

**ELIZABETH
HURLEY'S
SECRETS:
HARD TIMES,
GOOD TIMES,
AND HUGH**



MUSIC

**Absolute
ambition:**
Conductor
Kristjan Järvi
(far right)
and mem-
bers of his
genre-bend-
ing Absolute
Ensemble

Between Hard Rock and a Classic Place

In the music world, high and low have been strange bedfellows for years. Two decades before Beck sampled Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony on *Odelay*, Beethoven's Fifth became a disco hit. Meanwhile, the Kronos Quartet made a career out of plundering the cultural divide, mixing Ives and Bartók with Hendrix. So the foundation has been laid for Kristjan Järvi's Absolute Ensemble to eviscerate

what's left of musical categories: They make dense works by John Adams and Schoenberg easier to swallow, not only by throwing in the occasional Hammond B-3 and drum set—rendering contemporary symphonic repertory even *more* contemporary—but by adding a dash of James Brown and Led Zep for good measure. The Estonian Järvi, twenty-seven, and his raffish collective of classical brats are hip to the

postmodern sensibilities of their demographic. The ensemble (whose new CD, *Absolute Live*, is out this month) makes Schoenberg rock and rock Schoenbergian. And when Järvi waves his baton with the New York City Ballet this summer, he's sure to turn Lincoln Center into a rave.

From a marketing perspective, it doesn't hurt that Järvi's look is more downtown chic than stuffed shirt. With his scraggly mane and fanzine-ready sneer, he could easily pass as the lead singer of a grunge band. "We are trying to bring back alienated audiences to the classical scene," he says. Absolute Ensemble won't be outselling Korn any time soon, but if they can lure even a few adventurous twentysomethings to listen to Webern, they will have fulfilled an ambitious task indeed.—DAVID YAFFE