

Happy (Late) Birthday, John Cage

Yesterday would have been the composer John Cage's 100th birthday. (He died in 1992.)

NPR celebrated with [this story](#) about Cage's legacy. Cage's most famous composition is *4'33"*, performed below. I briefly mentioned this piece in a blog post a year ago on the topic of [Art and Attention](#).

It's worth thinking about Cage's aims as a composer in conjunction with Susan Sontag's "Against Interpretation" and, for those of you in my section of Engl 170, the [first paper](#) topic. This quotation from the NPR story seems especially pertinent:

But perhaps Cage's greatest invention was his approach to music and art. After two years studying Zen Buddhism, Cage came up with the idea of using chance to compose his music. He used the I Ching and literally rolled the dice to determine which elements went where, freeing the music from the composer's preconceptions.