

**Jokes and Wordless Songs:
Carlos María Solaire rounds up the latest viola discs**

(excerpt)

By Carlos María Solaire

Melia Watras's CD, *Prestidigitation* (Fleur de Son Classics FDS 57992), does include an original vocal work: Brent Michael Davids's *Viola Jokes* for viola and voice. The lyrics consist of a string of...well yes, viola jokes, accompanied –and given the lie!– by a virtuoso instrumental ostinato. This is the only piece here not to include electronic effects. Heinrich Taube's insistent *Tacoma Narrows* and Diane Thome's *And Yet...* at least allow one to hear Watras's viola undistorted, against a backdrop of computer-created sound. In Richard Karpen's *Aperture* and Juan Pampin's *Nada*, the instrument's sounds are manipulated together with those emanating from the computer. With the composers involved in the manipulation, these performances are surely definitive, and the recording quality is state of the art.