MARC SABBAH

VIOLA · CURRICULUM VITAE Updated November 2026

Marc Sabbah (1988, New York City) is an international viola soloist, chamber musician, conductor and, since 2017, Professor of Viola at the Royal Conservatory of Mons (ARTS²), Belgium. His recording of J.S. Bach's Six Suites for Cello on viola (Prospero Classical, 2026) was named BBC Music Magazine's "Instrumental Choice" of August 2026 with five stars, and Classical Album of the Month by audio/stereoplay in November 2026.

From 2012 to 2024 Marc was solo violist of the Belgian National Orchestra. Described as "a magnificent player" by legendary conductor Zubin Mehta, he has been invited as guest principal violist of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestre National de Lille, the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, the Brussels Philharmonic and the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich. He graduated cum laude from the Conservatorium van Amsterdam as a pupil of Sven Arne Tepl and Nobuko Imai.

As a soloist he has performed concerti with orchestras including the Belgian National Orchestra, the Athens State Orchestra, the Antalya State Orchestra, the Philharmonisches Orchester Basel, the Casco Philharmonic, de Filharmonie Amsterdam, the Orquesta Filarmónica de Coahuila and the Filarmónica de Bogotá.

Since 2016 Marc has formed the Duo Sabbah-Reyes with Belgian pianist Eliane Reyes, dedicated to the repertoire for viola and piano; their album AppassionAlto (Prospero Classical) was praised by The Strad. He is a founding member of the string trio Trio NOMADA with David Cohen, principal cellist of the London Symphony Orchestra, and violinist Noé Inui. He is the founder of the Kâsteaux and Cameristica Chamber Music Festivals in Belgium, and was musical director of Cameristica from 2024 to 2026.

Marc has performed at the Oxford Chamber Music Festival, the Varna Festival in Bulgaria, the Grachtenfestival Amsterdam, the Kammermusikfest Kloster Kamp and the Goslar Festival in Germany, the Delft and Utrecht Chamber Music Festivals, Zeeland Klassiek, the International Viola Congress in Rotterdam, ArteAmanti, Festival van Vlaanderen and Les Sons Intensifs in Belgium, as well as Arcidosso, Les Nuits Romantiques and the Cremona Academy. In November 2025 he made his Japan recital debut in Niigata, including the world premiere of a new work for viola and piano by Kensaku Shimizu.

A dedicated teacher, Marc gives masterclasses at conservatories and festivals worldwide, including the Real Conservatorio Superior de Música de Madrid, the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Salamanca and of the Canary Islands, Codarts Rotterdam, the Dutch Viola Society, the Brussels Chamber Music Festival and the Athens State Orchestra. He studied with Nobuko Imai, Pinchas Zukerman, Kim Kashkashian, baroque cellist Anner Bijlsma and Gábor Takács-Nagy, and has performed throughout Europe, Latin America, Israel, Japan, China, the United States and Canada.

In 2011 Marc performed with Ivry Gitlis at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland. Before his passing, Ivry Gitlis attended Marc's performance of the Leo Smit viola concerto at the Royal Conservatory of Mons and called him "the Paganini of the viola".

At only eighteen Marc premiered new works at the Berlin Philharmonie as violist of the Kubrick Quartet and principal violist of the Deutsch-Skandinavische Jugend-Philharmonie. He won top prizes at the Moscow Arts Competition in Boston and at the Horowitz International Competition in Kyiv, Ukraine (2004), where he performed the Hoffmeister concerto and Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante with the Ukrainian State Orchestra; 1st prize at the Amsterdam National Viola Competition (2014); 1st prize at the Rising Stars Grand Prix (2016), performing solo at the Berlin Philharmonie; and the 1st Grand Prize of the Manhattan International Music Competition (2016), with a recital at Carnegie Hall.

The 2026–27 season sees Marc performing and teaching in Belgium, Germany, Spain, Türkiye, Mexico and Israel, including a solo recital at Flagey in Brussels.

Marc began the violin at the age of three at the 3rd Street Music School Settlement in Manhattan and continued at the Lucy Moses School, where he studied with Mark Lakirovich. Mesmerised by the warmth of its tone and admiring his sister's cello playing, he switched to the viola at eleven. He graduated from the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts and the Pre-College Division of The Juilliard School.

Since 2020 Marc has been an ambassador for Jargar Strings. He plays a viola by Leroy F. Geiger (Chicago, 1951) and a viola by Thomas Meuwissen (Brussels, c. 1998).

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