

4'33" BC (BEFORE CAGE)

Now, what is poetry?

If you say it is simply a matter of words,
I will say a good poet gets rid of words.

If you say it is simply a matter of meaning,
I will say a good poet gets rid of meaning.

“But,” you ask, “without words and without meaning, where is the poetry?”

To this I reply:

“Get rid of words and get rid of meaning,
And there is still poetry.”

~ 楊萬里 [Yang Wanli (1127–1206)]



Long before Cage’s 4’33”, a musical piece in which nothing was played, Shinto shrines were said to offer “silent concerts,” in which wind instruments and strings assembled, and not a note was delivered. ~ Pico Iyer, *A Beginner’s Guide to Japan* (2019), 112.



The image shows two pages from John Cage's score for 4'33". The left page is the title page, featuring the Roman numerals I, II, and III, each followed by the word "TACET". Below this is a note explaining the work's title and performance history. At the bottom, it says "FOR IRWIN KRIZMEN" and "JOHN CAGE" with a signature. The right page is the first page of the musical score for Part I, labeled "I" at the top. It contains three staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The staves are filled with rests, indicating that no sound is to be produced during the performance.

FIRST TACET EDITION SCORE
~ JOHN CAGE, 4'33" (1952)