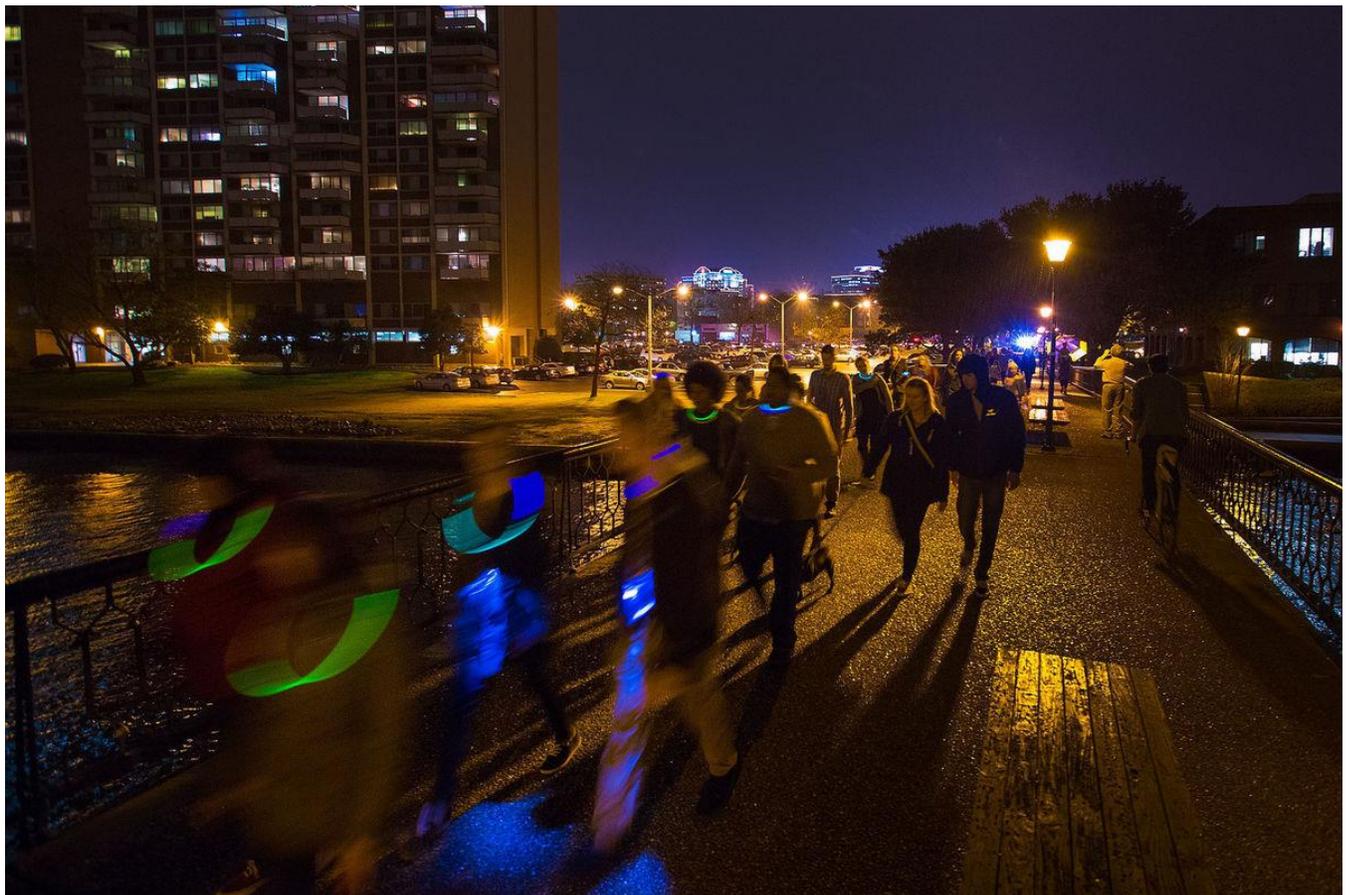


# "Unsilent Night" music parade marches on despite drizzle in Norfolk

- By Katherine Hafner  
The Virginian-Pilot



- Hyunsoo Leo Kim | The Virginian-Pilot

Participants of the "Unsilent Night" electronic music parade walk across the Hague footbridge in Norfolk on Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2015.



- Hyunsoo Leo Kim | The Virginian-Pilot

People and companion dogs, including this one in a Santa hat, participate in the "Unsilent Night" electronic music parade through downtown Norfolk. Participants played preselected tracks on their cellphones to create one big sound as they walked on Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2015.



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Participants of the "Unsilent Night" electronic music parade walk down Freemason Street escorted by Norfolk police vehicles Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2015 and play preselected tracks on their cellphones to create one big sound.

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## **NORFOLK**

They marched to the beat of their own smartphones. And Bluetooth speakers. And yes, even old-school boomboxes.

A group of almost 70 people held their respective devices up in the drizzly sky Wednesday night, each projecting a particular tune that fed into an overall melody called "Unsilent Night."

The piece, written by composer Phil Kline to be "heard outdoors in the month of December," is played at events of the same name around the country, according to the Unsilent Night website. It started in Greenwich Village in New York City in 1992. Since then, crowds have gathered for the occasions, in which people each play a specific track that feeds into a "sound sculpture" that "emanates throughout the city streets."

"The idea is like modern-day caroling," one participant said as the group milled around The Plot before Wednesday's event.

This was Norfolk's second Unsilent Night, and it kicked off the season for 34 others around the world in coming weeks.

Police cars escorted the participants who showed up despite a light rain. They started at The Plot in Norfolk's new arts district and made their way up Granby and down Freemason streets, onto cobblestone-paved Botetourt Street, across the Hague walking bridge, past the Chrysler Museum and back to The Plot, where they ended with a celebration at the bar/event space Work | Release.

Along the way, drivers turned their heads to see what the commotion was. A baby pressed his head against the glass of a Freemason home. The Tide even stopped briefly .

Mary Miller, president of the Downtown Norfolk Council, said while the rain put a damper on turnout, a lot more families seemed to be involved this year.

Martin and Karen Gilbert of Virginia Beach showed up with their four grandchildren in tow.

“Electronic music parade just kind of spoke to us,” Karen Gilbert said with a laugh.

Before the parade began, organizers encouraged attendees to download one of four prerecorded tracks through the Unsilent Night website. They then played the tunes throughout the 45-minute walk, wearing glowsticks and crushing wet leaves underfoot.

The walk also served as a kind of holiday tour of the area, with Christmas lights and wreaths adorning many historic homes on Freemason and Botetourt streets.

The bells pealing from Epworth United Methodist Church neatly blended with the chiming music of the parade.

“I thought it sounded really unique and interesting,” Andrea Stackbein, new to Norfolk, said of the event, which she attended with sister Alyssa. “It’s pretty awesome.”

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