

## **MUSIC**

### **Mahan Esfahani**

St Cecilia's Hall



In his post-concert, pre-encore address to the audience, Iranian/American harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani revealed how early in life he dreamt of travelling to see the 1769 Taskin harpsichord in Edinburgh's St Cecilia's Hall. Now here he was playing it, in what he described as the crowning achievement of his career to date. That might have been festival-flattering hyperbole, but the sturdy instrument made a dazzling counterpoint to Esfahani's playing, crisp, rich, almost like a piano at times, with a huge flexibility to its sounds – all of which Esfahani used to full effect.

He seems to be on a mis-

sion to demonstrate the expressiveness of his instrument – and judging by his remarkably fluid, fresh, almost improvisatory playing and rhythmic suppleness, he's pretty much succeeded. Three short pieces by d'Anglebert, harpsichordist to Louis XIV, were almost top-heavy in their elaborate decoration, dispatched with utter conviction. A Sonata in E flat by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, JS's eldest son, was a glorious oddity of early Classicism, with a breathlessly and shamelessly virtuosic finale that Esfahani relished.

To end came JS Bach's Overture in B minor, each movement alive with dance rhythms and bristling with character. It was as joyful as it was revelatory – and, it goes without saying, deeply expressive.

**DAVID KETTLE**