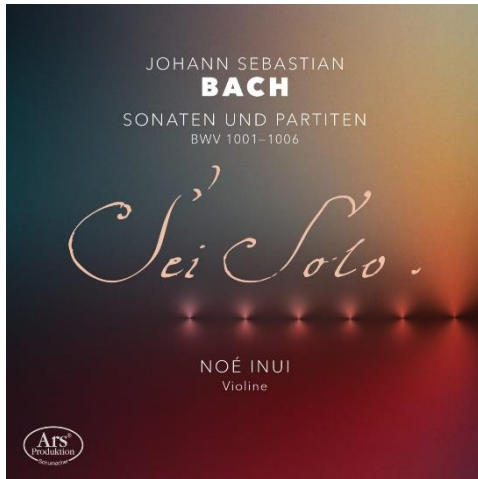




Noé Inui frees Bach from conventions

On his new double album “Sei Solo”, the violinist interprets Bach’s virtuosic cycle for solo violin, combining historically-informed performance practice with a modern playing style



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

CD 1

Sonata BWV 1001 in G

- [1] ADAGIO
- [2] FUGA ALLEGRO
- [3] SICILIANA
- [4] PRESTO

Partita BWV 1002 in H

- [5] ALLEMANDA
- [6] DOUBLE
- [7] CORRENTE
- [8] DOUBLE (PRESTO)
- [9] SARABANDE
- [10] DOUBLE
- [11] TEMPO DI BOREA
- [12] DOUBLE

Sonata BWV 1003 in A

- [13] GRAVE
- [14] FUGA
- [15] ANDANTE
- [16] ALLEGRO

CD 2

Partita BWV 1004 in D

- [1] ALLEMANDA
- [2] CORRENTE
- [3] SARABANDA
- [4] GIGA
- [5] CIACCONA

Sonata BWV 1005 in C

- [6] ADAGIO
- [7] FUGA
- [8] LARGO
- [9] ALLEGRO ASSAI

Partita BWV 1006 in E

- [10] PRELUDIO
- [11] LOURE
- [12] GAVOTTE EN RONDEAUX
- [13] MENUETT I & II
- [14] BOURÉE
- [15] GIGUE

Noé Inui Violin

ARS Production

Release: 2 July 2026

They are seen as a touchstone for every young violinist: **Johann Sebastian Bach’s six sonatas and partitas for solo violin, BWV 1001-1006**. It is not for nothing that Yehudi Menuhin once called them the “Old Testament” of all violin playing. **Noé Inui**, too, had to confront them early on. The sonatas and partitas “*are systematically used in the first round of major international competitions,*” says Inui, who was born in Brussels in 1985 to Japanese and Greek parents. He took up the challenge — but initially failed. In 2003, the news of his grandfather’s death also cast a pall over his life. “*This period is not one that I recall with any joy, and it was certainly not beneficial for my relationship with the works of J.S. Bach,*” he says.

Enthusiasm for the Chaconne

This, although everything had started so well. At the age of four, Noé Inui began playing the violin after his father gave an enthusiastic account of a concert that he had gone to in Osaka in 1976. Among other things, he heard Bach’s famous Chaconne from Partita No. 2, played by Henryk Szeryng. This Polish-Mexican violinist and teacher recorded the entire cycle of solo violin works BWV 1001-1006 twice: in 1955 (still in mono) and once more in 1967 in a seminal recording that has since been regarded as a benchmark.

And it was this recording that Noé Inui’s father used to put on during their many car journeys together. In the text accompanying Inui’s new double album, “Sei Solo”, which is being issued in July 2026 on Ars Production, he writes that the **experience of listening to it engraved itself deeply on his memory**. “*Recording Bach’s solo violin works would be a milestone for any violinist. My goal was not only to achieve that milestone but also to show how a **balance** can be found between **historically-informed performance practice and modern violin playing.***”

Valuable autograph

Johann Sebastian Bach's cycle for solo violin was written **during his time in Köthen**, where he was able to focus more on instrumental than choral music. Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen had appointed the extremely productive musician as *kapellmeister* at his court in 1717. Bach remained in this position until 1723, when he moved to Leipzig as the new cantor at the St. Thomas School. The "Sei Solo a Violino senza Basso accompagnato" (the original Italian title of this group of works) have come down to us as an **autograph**; the composer noted the year 1720 on the title page. This document resurfaced around 1890 and was offered for sale to Johannes Brahms — who, however, doubted its authenticity and didn't buy it. Perhaps Brahms was sceptical in view of the autograph's beautiful calligraphy and very good state of preservation. It is now held at the Berlin State Library.

Pleasure in polyphony

The three sonatas all have the form of a four-movement **Sonata da chiesa** with the tempo order "slow, fast, slower, faster". Noé Inui has this to say about them: *"The different structure of the Sonatas is most noticeable from the fact that the main movement is always a fugue, a form of composition in which every composer of this era took pleasure in demonstrating their skill. At the time, there was a strong tradition of improvising fugues, and composers even competed in fugue-improvisation duels."*

The complexity of the works reflects Bach's great mastery and his joy in the polyphonic style, which is why they are regularly called for at competitions. And that also explains the difficult period in Noé Inui's artistic career: *"So often used simply as a 'barometer' for testing specific criteria, such as technique or memory, these masterpieces are not always understood or fully appreciated."*

Traditional rigour and new freedoms

While in the sonatas Bach adhered closely to the form of the Sonata da chiesa that was usual in his day, in the partitas he departs somewhat from the conventional **Sonata da camera** genre. He does not just follow the classical dance sequence of Allemande, Courante, Sarabande and Gigue but is also inspired by the widespread practice of French clavicembalists of the 17th and early 18th century in using a freer order of movements. For example, in Partita No. 2, he adds a **Chaconne** or **Ciaccona** as the fifth dance. The wild, unbridled character of this style of dance, which seems to have originated in Central America before making its way to Spain in the late 16th century, led to it being banned in the latter country in 1615 (which, needless to say, did nothing to diminish its popularity).

Putting in some swing!

In Partita No. 3, Bach then begins with a **Prelude** or **Preludio** that became extremely popular. *"In some of the movements of this partita (No. 3), I play using what is known as 'jeu inégal'"* Noé Inui says. *"This means playing notes that are written with the same value alternately longer and shorter. This practice gives the music a swing feel, similar to modern jazz. Its use in Bach's music is a matter of fierce debate among musicologists, but in this particular suite of dances I found it very appealing."*

Noé Inui embraces this liberty. He **departs from conventions** and has produced what might even become a contemporary reference recording. And he jettisons his youthful trauma of a botched competition (whatever the cause) once and for all. Since then, Noé Inui has taken part in several others — and won them.

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