



First Master of Music Recital

Friday, April 3, 2026

12:30pm, Kulas Hall

Zongkai Fan, Piano

Piano Sonata No. 12 in A-flat major, Op. 26

Ludwig van Beethoven

I. Andante con variazioni

(1770-1827)

II. Scherzo, allegro molto

III. Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un eroe

IV. Allegro

Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major, Op. 47

Frédéric Chopin

(1810-1849)

~ INTERMISSION ~

Ballade No. 2 in F major, Op. 38

Frédéric Chopin

Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23

(1810-1849)

Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52

Zongkai Fan is a student of Ilya Itin.

Dedicated with deepest gratitude to Prof. Ilya Itin for his guidance, and to my family, friends, and all who share in this musical journey.

Zongkai Fan, Piano

Pianist Zongkai Fan is currently pursuing a Master of Music in Piano Performance at the Cleveland Institute of Music under the tutelage of Ilya Itin. He earned his Bachelor's degree from the China Conservatory of Music in Beijing. He is recognized for his profound artistic interpretation and expansive repertoire spanning from Bach to Chopin's Four Ballades and Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*. As an active performer, he frequently appears as a soloist in Cleveland, participating in various events and performances.



Program Notes

"All's fair in love and poetry." This phrase suggests that to express profound emotional truth, traditional boundaries must inevitably be broken. Today's program explores this philosophy through two composers who shattered established forms to turn poetry into sound.

Ludwig van Beethoven: Piano Sonata No. 12 in A-flat major, Op. 26

Composed in 1800-1801, Op. 26 refuses to behave like a typical classical sonata. Discarding the conventional fast-paced opening, it begins with a lyrical *Andante con variazioni*, demanding deep introspection from the very first note. The psychological core of the work lies in the third movement—a Funeral March (*Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un eroe*). Here, Beethoven realized that to express the tragic weight of mortality and heroism, standard form had to give way to pure narrative drama.

Frédéric Chopin: The Four Ballades

If Beethoven bent the rules, Chopin invented entirely new ones. Inspired by poetic legends, he was the first to bring the literary "Ballade" to the piano, creating works characterized by profound emotional depth and sweeping contrasts.

Today's performance presents them in a specially curated narrative. The journey begins with the sunlit optimism of **Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major**, unfolding like a graceful dance that builds to a triumphant ending.

Following the intermission, the tone darkens. **Ballade No. 2 in F major** presents a fascinating contrast, shifting violently from a peaceful melody to a fierce, dramatic storm, ultimately fading into a heartbroken whisper. This leads directly into the passionate and heroic **Ballade No. 1 in G minor**, driving toward a fiery, relentless conclusion. The program culminates with **Ballade No. 4 in F minor**, weaving a spellbinding web of intricate polyphony before crashing into a devastatingly difficult coda.

Ultimately, both composers poured their love, sorrow, and visions onto the keyboard without holding anything back. In this realm of wordless storytelling, the piano becomes a voice, the score becomes a poem, and truly, all is fair.