole entire piece, so what was the point of it? After the release of 4'33, people were asking why the whole entire piece was just silence. John Cage responded with the fact that this is not silence. There is still sound, such as the audience's giggles, and that those sounds were part of the whole entire piece. The point of the piece was to make people realize and listen to the ambient sounds around them, to sit and listen to everything going on around them. The point of 4'33 was to make people listen to the sounds around them. John Cage wanted and intended for all sounds that were made during the performance of 4'33 to be a part of the performance.

All in all, the question that has plagued many people's minds has finally been answered. The biggest controversy of the 20th century has finally been solved. Is John Cage's 4'33 music? The answer is no. Instead, the notorious piece is a performance, performed by not only the musician at the instrument, but also by the audience. 4'33 was an amazing feat which made the world look at music in many different ways, and single-handedly redefined music as a whole. It also gave new meaning to what silence was, and what could be done in a performance. 4'33, a masterpiece that was 5 years in the making, a piece that redefined music, a piece that gave new meanings to silence, a piece that caused everyone to think in a new way, a piece so great yet has so little.