



department of music
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE STUDENT RECITAL SERIES

presents

Zinuo Zeng, piano

April 6, 2026, 7:30 p.m.
Doudna Fine Arts Center
Recital Hall

Program

Prelude and Fuge in A-flat Major, BWV 862
from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I

J.S. Bach
(1685-1750)

6 Variations in F Major, Op. 34

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Brief Intermission

Piano Sonata in F minor, Op. 5

Nikolai Medtner
(1880-1951)

I. Allegro
II. Intermezzo: Allegro
III. Largo
IV. Allegro: Allegro risoluto

Program Notes

Johann Sebastian Bach is one of the most influential composers in Western music. His works unite contrapuntal mastery, harmonic clarity, and structural balance. The Well-Tempered Clavier was conceived as both a pedagogical and artistic project, exploring all major and minor keys within a flexible tuning system and providing a model for composition and performance.

The Prelude in A-flat major unfolds through a flowing texture built from a recurring motivic idea that permeates the entire piece. This creates a sense of continuity and structural unity, while subtle harmonic tension emerges beneath its luminous surface. The four-voice Fugue introduces a concise subject outlining the tonic harmony and develops it through systematic contrapuntal procedures.

Beethoven's Six Variations Op.34 represents a major departure from traditional variation form. Instead of remaining in a single key, each variation moves to a different tonal center, forming a large-scale harmonic design. Beethoven described such works as belonging to a new manner, where each variation assumes an individual expressive and structural role rather than serving as a decorative transformation of the theme. Each variation presents distinct textures, rhythms, and characters, moving through contrasting tonal areas before returning to the home key. The result is a unified yet progressive structure that reflects Beethoven's expanding approach to form and expressive transformation.

Nikolai Medtner, a contemporary of Rachmaninoff, remained deeply rooted in the Austro-German tradition while developing a highly individual musical language. His Sonata in F minor, Op. 5 is his first piano sonata and already demonstrates the essential features of his style: motivic unity, structural rigor, and a strong sense of narrative continuity.

The work is unified through recurring motives that undergo continuous transformation across the movements, these motives appear in varied shapes and contexts. Although the harmonic language is richly Romantic, the structure remains tightly controlled