



**AMERICAN RECORDER SOCIETY  
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Glen Shannon, Editor

Anthony St. Pierre

**S-O-S**

*for SATB Recorders*

# S-O-S

By Anthony St. Pierre

## PREFACE

*The first international distress signal C-Q-D was popular around 1900 but did not sound very frantic. Meanwhile, German ships had been using S-O-E but this combination was deemed unsatisfactory to radiotelegraphy because the final dot ('E') was often obliterated by static or other interference. After much international deliberation it was replaced in 1906 with S-O-S, which actually does not stand for anything (contrary to popular belief), but does sound distinct enough through radio static.*

**Using Morse code** to generate a “rhythmic text” is one of numerous techniques contemporary composers have employed in their search for musical inspiration. The rhythms provide boundless material from which to derive interesting motives, and new shapes are created by superimposing patterns over one another.

Anthony St. Pierre (b. 1956, Schenectady, NY) earned a B.Mus. in composition from the Ohio State University and a M.Mus. from Washington University in historical performance practice. In 1980, he came to Toronto to play oboe with the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra. He plays the recorder frequently with Scott Paterson and János Ungváry (both former ARS Board members) and has composed numerous pieces for diverse recorder ensembles. He has also composed for organ, piano, voice, chamber winds, percussion, band, as well as electronic media. Some of his recorder scores are available through his website, <http://pages.ca.inter.net/~abelc/compositions.html>, which also offers his treatise, *Composing a Simple Fugue*.

—Glen Shannon



**Performance notes:** The opening rhythm in the Bass spells out the titular Morse code letters, written conventionally as . . . — — — . . . representing three short tones, followed by three long tones, then three short ones again. The prevalence of the dorian mode (natural scale starting on D) imparts a somber atmosphere throughout.

*S-O-S* is roughly in ABA form. Bar 17 marks the B section, with the tension increasing through the use of canon. Here the Soprano begins to play the S-O-S rhythm starting in the middle of the bar, resulting in the barline splitting the second long tone. In Bar 21, the Alto joins in the offset rhythm, followed by the Tenor and Bass in tandem in Bar 24. Be careful not to over-think the rhythm in this section, as it can be easy to count yourself into trouble and render the Morse Code unrecognizable. Using a metronome may be useful in keeping the ensemble together. A brief transition in Bar 30 introduces an altered recapitulation of A.

In the Soprano part are several examples of *ossia* passages, which are alternative versions, in smaller type, of the passage which stands directly under them. Because the notes reach the stratospheric range on the instrument, which the average Soprano player rarely encounters, the composer was generous enough to provide us with alternates to play at our discretion.

# S-O-S

Anthony St. Pierre  
(1998)

Allegro agitato ♩ = 100

Musical score for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass Recorders, measures 1-4. The piece is in 12/8 time and begins with a tempo marking of *Allegro agitato* (♩ = 100). The Soprano Recorder part is silent. The Alto Recorder part begins in measure 3 with a melody marked *mp*. The Tenor Recorder part begins in measure 2 with a melody marked *p*. The Bass Recorder part begins in measure 1 with a bass line marked *p* and *legatissimo*.

Musical score for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass Recorders, measures 5-8. The Soprano Recorder part begins in measure 5 with a melody marked *mp*. The Alto Recorder part continues its melody. The Tenor Recorder part continues its melody. The Bass Recorder part continues its bass line.

Musical score for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass Recorders, measures 9-12. The Soprano Recorder part begins in measure 9 with a melody marked *mf*. The Alto Recorder part continues its melody. The Tenor Recorder part continues its melody. The Bass Recorder part continues its bass line.

Musical score for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass Recorders, measures 13-16. The Soprano Recorder part continues its melody. The Alto Recorder part continues its melody. The Tenor Recorder part continues its melody. The Bass Recorder part continues its bass line. Measure 15 has a dynamic marking of *mf*.