Introduction

Michael Praetorius (1571–1621), church musician and court Kapellmeister at various places between Brunswick and Dresden, left behind an extensive *oeuvre* of church music works that was highly regarded by clergy, aristocracy, and reformers alike during a difficult period of church history. Especially his compositions on Christmas chorales are well-known and still popular today, and suitable for voices as well as instruments.

In our series "Puer natus in Bethlehem," the volume with two-part pieces enjoys particular popularity.[1] The majority of these bicinia are intended for two high voices and therefore written in treble clef. Yet, they can be sung or played in any register, especially since the compass is relatively narrow. However, treble clef presents a difficulty for inexperienced players of the viola da gamba, violoncello, and other bass instruments. Therefore, in the present volume, we have again combined all nine Christmas bicinia in which both voices are in the same register, this time in bass clef versions.

We have transposed several bicinia to make them easier to play on the viola da gamba or violoncello. The table below shows the keys in this volume and in the original. The column on the right indicates the original Güntersberg edition in which each bicinium is to be found.[2] Further information concerning the original, such as source, clefs, and time signatures, are also given there.

The illustrations on pages IV and V show the original print of the bicinium "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme" from 1607. Both parts are written in soprano clef. In the preceding and following pieces, treble and alto clefs are also used. Thus the players of the time had to master several clefs. There were no bar lines and no measure numbers; notes were not divided by "imaginary" bar lines. And the players only had individual parts; there was no score.

In spite of the rhythmical sophistication, these beautiful bicinia place only minimal technical demands on the players. They are certainly an important enhancement for instrumental instruction.

Günter und Leonore von Zadow
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Translation: Howard Weiner

	Key	Original key	Original Güntersberg edition
1 Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme	C	C	G151 p. 22
2 Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland	D	G	G151 p. 14
3 Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ	D	G	G151 p. 6
4 Vom Himmel hoch da komm ich her	C	C	G151 p. 18
5 Puer natus in Bethlehem	D	G	G187 p. 2
6 Puer natus in Bethlehem	D	G	G151 p. 17
7 In dulci jubilo	F	F	G151 p. 10
8 Ein Kindelein so löbelich	F	F	G151 p. 4
9 Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern	C	F	G187 p. 24

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[1] Michael Praetorius, *Puer natus in Bethlehem, Weihnachtssätze für Vokal- und Instrumentalensemble*, vol. 1: 2-part, eds. G. and L. v. Zadow (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2008), G151.

[2] In addition to the edition described in footnote 1, the following edition is also included in the table: Michael Praetorius, *Puer natus in Bethlehem, Weihnachtssätze für Vokal- und Instrumentalensemble*, vol. 12: 2–6-part, eds. G. and L. v. Zadow (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2010), G187.