



Johann Sebastian Bach

Composer of the Week



Johann Sebastian Bach





Born in Eisenach, Germany, in
1685.

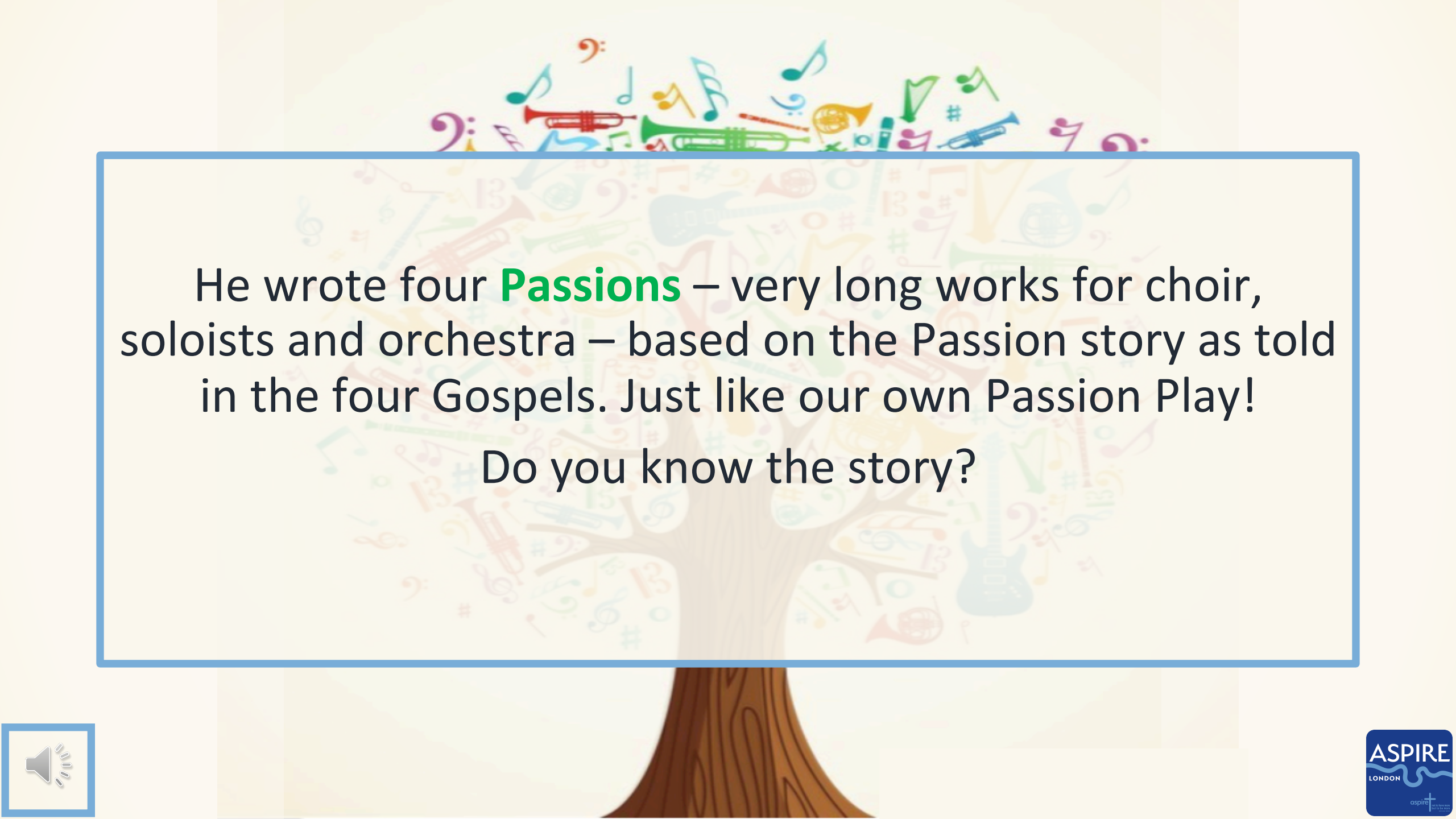
Died in Leipzig, Germany, in
1750.

One the most celebrated composers of all time.
The most well-known of a large family of German musicians.

He composed over 1,000 works (pieces of music).

He was an organist and keyboard player and was employed throughout his life by local Noblemen. Because of this, many of his compositions were Church Music.





He wrote four **Passions** – very long works for choir, soloists and orchestra – based on the Passion story as told in the four Gospels. Just like our own Passion Play!

Do you know the story?



His **St Matthew Passion** is the longest and most famous. It was first performed on Good Friday, 1727 at St Thomas Church, Leipzig.

Can you see the actual organ Bach played?



Bach had 20 children many of whom were musicians.

One of them, Johann Christian Bach, settled in London and was a court musician to Queen Charlotte.

When the young Mozart travelled to London, JC Bach met him and taught him, and it is said that he greatly influenced Mozart's compositions.



Bach was an amazing organist
and keyboard player.
He would have played on a
harpsichord.



What do you notice about the
harpsichord?



Bach once walked two hundred and thirteen miles to hear a performance by an organist whom he admired. Once he had heard the concert, he turned round and walked straight home again.

How many miles did he travel in total?

426 miles

That's a similar distance as walking from London to Blackpool and back.

During this time new versions of the harpsichord were beginning to be produced which were more like our piano of today. It was mostly to do with how the instrument was tuned, the new instruments kept their tone and didn't need to be retuned regularly.

To prove how good this new way of tuning was, Bach composed a **Prelude and Fugue** one in a **major** (happy) key and one in a **minor** (sad) key for each note of the scale.

There are 12 notes in a whole scale.
Bach composed 1 major and 1 minor **prelude** and **fugue** in each key.

Bach
composed 24
Preludes and
fugues

He wrote 2
books of these.
That means, a
total of,
48 Preludes
and Fugues

These are also
known as '**The
Well
Tempered
Clavier**'

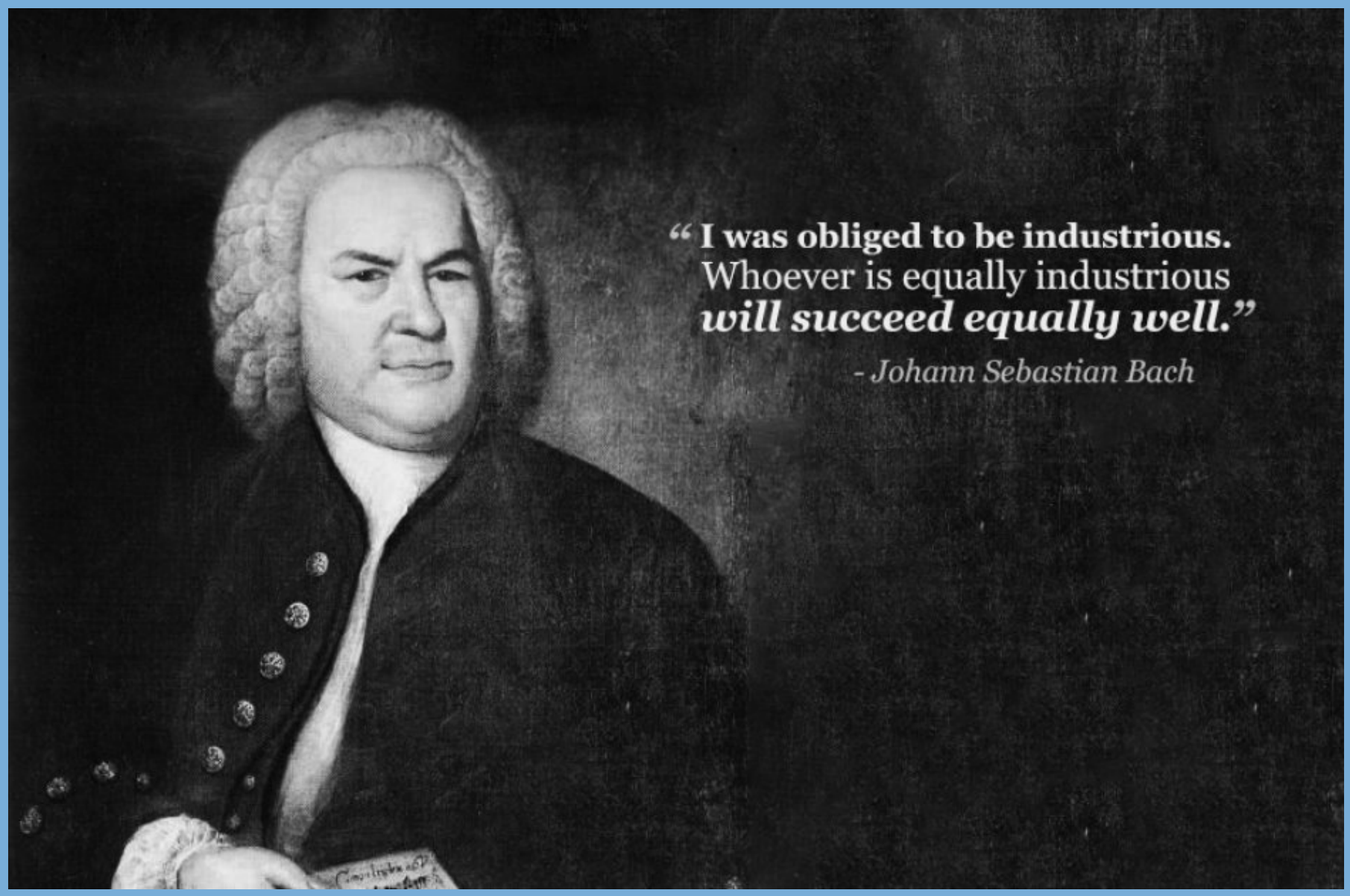
Preludes are fairly simple compositions while **Fugues** are complicated, mathematical works.

Listen to this fugue in C minor from Book 1 .
Listen out for the **theme** or tune and how it's repeated in different parts of the keyboard.

See if you can notice how many times it re-appears.

Lift your hand every time you hear the **theme** repeated.

Johann Sebastian Bach
Fugue in C minor
Well-Tempered Clavier
Book I



**“I was obliged to be industrious.
Whoever is equally industrious
will succeed equally well.”**

- Johann Sebastian Bach