

Previews

Absolute Value

Kristjan Järvi speaks like a man who is out to change the world, but right now he has set himself an equally difficult task: reforming the tradition-bound world of classical music. "We can't live and breathe and eat the past—we are living in the present," says the 27-year-old conductor. "We have to present people who are alive now, and we have to move forward. This is a part of cultural evolution." To this end, Järvi (pictured, seated at right) has assembled a group of similar-minded musicians to form Absolute Ensemble, which he hopes will

lead the musical revolution. Järvi bases his selections on what he considers their musical worth, without regard for their pedigree. Thus, an Absolute Ensemble concert might feature a Mozart concerto alongside an arrangement for strings of Black Sabbath's "Paranoid," one of Järvi's favorites. This Friday, Canadian violinist Lara St. John joins Absolute Ensemble at Alice Tully Hall to perform an arrangement of a Bach concerto, as part of a program that also includes a funk-fusion piece by Charles Coleman, the group's composer-in-residence. While purists might cringe at such a juxtaposition, Järvi dismisses such criticism as too backward-looking. "Tradition must be weighed and considered very carefully, but it's not the Bible," he says. "Times are changing." **NICK MEYER**

