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**Ravel: Daphnis et Chloé (complete ballet)**

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François-Xavier Roth and his superb period-instrument band Les Siècles give us a thrillingly alive and intoxicatingly atmospheric rendering of Ravel's 1912 ballet in its glorious entirety. In terms of refreshingly distinctive timbre, subtly probed detail and revelatory clarity of both harmony and texture, it's a veritable feast for the ears (the strings' sublime delicacy of articulation is alone worth the price of admission). What's more, Roth's memorably unforced, rivetingly cogent conception unfolds with entrancing inevitability and selfless dedication; indeed, there's a hugely gratifying whiff of greasepaint about the whole venture, a very real sense of a scintillating theatrical event taking place before our eyes. Plaudits to Ensemble Aedes for an excellent choral contribution, and principal flute Marion Ralincourt deserves her special mention on the sleeve. Vivid engineering and copiously informative presentation, too. If you think you already know Ravel's miraculous score, you really do need to hear this. C'est vraiment magnifique!

–Andrew Achenbach

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