

# Psalm 137 (By the Waters of Babylon)\*

By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept  
when we remembered you, O Zion, we remembered you.

As for our harps, we hung them upon the trees in foreign land,  
for our oppressors called for a song,  
but how shall we sing your song on an alien soil?

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may I forget how to play and sing,  
if I forget you, O Jerusalem.

*Adapted by Patricia Van Ness  
from The Psalter,  
The Book of Common Prayer*

Music by Patricia Van Ness (1951)

Score rev. 21 July 2020

\*from MUSIC FOR THE PSALMS,  
dedicated in its entirety to Peter Sykes

The musical score consists of six staves of music for a three-part vocal arrangement (Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Violin 1, Violoncello, and two parts for Violin 1 and Violoncello). The key signature is A major (no sharps or flats), and the time signature is common time (indicated by '3/4'). The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 60$ . The vocal parts include lyrics such as "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered you, O Zion, we remembered you." The instrumental parts provide harmonic support with sustained notes and rhythmic patterns. Measure numbers 9 and 18 are indicated above the staves. Dynamic markings like *mf*, *p*, *f*, and *mp* are used throughout the score. A small square box containing the letter 'A' is placed near the end of the vocal line in measure 18.

Van Ness, Psalm 137 (*By the Waters of Babylon*)

2

26

S. trees in that for - eign land, \_\_\_\_\_ for our op - pres-sors\_ called for a song, but

Vln. 1

Vc.

34 *mf* ————— *f* *>mf*

S. how shall we sing your song,— on an alien soil? \_\_\_\_\_

Vln. 1

Vc.

43 **B**

S. If I for - get you, O Je - ru - sa - lem, \_\_\_\_\_ may I for-

Vln. 1

Vc. *p*

52 *mf* ————— *f*

S. get how\_ to play and sing,— if I for - get

Vln. 1

Vc.

Van Ness, *Psalm 137 (By the Waters of Babylon)*

3

59

*mf*

S. rit.

Vln. 1

Vc.

— you,— O, O, O, Je - ru - sa - lem.  
rit.

Detailed description: This is a musical score page for the piece 'Psalm 137 (By the Waters of Babylon)' by Van Ness. The page number is 3. Measure 59 begins with a soprano vocal line. The vocal part starts with a melodic line consisting of eighth and sixteenth notes, followed by a sustained note. This is followed by a ritardando (rit.) indicated by a wavy line over the notes. The lyrics are: '— you,— O, O, O, Je - ru - sa - lem.' A piano dynamic (mf) is marked above the vocal line. The strings (Vln. 1 and Vc.) provide harmonic support with sustained notes and rhythmic patterns. The instrumentation includes Soprano (S.), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), and Cello (Vc.). The vocal line has a treble clef, and the strings have a bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is common time (indicated by a 'C'). The vocal line has a melodic line, followed by a sustained note, then a ritardando (rit.) indicated by a wavy line over the notes. The lyrics are: '— you,— O, O, O, Je - ru - sa - lem.' A piano dynamic (mf) is marked above the vocal line. The strings (Vln. 1 and Vc.) provide harmonic support with sustained notes and rhythmic patterns.