



Sterling continue to pick off the gaps in the catalogue. Here they tackle two Dutch symphonies of the classical-romantic persuasion.

**Bernard Zweers** came of modest stock - the son of an Amsterdam book and music shopkeeper. After overcoming family opposition he studied music with Jadassohn in Leipzig (1881-83). From 1895 to 1922 he was head of the Amsterdam Conservatory and a revered teacher to several generations of Dutch composers. Zweers' First Symphony came from the same year as Richard Strauss's Violin Concerto, Glazunov's First Symphony, Bruckner's Sixth Symphony and Bruch's *Kol Nidrei*. It is a backward-looking work with a Haydn-like zest and sturdy charm. For much of the time it reminded me very agreeably of Beethoven's Fourth and Eighth Symphonies, occasionally with a light Brahmsian accent. Zweers' writing is athletic and masterfully orchestrated. Spanjaard and the orchestra revel in its clean textures and joy in living.

Before this disc I had not heard of **Daniël de Lange**. Unlike Zweers he came of a musically sympathetic family. He studied cello in Brussels and then toured Europe from 1858. He worked in the turbulent musical milieu of Paris (1864-1870) where he met the leading musicians of the day. Amongst his contacts was Lalo to whom he dedicated his First Symphony. The de Lange First Symphony dates from the year in which Bruch wrote his First Violin Concerto and Saint-Saëns his Second Piano Concerto. Like the Zweers it is in four movements. This is a much more dramatic work than the more Beethovenian Zweers although the second movement is a closer classical match. It is given a stirringly emphatic performance. Just listen to the slightly overdone - by de Lange not Halstead - repetitive vehemence of the first movement. That slow movement (tr. 6) moves pleasingly between the poles of Mozart and Grieg. The *Scherzo* skips resoundingly along being redolent of Goldmark (*Rustic Wedding*) and Bizet (Symphony in C). It is prone to the composer's slight weakness for repetitive rhythmic emphasis but as if to compensate there is some memorable writing for woodwind. Like the first movement the finale is an *Allegro Moderato* and rather a good one once it gets under way. It makes play with Dutch folk songs although their use is not intrusive nor do they seem artificially grafted on. Towards the end of the movement there is some really fiery tempestuous writing. The main theme is regal, sanguine and life-enhancing (tr. 8, 5:05) even if that theme does recall Rimsky's *Russian Easter Festival* hymn.

The excellently supportive notes are by Ilja Nieuwland. The recording quality is extremely good effectively silencing any concerns. The two recording venues make for sonorous results.

This makes for a fascinating whistle-stop tour of the classical-romantic symphonic voice in the Netherlands. Richly enjoyable.

*Rob Barnett*

**Bernard ZWEERS (1854-1924)**  
Symphony No. 1 in D major (1881) [26:18]

**Daniël de LANGE (1841-1918)**  
Symphony No. 1 in C minor (1868) [30:45]

● Netherlands Radio Chamber Orchestra/Ed Spanjaard (Zweers); Anthony Halstead (de Lange)

Rec. 4 December 1994, Vredenburg, Utrecht (Zweers);  
2 August 2001, Studio MCO, Hilversum (de Lange). DDD  
Dutch Romantics series  
World premiere recordings

● **STERLING CDS 1068** [57:11]