

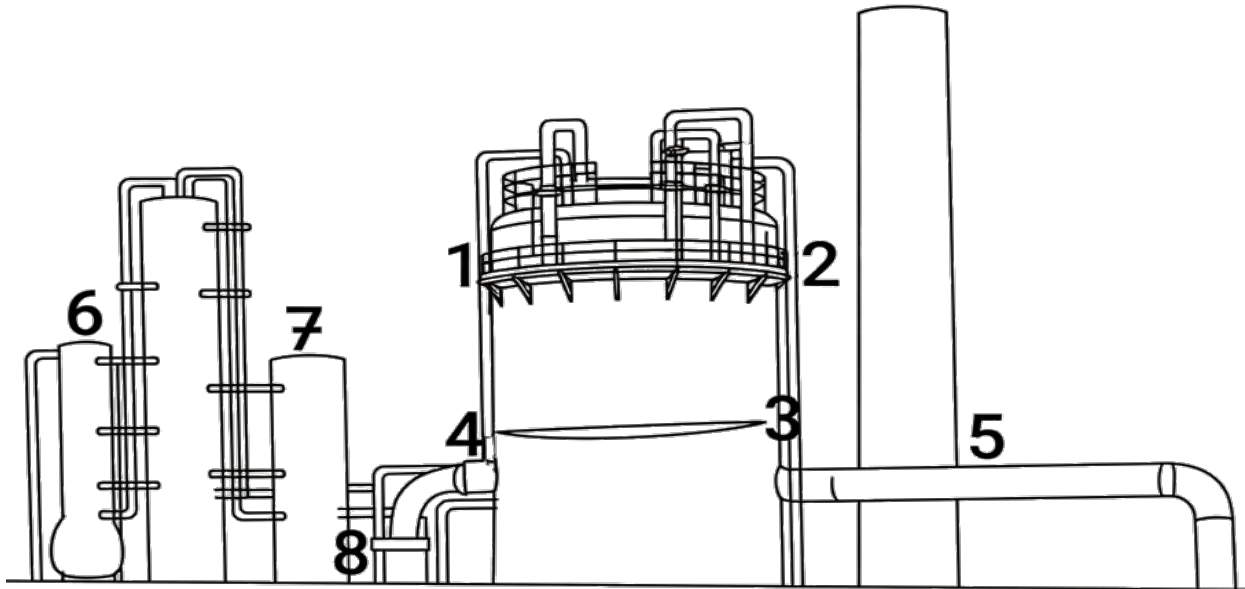
Gasworks Park Overture

*A Site-Specific Work for Percussionists
Performing on the Historic Gaswork Structures in
Gasworks Park, Seattle*

Thomas F. Heston

Conductor

The conductor is to stand 10-1/2 paces (21 steps) directly south of large outdoor gasworks and face it (faces 6 degrees on compass). These works lie SEE of the Gasworks Memorial Sundial.



The placement of the percussionists is optional, but generally as above. Also, any number of percussionists can play along ad lib.

* Please keep in mind this is a celebration of happiness, a release of rare, unique, and gorgeous music. *

Conductor is not to read from a score, performers may (optional of course!).

15-May-1983 at 7:30 pm: this is a good time of day to perform this song. Sunday is ideal - the shadows are good.

Conductor **Adagio**
Cued by conductor

Hammer(s) $\frac{4}{4}$ *mf*

2x4s $\frac{4}{4}$ *ff*

Metal Pipes $\frac{4}{4}$ *mf* *p*

Small Rock Hammers $\frac{4}{4}$ *ff*

2 - 4 Rubber Mallets $\frac{4}{4}$ *ff*

Optional $\frac{4}{4}$

Metal Hammers $\frac{4}{4}$ *f*

Metal Hammers $\frac{4}{4}$ *ff*

(optional players) $\frac{4}{4}$ *ad lib* *ff*

C.		Improvise (all players) 3' 03"	Cued by conductor, any tempo	15" of silence	 2 / 4		
hmr			 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 2 / 4
2x4			 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 2 / 4
pipes			 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 2 / 4
sm hmr			 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 2 / 4
rm			 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 2 / 4
opt			 	 	 	 	 2 / 4
mtl hmr			 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 2 / 4
mtl hmr			 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 2 / 4
(opt)			 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 <i>f</i>	 2 / 4

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	2/4	2/4	4/4	3/4
C.	tutti cued by conductor		5" of silence	
hmr	2/4	2/4	4/4	3/4
2x4	2/4	2/4	4/4	
pipes	2/4	2/4	4/4	
sm hmr	2/4	2/4	4/4	
rm	2/4	2/4	4/4	3/4
opt	2/4	2/4	4/4	
mtl hmr	2/4	2/4	4/4	3/4
mtl hmr	2/4	2/4	4/4	
(opt)	2/4	2/4	4/4	

C. : ad lib, repeating for 1' 30"
 cutoff with conductor

hmr $\frac{3}{4}$:

2x4 :

pipes :

sm hmr :

rm $\frac{3}{4}$:

opt :

mtl hmr $\frac{3}{4}$:

mtl hmr : free play to end

(opt) : free play to end

The End. Thanks for Playing!

a BIRTHDAY SONG for everyone.

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The preserved towers of Gas Works Park in Seattle sit on a point jutting into Lake Union. For fifty years, a coal gasification plant at that site produced the gas that lit and heated the city. When natural gas arrived by pipeline in 1956, the plant's useful life simply ended. Most cities would have leveled the machinery and hauled it away. Seattle did something better. Landscape architect Richard Haag persuaded the city to keep the great cracking towers standing, clean and green the soil, and build one of the world's first parks that honors its industrial past rather than erasing it. The boiler house became a picnic shelter. The old compressor building became a children's play barn. The towers stayed, rising over the lawns like an iron cathedral.

In the spring of 1983, I was a music student, and living by Gasworks Park (1). Visiting those towers became part of my daily routine, and gradually they revealed their inner music to me. That was the discovery they gave me: music didn't live only in practice rooms and concert halls, in the pieces we were assigned and the halls built to hold them. Music could exist everywhere, even in decommissioned old rusty gasworks on the edge of a lake; **Gasworks Park Overture** represents the music they revealed to me.

After that spring, I left for Alaska. I had no plans to study medicine or become a physician. Medicine wasn't on my mind. But on the boat, a come-along snapped back and struck a friend of mine across the forehead, opening a deep gash. The first mate attempted first aid and got it wrong. I recognized the mistake immediately — I'd been an Eagle Scout, and as a patrol leader my patrol had won the Spokane city-wide first aid contest — but as a grunt crew member I had no authority to intervene. This experience made two things very clear: I wasn't afraid of trauma or emergencies, and I should have been the one giving aid, not the first mate.

I still can't quite put into words what that moment taught me, but I've come close since: it is hard to be optimistic when you're bleeding. The best thing for the spirit in that moment isn't a song, or a meditation, or a chant. It's stopping the bleeding. The music of the human spirit, when the body is in acute crisis, is served first by the correct physical action — not by anything sung or played alongside it.

I didn't know it then, but that was the beginning of a second discovery to sit next to the first. Looking back now, after thirty years of clinical practice, I can say what I couldn't say on that boat deck. The human spirit is the greatest music there is. It doesn't announce itself in a concert hall; it plays on quietly in every person, whether or not anyone is listening for it. Medicine — healing the body and mind, especially when they're broken — has been my way of helping strengthen the human spirit, the inner music in all of us. The Gasworks Park Overture taught me music lives in unexpected places, in our everyday lives, in physical objects. Alaska taught me what to do first when the music inside of us is in danger: heal the body to strengthen the spirit.

This overture is still unperformed, still waiting for its Sunday evening. I don't know if it ever will be performed. But I know what it was for: it was the sound of finding out that the world is already full of music, if you're willing to look at a fenced-off ruin and hear it anyway.

Tom Heston, MD
July 3, 2026

1. Heston TF. Two Left Shoes. 2024. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10666797