

Michael Praetorius: *Puer natus in Bethlehem*
Christmas duos for two equal instruments
Edition Guntersberg G151

In his fifty or so years lifespan Michael Praetorius (?1571 – 1621) composed over a thousand sacred pieces, mostly based either on Protestant hymns or the Latin Liturgy in two to more than sixteen parts. These nine appealing duos are taken from volumes V and IX of 'Musae Sioniae' published between 1607 and 1610. Most are well known titles, such as 'Wachet auf', 'Von Himmel hoch', 'In dulci jubilo' and the 'Puer natus' of the title. The melodies, though easily recognisable, are delightfully scrambled rhythmically, with ornamental scalic flourishes and canonic entries.

The voice range is from middle C up to E, with very occasional high F's, making them playable on tenor/descant recorders as well as viols. The latter could happily put them down an octave onto basses/tenors. The clefs are treble.

The layout of this edition is very clear, employing mensurstrich which is useful for avoiding ties - don't be put off by this, it really is very easy to read. It is texted throughout, so lovely to sing too. There is also a book of trios in the same series which I am sure are just as good if not better

To conclude: these duos are fun and not very difficult, so could make a lovely little present for playing or singing with the family at the festive season!

Jenny Tribe