



Johann Sebastian Bach

Composer of the Week



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Born in **Eisenach, Germany,**
in **1685.**



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Died in **Leipzig, Germany**, in
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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.
Due to this, many of his compositions were **Church Music**.



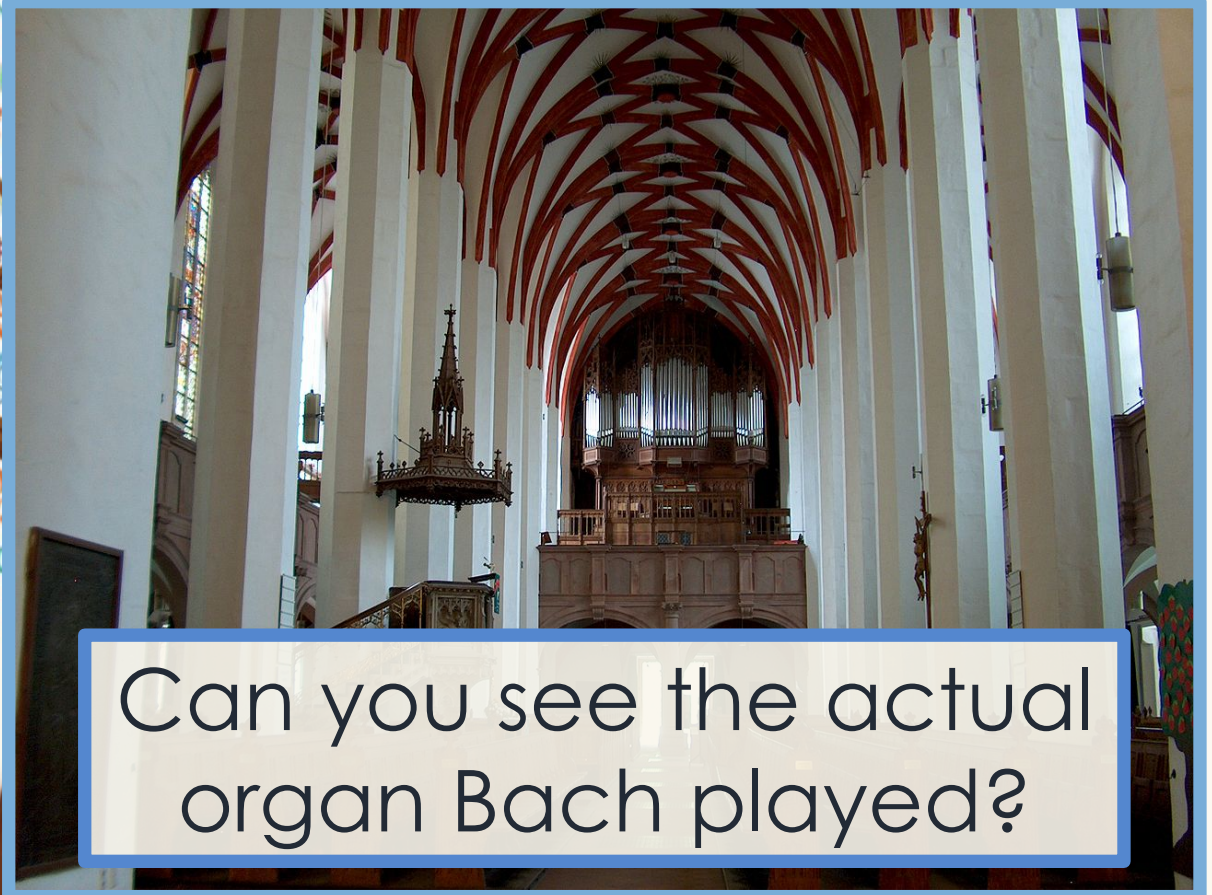


He wrote four **Passions** – very long works for **choir**, **soloists** and **orchestra** – based on the Passion story as told in the four Gospels.

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**.



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and **keyboard** player.
He would have played on a
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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**.

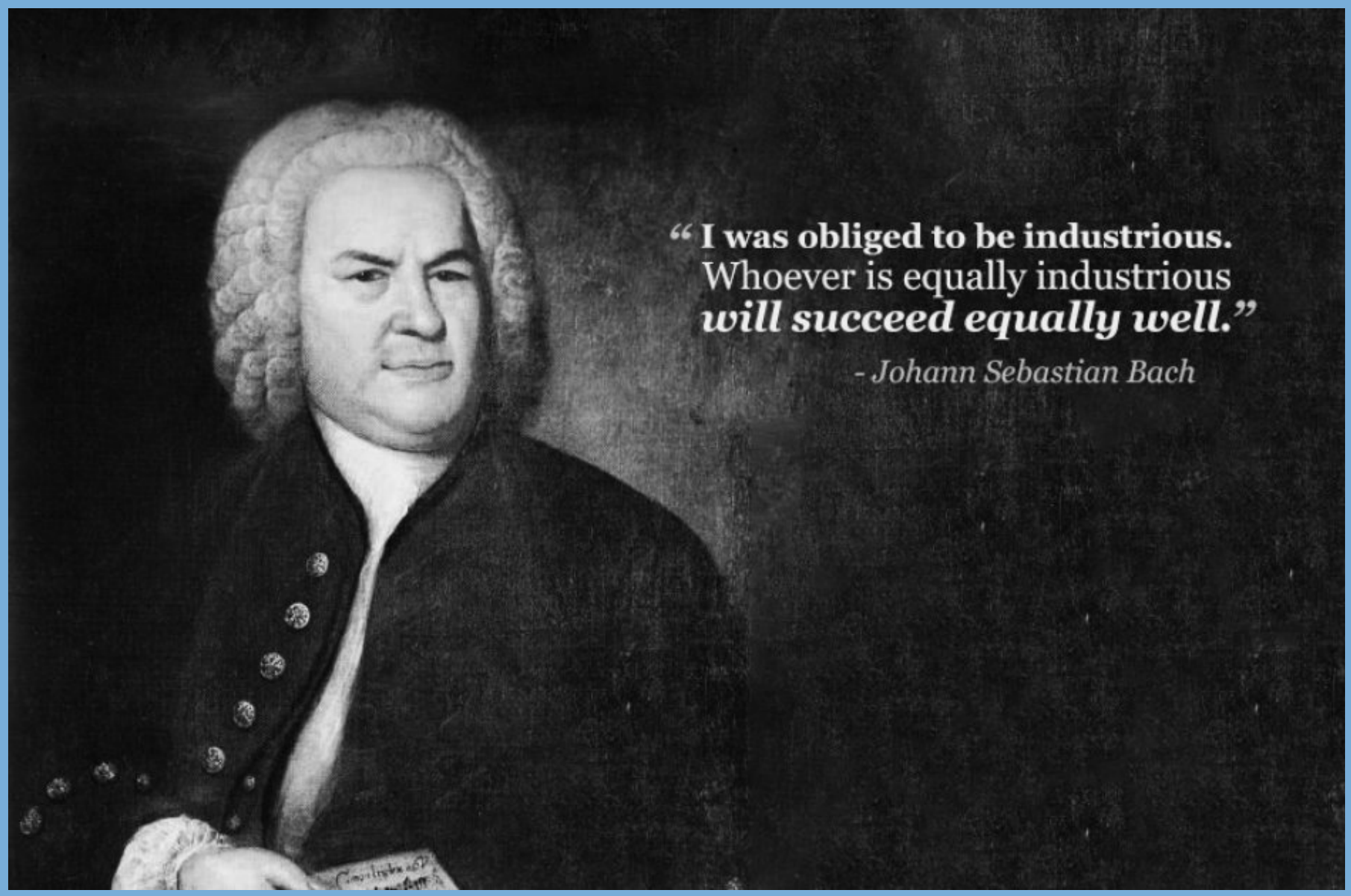
Preludes are fairly simple compositions while **fugues** are complicated, mathematical works.

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