

# Super Flumina Babylonis

## (Psalm 137)

SATB a cappella

Giovanni Pierluigi Da Palestrina  
(1525-1594)  
Edited by B. R. Henson

### Editorial Notes

Sacred motets of the sixteenth century were "word" music. Rhythmic groupings and the expression of rise and fall were achieved by these performance practices.

1. Stressed syllables were stressed dynamically. The stressed syllables are underlined in this edition. Obviously then, unstressed syllables are sung softer.
2. Melismas (several notes per syllable) follow the architectonic line. That is to say: crescendo on rising melismas and decrescendo on falling ones.

These familiar markings  $\ll$  and  $\gg$  have been added to help remember these two important practices. The dynamic markings are editorial and are only suggestions. The dynamics should reflect the meaning of the text. They will also change according to the size of the choir and the room. The text follows.

Super flumina Babylonis, illic sedimus,  
et levimus dum recordaremur tui, Sion.  
In salicibus medio ejus  
suspendimus organa nostra.

*By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down  
and wept when we remember thee, O Zion.  
On the willows there,  
we hung up our lyres.*

The musical score consists of five staves. The top four staves represent the vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The bottom staff represents the piano for rehearsal. The vocal parts are in treble clef, while the piano part is in bass clef. The key signature is two sharps. The music is in common time. The piano part includes dynamic markings such as *mp* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano). The vocal parts feature several melismas, particularly over the words "super flumina" and "on the willows". The lyrics are written below the corresponding notes in both Latin and English. The piano part provides harmonic support, with chords played on the bass line and harmonies in the treble line.

2

*mp*

Su - - per flu - mi-na Ba - - by -  
na Ba - by - lo -  
nis, su - - per flu - mi-na Ba - by -

8

3

lo - nis, su - per flu - mi-na Ba - - by -  
nis, su - per flu - mi-na, Ba - - by -

*mp*

Su - - per flu - mi-na Ba - - by -  
lo - - - - nis,

8

4

lo - - nis, il - lic se - di - mus, et fle -  
lo - - nis, il - lic se - di - mus, et  
lo - nis, il - lic se - di - mus, et fle -  
il - lic se - di - mus, et

5

vi - mus, il - lic se - - di - mus,  
fle - vi - mus, il - lic se - - di - mus,  
- vi - mus, il - lic se - - di - mus,  
fle - - vi - mus, il - - lic se - - di -

6

et **fle** - vi-mus, dum re - cor -  
et **fle** - vi - mus, dum re - cor - *da - re -*  
— et **fle** - vi - mus, dum re - cor -  
mus, et **fle** - vi - mus,

7

- **da - re - mur** **tu** - i, **Si - on**, dum re - cor -  
- **da - re - mur** **tu** - i, **Si - on**,  
- **da - re - mur** **tu** - i, **Si - on**, dum re - cor - **da - re - mur** **tu** - i, **Si -**  
dum re - cor - **da - re - mur** **tu** - i, **Si -**

8

- da - re - mur tu - - i, Si - on,  
dum re - cor - da - re - mur tu - - i, Si - on,  
on, dum - - re - cor - da - re - mur tu - - i, Si - on,  
on, dum

9

dum re - cor - da - re - mur  
dum re - cor - da - re - mur  
dum re - cor - da - re - mur tu - - i, Si - on,  
re - cor - da - re - mur tu - - i, Si - on,

10

tu - i, Si - on, in sa -

tu - i, Si - on, in sa - li - ci - bus in me - di -

Si - on, in sa - li - ci - bus in me - di - o

in sa - li - ci - bus in me - di - o

11

li - ci - bus in me - di - o, e - - jus, in me - di -

e - - jus, in me - di - o

e - - jus

12

A musical score for voice and piano. The vocal line begins with "o e - jus," followed by "e - jus, in sa - li ci-bus in me -". The piano accompaniment consists of a bass line and a treble line, providing harmonic support. The vocal line continues with "in sa - li - ci-bus in me - di - o" and concludes with "in sa - li - ci-bus in me - di - o e -". The piano part ends with a final measure of chords.

13

A continuation of the musical score. The vocal line begins with "in sa - li - ci-bus in me - di - o e -", followed by "- di - o e - jus, in me - di - o e -". The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support. The vocal line continues with "e - - - jus, in me - di - o e - jus," followed by "jus, in me - di - o". The piano part ends with a final measure of chords.

14

jus, su -  
jus, su - spen - di-mus or - ga-na no -  
su - spen - di-mus or - ga-na no -  
e - jus, su - spen - di-mus or - ga-na no -

15

spen - di-mus or - ga-na no - stra, or - ga-na  
stra, su - spen - di-mus or - ga-na no - stra, or -  
stra, su - spen - di-mus or - ga-na no - stra, or - ga-na no -  
stra, su - spen - di-mus or - ga-na

16

no - - stra, su -  
ga - na no - stra, su - spon - di-mus or - ga-na no -  
stra, no - stra, su - spon - di-mus or - ga-na no -  
no - - stra, su - spon - di-mus or - ga-na no -

17

spen - di-mus or - ga-na no - stra, or - ga-na no - stra.  
stra, su - spon - di-mus or - ga-na no - stra, or - ga-na no - stra.  
stra, su - spon - di-mus or - ga-na no - stra, or - ga-na no - stra.  
stra, su - spon - di-mus or - ga-na no - stra.