

“This is a great loss for both the community of San Diego and Tijuana”

Baja California and San Diego lose sole classical music station

Norisa Diaz
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The binational and bilingual classical radio station XLNC1, which broadcast on 104.9 FM, had its last day on the air yesterday. The station, whose broadcast area covered the regions of southern San Diego County, Tijuana, and northern Baja California, announced on February 9 that it would no longer broadcast due a lack of funding.

The station was unique in that it was one the few in the world that was both binational and bilingual. Its tower was located in Baja California, and the station was known for announcing composers and titles in both Spanish and English, often using one language to introduce a piece and the other language when the piece ended. The station will maintain streaming via their online services, but radio listeners in the region will no longer be able to tune into 104.9 FM.

XLNC1 was founded in 1998 by Victor Diaz initially as an Internet radio station. In 2000, it began broadcasting at 90.7 FM. In 2004, the station nearly shut down due to signal and financial problems, and eventually moved to 104.9 FM in 2008.

Diaz stated that he created the station to educate audiences in both Mexico and the United States about classical music and its mission was “to make great music accessible to everyone.” Following Diaz’s death in 2004, his wife Martha Barba kept the underfunded station afloat, often with personal funds.

During its 20 years of operation, commercial-free classical music has been played on XLNC1 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The wide-ranging programming includes the most popular melodies in classical music each weekday morning, the “Top 400 Hits of the Last 400 Years,” and weekly broadcasts of the New York Philharmonic, as well as the San Francisco Opera during

its season.

Nightly Gala Concerts are known for their diversity. For instance, this week alone, “The Greatest Video Game Music,” performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, will follow “Music by Nikolai Myaskovsky” performed by the USSR Radio Symphony Orchestra.

“This is a great loss for both the community of San Diego and Tijuana,” XLNC1 owner Martha Barba told the WSWs. “XLNC1’s significance was to unify both the United States and Mexico by erasing borders with classical music. We hoped to better the relationship between the community of San Diego and Tijuana by bringing them together with music. We also hoped to teach future generations the importance of classical music and inspire them to pursue their passions in music and the creative arts.

“The station has meant so much to our listeners; since our announcement of us going off the air we have received an outpour of grateful messages, as well as sad ones stating how we are leaving a void in their life by no longer broadcasting on 104.9 FM. ... We did what we could to keep classical music on the air at XLNC1 and survive so we could continue to help culture grow, but now we must take a small step back. It was a pleasure to provide life-changing music for two cities which we love.”

The binational listening community has posted hundreds of comments in Spanish and English on the station’s social media pages pleading for the continuation of the station and lamenting the loss of the station as a beacon of culture.

- “This radio station was there for me whenever I am sick and need classical. It has given me countless good memories. I will keep listening online but the community

is losing an important resource. Can nothing be done to save the station??”

- “This seriously breaks my heart. I’m old tech so I still listen to an actual radio at home and in my car, and XLNC1 is the station I listen to. I don’t have a smart phone so can’t listen via an app. I’m happy that I’ll still be able to listen via the web page but I don’t spend much time on the computer that I can be listening. Anyway, thanks for all the wonderful years.”

- “XLNC was extremely important for me because there were very few opportunities to listen to classical music or go to concerts in Tijuana (where I was raised). XLNC made timeless music accessible, especially for us Tijuana kids who could not afford going to the SD Symphony. I liked the music so much that I began taking violin lessons...and it was the only radio station that no matter the time of the day, I felt peace and calm. ... Thank you for changing lives through music...and for introducing to everyone the love and magic that comes with classical music.”

- “This is really sad news for classical music lovers here...one of the few good radio stations we have here! what will we lose here next?”

Nearly all of the comments speak to the general austerity and attack on public services and the arts or refer to the ways in which the station has helped listeners on both sides of the border cope with the stress of daily life.

The number of Mexicans living in poverty increased by 2 million between 2012 and 2014. In 2014, Mexico’s poverty rate increased from 45.5 to 46.2 percent, corresponding to 55.3 million people in the country of approximately 120 million.

As poverty soars throughout Mexico, violence among the drug cartels is claiming record numbers of lives, particularly among the border regions. Violence in Tijuana’s vast working class neighborhoods has skyrocketed to new levels. Reports indicate that 2017 saw 1,734 homicides, nearly doubling the 2016 record of 910.

Mirroring the deadly opioid epidemic in the United States, which in 2016 claimed the lives of over 64,000 people, Mexico’s most recent National Survey on Drug Consumption, Alcohol and Tobacco (ENCODAT) reported that the percentage of Mexican men between 12

and 65 who have used illegal drugs nearly doubled over the past decade (to 15.8 percent) while the percentage of women more than doubled (to 4.3 percent).

San Diego faces a growing homeless crisis that corresponds to a rising cost of living. The city hosts the fourth-largest homeless population in the United States. Recent data from school districts showed more than 23,800 students were homeless last year in San Diego County—a record high and a 4.7 percent increase over the previous year.

Analysis by *inewssource* showed that countywide poverty rate grew from 12.3 percent to 14.5 percent between 2011 and 2015, with more than 450,000 people living below the federal poverty line, set an annual income of \$12,082 for a single person.

It is in within the context of these social crises that listeners mourn the loss of a public utility that offered both deep international elements and artistic beauty, and was free and accessible for all. Like all other social benefits, access to art is under relentless attack as culture is subordinated to the profit motive and the lion’s share of society’s wealth becomes further concentrated at the top, while government funding is directed to unending imperialist war.

According to a recent study released by the Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs at Brown University, titled “Costs of War,” 16 years of war in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria have drained \$5.6 trillion from the United States economy. Last month, the Trump administration revealed plans to build up the US nuclear “triad” with 30-year projections totaling \$1.3 trillion. The cost of just one Trident D5 submarine-launched missile (\$66 million) would be enough to cover the annual budget of the station and keep XLNC1 on the air for the next 33 years.



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