

# Edmonds composer honors Civic playground namesake with 'Mika's Song'

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Ed Hartman, right, directs the participants at Mika's Playground.

Drizzle did not prevent some people from making music at [Mika's Playground at Civic Park and Playfield](#) in downtown Edmonds Saturday. Drummer and percussion teacher [Ed Hartman](#) and seven people stood near a column of tubular bells that were installed on the playground near 7th Avenue North.

Standing by a music sheet holder, Hartman — an Edmonds resident — held up two fingers, cueing one of the participants to strike one of the bells with a small mallet. The low chime vibrated in the air and before it faded, Hartman held up seven fingers, cueing another participant to hit another bell. He continued to hold up different numbers of fingers in a repeated pattern after each chime and eventually, the participants learned the pattern and played *Mika's Song* on their own without Hartman's lead.

[Ed Hartman "Mika's Song" Concert from 8th Sense Productions on Vimeo.](#)

Hartman came up with the idea of *Mika's Song* after he saw the tubular bells during the opening of Civic Playfield last June and played on it. The song is named after Mika Zimbalist, who had cerebral palsy and passed away in February 2019, a few days before his 11th birthday.

“The instrument is based on a simple scale, [and] it has limitations, just like disability itself,” he said. “It has [fewer] notes than what is found on a piano.”

*Mika's Song* is based on a pentatonic scale, which has five notes per octave and is often used for novice musicians.

“It doesn't have clashing notes. That way it sounds more harmonious to the player and listener,” Hartman said.



Ed Hartman at work.

After he contacted the Edmonds Arts Commission and got their approval to create *Mika's Song*, Hartman composed a melody that fit the tubular bells. He added lyrics, created chords, and experimented with different arrangements like a chef testing a new recipe. “It's now a song that can be played by anyone in a number of styles,” he said.

Hartman made a simple numbering system for the bell chimes, which enabled him to teach seven people at the event to “successfully play the piece with no rehearsal” in less than an hour.

“I also brought in another professional percussionist, Don Dieterich, and we had a wonderful time improvising on the chimes,” he said. “Because of the rain, the PA wasn’t available, so this performance became much more intimate for the audience who surrounded us.”



Ed Hartman (left) and Don Dieterich making music.

A veteran musician who has composed music scores for popular TV shows like *Stranger Things*, *The Grand Crew* and *Legacies*, Hartman was looking for projects that he could relate to because of his recent health issues. *Mika’s Song* is just the beginning of bringing inclusivity of music to the park. Hartman wants to collaborate with a local artist to create a plaque engraved with the music on it. This would allow people to copy the music and create the song with almost any musical instrument.

People who want to play the bells can use a mallet that is attached to each bell. “[My] best advice is simply to explore the instrument. Hit it at different levels (always with care!), and in different places on the tubes themselves,” Hartman said. “You will find a variety of subtle differences of timbre (quality). Combining more than one tube together will create ‘harmony’ or chords. If you record your performance, you can listen to it, and see how it compares to a piano or other instrument. It’s a wonderful place for anyone—especially kids—to discover music.”

Hartman doesn’t have any further demonstrations or events with the bells in the near future, but when he does, he plans to do it with a full PA system.



Participants learn to play the melody.

“The fact that an entire playground was built around his love of play is a testament to what any of us can achieve. This hasn’t been an easy project, and today’s weather challenges added to adventure,” Hartman said. “I do know that I need to push through everything and create a positive musical experience. I feel good that somehow a true artistic event did occur. It felt very worthwhile.”

Follow Ed Hartman on [YouTube](#), which is filled with drumming tutorials, do-it-yourself tunings and samples of his published work.

— *Story and photos by Nick Ng*