Emad Zolfaghari

Described as “An enthralling young viola soloist overflowing with imagination and conviction” by the Violin Channel, Canadian violist and VC artist Emad Zolfaghari came to international attention after being the first ever Canadian to be awarded first prize and audience prize at the 2024 Primrose International Viola Competition. Laureate of many prestigious prizes that launched his career as a performing artist, Emad additionally won first prize at the Irving M. Klein International String Competition, first, audience award and every special prize at the ArsClassica International String Competition, first prize at the Morningside Music Bridge Competition, second prize at the Johansen International String competition, third and special prizes at the Tokyo International Viola Competition and third and audience prize at Montreal’s Concours OSM. He also won the Nobuko Imai Förderpreis at the Kronberg Academy’s 2025 Viola Masterclasses as a student of Tabea Zimmerman, was named as one of CBC music’s “30 under 30 hot classical musicians,” and was awarded Charlotte White’s Salon de Virtuosi Career Grant in 2024. Emad was accepted into the Curtis Institute of Music at age 16, where he earned his Bachelor’s degree studying with Hsin-Yun Huang, Misha Amory and Roberto Diaz. He is a current masters student at the Juilliard School studying with Cynthia Phelps and Hsin-Yun Huang, where he is a proud recipient of a Kovner Fellowship.

Emad has appeared as a soloist with several major symphony orchestras, including l’Orchestre Métropolitain in Maison Symphonique de Montréal under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the Montreal Symphony, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in Roy Thomson Hall, the Tokyo Philharmonic in Kioi Hall, the National Philharmonic in Strathmore Hall, the Oakville Chamber Orchestra, the National Metropolitan Philharmonic, the Guelph Symphony Orchestra and the Santa Cruz Symphony, among others. He has given recitals across Canada, the United States and Japan at La Chapelle Historique du Bon Pasteur, the Gualala Chamber Music Series, Britton Recital Hall at the University of Michigan, Kioi Hall in Tokyo and more. He was also featured as artist in Residence for the Performance Today Radio Show with Fred Child at Minnesota Public Radio in 2025.

Emad has taken part in extensive touring programs with Curtis on Tour, Morningside Music Bridge and as the principal violist of the Curtis Symphony. In the 2026-27 season, Emad will again tour with Morningside Music Bridge throughout Canada and with Marlboro on Tour throughout the United States. He has attended and is continually invited to several renowned summer music festivals such as the Marlboro Music Festival, Cleveland ChamberFest, ChamberFest West, Music in the Vineyards, Morningside Music Bridge, the Center Stage Strings festival as a junior faculty member, the Four Seasons Chamber Music festival and Music from Angel Fire, among others.

In his earlier years, Emad studied at the Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists in Toronto on full scholarship with Theresa Rudolph, Assistant Principal Viola of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Emad performs on a fine 1700 Matteo Goffriller viola on generous loan from the Rachel Barton Pine Foundation and a 1786 Lorenzo Storioni viola and Eugène Sartory bow on generous loan from CANIMEX, inc. His studies are generously supported by a Sylva Gelber Foundation Award which he received both in 2025 and 2026.