

JAZZ AND ROCK-POP GROUPS OF LENINAKAN

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Abstract

Introduction: The musical life of Leninakan (present-day Gyumri) in the 1960s-1980s developed within a dynamic cultural environment where jazz, rock-pop, and other non-academic trends emerged alongside academic traditions. This process was influenced by changes in Soviet cultural policy, the growing professional level of local musicians, and new forms of youth self-expression. The article examines jazz and rock groups as an important element of the city's cultural identity.

Methods and materials: The study applies historical-analytical, musicological, and cultural studies methods. The main sources include archival materials, press publications, scholarly literature, and documentary and oral evidence concerting the activities of jazz, rock-pop, and vocal-instrumental ensembles of the period. **Analysis:** The research focuses on the genre orientations, repertoire practices, and socio-cultural roles of jazz and rock groups active in Leninakan between the 1960s and 1980s. Special attention is given to the shift from big-band traditions to authorial rock and folk-rock forms and to the role of youth and student environments. **Results:** The findings show that these groups shaped both the city's musical life and the development of Armenian non-academic music, contributing to new musical languages, stage culture, and urban youth identity in Armenia and the diaspora.

Key words: *Leninakan, Gyumri, jazz music, rock-pop groups, urban musical culture, youth subculture, non-academic music.*

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ДЖАЗОВЫЕ И РОК-ЭСТРАДНЫЕ КОЛЛЕКТИВЫ ЛЕНИНАКАНА

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Аннотация

Введение: Музыкальная жизнь Лениакана (ныне Гюмри) в 1960-1980-е годы развивалась в динамичной культурной среде, где наряду с академическими традициями постепенно формировались джаз, рок-эстрада и другие неакадемические направления. Этот процесс был обусловлен изменениями в советской культурной политике, ростом профессионального уровня местных музыкантов и поисками новых форм молодежного самовыражения. В работе рассматриваются джазовые и рок-группы как важный элемент культурной идентичности города. **Методы и материалы:** В исследовании применяются историко-аналитические, музыковедческие и культурологические методы. Основными источниками послужили архивные материалы, публикации в прессе, научная литература, а также документальные и устные свидетельства о деятельности джазовых, рок-эстрадных и вокально-инструментальных ансамблей рассматриваемого периода. **Анализ:** Анализируются жанровые ориентиры, репертуарная политика и социокультурные функции джазовых и рок-коллективов Лениакана 1960-1980-х годов. Особое внимание уделяется переходу от биг-бендовой традиции к авторскому року и фолк-року, а также роли молодежной и студенческой среды. **Результаты:** Показано, что эти коллективы сыграли значительную роль в формировании музыкальной жизни города и развитии армянской неакадемической музыки, способствуя становлению нового музыкального языка, сценической культуры и городской молодежной идентичности в Армении и диаспоре.

Ключевые слова: Лениакан, Гюмри, джазовая музыка, рок-эстрадные коллективы, городская музыкальная культура, молодежная субкультура, неакадемическая музыка.

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INTRODUCTION: The formation and development of jazz and rock-pop music in Leninakan have thus far been only partially addressed in Armenian musicological scholarship. Existing studies have tended to focus primarily on the city’s academic musical life, its folk performance traditions, or the activities of individual cultural figures, while the history of jazz and rock groups as an independent and systemic phenomenon has largely remained at the level of fragmented documentary references. Although a number of studies and memoir sources preserve valuable information about individual ensembles, musicians, and concert activities, they do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the internal logic and developmental patterns of Leninakan’s non-academic musical movement.

The aim of the present article is to reveal the historical conditions surrounding the emergence of jazz, rock-pop, and vocal-instrumental groups in Leninakan during the 1960s-1980s, to examine the main directions of their activity, and to assess their role in shaping the city’s musical environment.

The scientific novelty of the study consists of offering, for the first time, a comprehensive and systematic examination of Leninakan’s jazz and rock groups through a comparative approach, drawing on both written sources and living testimonies and interviews.

The emergence of jazz and rock-pop ensembles in Leninakan during the 1960s should be regarded as a significant manifestation of a structural transformation in the city’s musical life.

Prior to this period, the concert culture of Leninakan had been largely centered on academic genres-symphonic, chamber, and folk music. From the mid-1960s onward, however, a new layer began to take shape, characterized by ensemble performance enriched with elements of jazz, popular music, and rock.

This process was both by the relative liberalization of Soviet cultural policy and by the professional growth of the city's younger generation of musicians. Many of these performers had received formal training at the Leninakan Music College and were actively engaged in various state and non-state musical institutions. As a result, Leninakan's musical environment expanded beyond its traditional academic framework, incorporating contemporary genres that reflected broader artistic and social changes of the period.

The "Tsitsernak" Big Band

A pivotal stage in the formation of Leninakan's jazz life is associated with the establishment of the "Tsitsernak" ensemble, founded in 1964 at the Textile Workers' Palace of Culture [1, p.12]. This ensemble became the city's first big band and marked the institutional beginning of professional jazz performance in Leninakan. The artistic director of the group was trombonist Henrik Mkhitarian, whose professional leadership ensured a high level of performance and clear structural organization within the ensemble. The peak of the band's activity coincided with the inclusion of pianist Suren Khachatryan, a development that significantly enriched the repertoire and enhanced the overall artistic quality of the ensemble[3]. The band brought together many of the city's finest brass and rhythm-section musicians, transforming "Tsitsernak" into a true cornerstone of Leninakan's jazz school. A defining feature of the ensemble was that it not only performed jazz and popular music works but also contributed to the formation of a local tradition of brass and ensemble performance. The musicians and students associated with "Tsitsernak" later became members of leading regional collectives, including, the well-known "Dzamuka" pop-jazz orchestra of the 1970s, thereby ensuring continuity and further development of the city's jazz heritage.

The "Shirak" Rock-Pop Ensemble

In 1966, the "Shirak" rock-pop ensemble was formed in Leninakan, becoming one of the most vivid manifestations of the city's youth-oriented musical life[1, p.16]. The group was led by Sergo Tonoyan, while its principal creative force was solo guitarist Anushavan Miranyan, a graduate of the Leninakan Music College. The ensemble performed in local clubs and in the city park, attracting primarily a young audience. Although its period of active activity lasted only about one year, "Shirak" established itself as one of the first stable rock-pop formations in Leninakan. The group introduced into the city's musical environment the instrumental configurations and stage language characteristic of Soviet pop-rock, thereby contributing to the early institutionalization of this genre within the local cultural context.

The "Angin Qarer" Rock Band

In 1967, the rock band "Angin Qarer" was formed in Leninakan, emerging as one of the boldest expressions of the city's youth counterculture [1, p.20]. The group came into being at a time when, under Soviet ideological conditions, rock music was regarded as a suspicious and potentially dangerous phenomenon.

The immediate impetus for the band's formation was a concert by the "Shirak" VIA, after which a group of young musicians gathered at the home of Surik Martirosyan and decided to establish their own rock collective. The core lineup consisted of Surik Martirosyan (lead guitar), Rober Kocharyan (bass guitar and principal songwriter), Levon Nuroyan (rhythm guitar), Mathos Markaryan (band leader), and Robert Sahakyan (drums). Initial rehearsals took place in private

homes, later moving to the Hosiery Factory Club and the Railway Workers' House of Culture, where the band was able to pursue its activities in a more organized setting. Between 1968 and 1971, "Angin qarer" had already established itself as a fully formed rock band, performing several paid concerts per month.

A defining characteristic of the ensemble was its repertoire freedom. The band performed works by The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and Jimi Hendrix, alongside Armenian songs and original compositions. Songs written by Robert Kocharyan became the first staged rock works in the history of Leninakan. In 1969, Gagik Barseghyan joined the group; he later founded the band "Bambir", a development that positioned "Angin qarer" as a crucial link in the lineage of Armenian rock music.

In 1970, the band participated in festivals held in Kirovakan, Yerevan, and Tbilisi, winning first prize in Tbilisi and thereby confirming its regional recognition. A joint concert with the band "Araqyalner" in 1972 was interrupted by state authorities, revealing the Soviet system's perception of the rock movement as ideologically threatening.

Although the band soon disbanded due to military conscription, it reunited in 1976 for Vladimir Kocharyan's theatrical production *Love, Jazz, and the Devil*, whose music received significant public acclaim. "Angin qarer" ultimately became a symbol of creative freedom in Leninakan and the fertile ground upon which the next generation of Armenian rock culture was formed.

The "Kilikia" Rock Band

The rock band "Kilikia" was founded in 1967 based on the No. 2 House of Culture in the Noravan district of Leninakan and quickly became one of the city's most intellectually oriented and ideologically coherent rock collectives [1, p. 28]. The band's existence was partly sustained through the support of the House of Culture's director, Gagik Yesayan, whose patronage provided "Kilikia" with a stable organizational platform.

The founder and creative core of the ensemble was Sergo Tonoyan, a keyboardist and band leader. A student of the Leninakan Music College who had been admitted to the conservatory, Tonoyan consciously chose a non-academic artistic path. His musical thinking fused world progressive rock-particularly the style of Emerson, Lake & Palmer and Keith Emerson-with a solid foundation in classical musical education.

At various stages, the band's lineup included Artak Petrosyan (drums), Karo Sidoyan (lead guitar), Armen Tiran (vocals and songwriter), Artash Harutyunyan (bass guitar), and others. The repertoire of "Kilikia" was based primarily on Sergo Tonoyan's original compositions, which, under the constraints of Soviet cultural policy, circulated mainly within youth circles.

One of the band's most significant achievements was the development of its own distinct musical language. Armen Tiran's song "Aghbyurner, ed ur kertak" ("*Springs, where are you going?*") became the symbolic emblem of "Kilikia", uniting Armenian melodic sensibility with rock sonority.

Thus, "Kilikia" occupies a distinctive place in the history of rock music in Leninakan as a bearer of authorial and intellectual rock culture, enriching the city's jazz-rock tradition with depth and artistic independence.

The Bells Rock Band

The rock band The Bells was formed in 1968 at the Leninakan Polytechnic Institute and represented one of the most active and intellectually engaged strata of the city's student rock scene [1, p.32]. Unlike bands that emerged within the framework of houses of culture, The Bells originated in an academic environment, where technical thinking and an interest in contemporary music converged.

The band's lineup included Gagik Martirosyan (keyboards and vocals), Zurab Marinashvili and Sergey Khachatryan (guitars), as well as Ashot Martirosyan, who combined keyboard, percussion, and vocal parts, thereby lending the ensemble a sense of sonic mobility and textural multiplicity.

The Bells operated at a time when an active rock milieu had already taken shape in Leninakan through the work of groups such as Angin Karer, Kilikia, and others. Within this context, The Bells embodied an urban, student-centered variant of rock culture, in which music functioned as a means of generational self-expression and the articulation of intellectual freedom.

Although the band's activity was relatively brief, lasting until 1970, its existence demonstrates that rock culture in Leninakan had already moved beyond club-based settings and penetrated the sphere of higher education, thereby shaping a new audience and a new mode of cultural thinking.

Aragats Music Ensemble

The Aragats ensemble was founded in 1970 based on the Builders' House of Culture and became one of the most established collectives within Leninakan's jazz-rock and variety music movement [1, p.36]. Emerging from the foundation of the Tsiternak Big Band, the group inherited its brass-oriented musical thinking while transforming into a contemporary, multi-genre ensemble oriented toward all-Union competitive platforms.

The founder and artistic director of the ensemble was Artush Sukiasyan, who brought together some of the city's prominent musicians. Key figures included vocalist and master of ceremonies Yuri Chikunov, drummer Andranik Gabrielyan, solo guitarist Boris Aleksanov, and keyboardist Tomik Khorenyan, whose contribution endowed Aragats with a structurally refined and multi-layered instrumental texture grounded in academic musical principles. The ensemble also featured leading saxophonists, trumpeters, and bass guitarists, while its vocal section included several accomplished performers, among whom Aniko Hovhannisyanyan stood out for her professional training and high stage culture.

Aragats distinguished itself not only by its high-performance standards but also by organizational stability. The ensemble became a laureate of the all-Union competition "*Tovarishch Pesnya*" held in Simferopol, successfully participated in the *Shirak-78 festival* in 1978, and was among the first ensembles in the city to be awarded the honorary title of "*People's Ensemble*".

In the musical history of Leninakan, Aragats functioned as a bridge between the big-band tradition of the 1960s and the competitive jazz-rock system of the 1970s, bringing the city's musical culture onto a broader all-Union cultural stage.

Urartu Ensemble

The Urartu rock-jazz ensemble emerged at a stage when Leninakan's rock culture had already matured and moved beyond the level of amateur club activity [1, p.42]. The group brought together musicians with formal academic training, instrumentalists shaped by jazz-oriented thinking, and performers with substantial stage experience, resulting in a structurally coherent and multi-layered sound.

The ensemble's vocalist was Armen Tiran, whose stage presence and vocal expressiveness became a defining element of Urartu's artistic identity. The keyboard section was represented by Surik Khachatryan and Sergo Tonoyan, one of the ideological figures of the Leninakan rock movement. The guitar texture was shaped by Gagik Aghababyan, Grachik Harutyunyan, and Karush Sndoyan, while the rhythmic foundation was provided by Artak Petrosyan and bassist Samvel Babayan. The high quality of the ensemble's live sound was ensured by sound engineer Shurik Harutyunyan.

Urartu represented a phase in which Leninakan rock music ceased to function as imitation and began to articulate its own musical language. The ensemble demonstrated that, by the 1970s-1980s, rock music in Leninakan could exist as a fully developed cultural phenomenon rather than merely an underground experimental practice.

The Prometheus Rock Band

The Prometheus rock band was formed in 1971 within the environment of the Leninakan Pedagogical Institute and became one of the significant manifestations of rock rebellion emerging from within the system of higher education [1, p.46]. Over the course of three years, the band developed a distinctive artistic profile by combining the intellectual atmosphere of student life with the energetic aesthetics of Western rock music.

The ensemble included Sergei Khachatryan (guitar), Zurab Marinashvili (guitar, vocals), Samvel Varzhapetyan (vocals), Eduard Maloyan (drums), Hamik Darbinyan (keyboards, vocals), as well as several bassists who participated at different stages of the band's activity. The group was led by the saxophonist Hakob, while the vocal palette was enriched by the contributions of Mara and Seda. The Prometheus stood out for its exceptionally advanced technical equipment for the period, reflecting the musicians' high level of dedication and professionalism.

The band performed not only in Leninakan but also beyond Armenia. Its 1973 performance in Kirovabad became a symbolic confrontation between Soviet ideological discipline and the music of freedom articulated from the stage. In 1974, the band ceased its activity; nevertheless, The Prometheus remains an important example of how the student environment could serve as a fertile platform for the formation of modern rock culture.

The Vialpi vocal-instrumental ensemble

The Vialpi vocal-instrumental ensemble was founded in 1975 at the Leninakan Polytechnic Institute and within a short period became one of the most organized and ideologically cohesive collectives of the city's youth rock movement [1, p.52]. The creative core of the ensemble was Levon Demirchyan-lead guitarist, vocalist, and musical director-whose original compositions shaped the group's distinctive artistic identity. The initial lineup included Vahan Gasparyan (bass guitar, vocals), Sergey Shahparonyan (drums), and Mkrtich Melikyan (keyboards), the only member with formal professional musical training. At a later stage, Samvel Aghanyan joined the group, forming a productive creative tandem with Demirchyan.

Vialpi's repertoire encompassed arrangements of Armenian folk songs, original works, and selected examples of Western rock music by bands such as Smokie, Pink Floyd, and the Eagles. The ensemble actively participated in municipal and republican festivals and performed in Tartu in 1979. In 1982, the group was awarded the honorary title of "People's Ensemble". The ensemble's final performance took place in 1984. In the musical history of Leninakan, Vialpi remains a collective that successfully integrated the intellectual potential of the student milieu with national musical thinking and the influences of Western rock, thereby contributing to the mature phase of the city's rock culture.

The Biayna Ensemble

The Biayna pop-jazz ensemble was founded in 1976 at the House of Culture No.1 in Leninakan and rapidly became one of the leading forces of the city's contemporary music movement [1, p.60]. A decisive milestone in its international recognition occurred in 1977, when Biayna was awarded the Second Prize at the International Festival held at VDNKH in Moscow, with the jury chaired by Georgy Garanyan. This achievement was exceptional not only for the ensemble itself but also for the entire musical environment of Leninakan.

The ensemble's artistic director was Drastamat Melikyan. Biayna featured a powerful rhythmic and brass section, giving its sound an almost big-band character. The vocal group and sophisticated polyphonic arrangements contributed to a coherent and expressive stage presence. In the same year, the ensemble also received Laureate status at the Transcaucasian festival held in Stepanakert. Biayna thus emerged as one of the most successful manifestations of Leninakan's pop-jazz movement of the 1970s, effectively combining local performing resources with the artistic demands of the all-Union stage.

The Kyanq Ensemble

The Kyanq ensemble was founded in 1976 within the student milieu of the Leninakan Pedagogical Institute and quickly became one of the symbolic representatives of the city's youth rock culture [1, p.66]. The ideological and creative core of the group was Artur Tonoyan, author of the ensemble's songs and poetic lyrics, in which lyrical expression intertwined with generational rebellion.

Kyanq performed with great success in student halls, festivals, and citywide events. In 1977, Tonoyan's song "Khndzorik" ("Little apple") was awarded Third Prize at a festival in Kirovakan, and in the same year the ensemble won First Prize at the Kutaisi Festival. The group also appeared in the Baltic region, performing at youth festivals in Daugavpils. Although Kyanq disbanded in 1978, it remains a vivid testament to the fact that in the 1970s Leninakan possessed not only a strong academic and pop tradition but also a vibrant student rock culture.

The Spyurk Ensemble

The Spyurk ensemble was formed in 1977 at the House of Culture No.2 in the Nor Avan district of Leninakan, on the initiative of students from the Kara-Murza Music College [1, p.72]. The intellectual and musical core of the group was Vardges Adamyan, who later became a well-known musicologist. Around him gathered Eduard Aghajanyan, Zhorzhik Kirakosyan, Murad Ghasabyan, and other young musicians.

Ensemble musician Vardges Adamyan noted:

"The ensemble carried out quite an active artistic activity; we had more than 50 pieces in our repertoire, toured in Moscow, participated in various festivals and competitions, and were awarded laureate titles" [2].

A defining characteristic of Spyurk was the synthesis of Western rock with Armenian musical thinking. The ensemble performed works by The Beatles, Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, and Uriah Heep, while also presenting songs by Komitas in contemporary arrangements. Spyurk performed regularly in the city park, educational institutions, and youth centers. The ensemble became an important link in the rock culture of late-1970s Leninakan, shaping a direction in which rock music merged with national musical self-awareness.

The Aregak Band

The Aregak rock band was founded in 1978 at the House of Culture of the Leninakan Textile Factory and quickly became one of the key centers for the development of heavy rock in the city [1, p.76]. The band's founder and ideological leader was Vardan Tokmajyan, a self-taught guitarist and composer whose original works later defined the ensemble's distinctive artistic profile.

Throughout the 1980s, Aregak developed both technically and stylistically, reaching a period of creative maturity between 1984 and 1988, when it articulated a fully realized language of hard rock and heavy metal. The "golden lineup" formed during this phase ensured a high level of performance and a stable stage identity. Aregak was among the first urban bands in Leninakan to consistently cultivate the heavy rock genre, relying not only on Western rock traditions but also on its own original material. Although only a limited number of recordings have survived, the band remains one of the most significant chapters in the city's rock memory.

The Bambir Band

The Bambir band was founded in 1978 in Leninakan and became one of the most vital and enduring platforms of Armenian folk rock [1, p.84]. The creative core of the group was Gagik Barseghyan (known as “Jag”), whose original songs and arrangements fused Armenian folk and classical heritage with the language of global rock culture.

The artistic hallmark of Bambir lay in its synthesis of Armenian melodic thinking and contemporary rock, through which the band developed a distinctive and recognizable sound. From an early stage, its concert activity extended beyond the borders of Armenia, encompassing various cities of the USSR and later the United States. The band has received numerous national and international awards, including a prize at the Folk Music Festival held in Belarus in 1982 and the Armenian Music Awards in 2003 for Best Rock Band. In the 2000s, Bambir also emerged as a theatrical and conceptual project through the programs *Salao* and *Armenian Scotch*.

Over the decades, Bambir evolved into more than just a band, becoming an entire artistic school whose legacy brought the folk-rock movement of Leninakan into the pan-Armenian and international cultural sphere.

The Deghdzanik Band

In 1980, a new name emerged in the musical life of Leninakan that quickly became one of the city’s most significant cultural brands: *Deghdzanik* [1, p.92]. The band was formed at a time when a rock-pop and jazz-rock scene had already taken shape in Leninakan, and the younger generation was demanding a technically sophisticated, visually rich, and contemporary sound. *Deghdzanik* was a direct response to this demand.

The founder and artistic director of the group was Gugush Tagvoryan, around whom the first, most widely known and later regarded as the “legendary” lineup was formed, consisting of Stepan Barseghyan, Avetis Seksenyan, Ruzan Gabrielyan, Sargis Papazyan, Abraham Danielyan, Melanya Adamyan, and Anahit Ayvazyan. With this lineup, *Deghdzanik* acquired the recognizable image through which it came to be perceived not only in Leninakan but also beyond its borders.

The band stood out for its exceptional level of technical equipment and stage culture, which was highly advanced for its time. Its sound, lighting, and stage solutions allowed *Deghdzanik* to function not merely as a musical ensemble but as a complete show-oriented cultural unit. As a result, the group became an integral part of the city’s public life: its members achieved wide recognition, and their performances were covered by the press and television.

The first lineup of *Deghdzanik* also acquired social significance, embodying the new urban youth of early 1980s Leninakan, a generation striving for free expression, contemporary sound, and professional stage culture. In this sense, the band functioned as a transitional link from the Soviet estrada model toward a more independent and urban rock-pop mode of thinking.

Lokomotiv Band

The Lokomotiv Band was founded in 1980 on the basis of the Sevyan Palace of Culture in Leninakan and quickly became one of the leading ensembles in the city’s pop and multi-genre musical life [1, p.96]. The band’s first concerts took place on February 9-10 of the “*Druzhiba*” (“*Stepanakert-80*”) Festival held in Stepanakert. From 1981 to 1988, Lokomotiv was a regular participant in republican and city festivals and competitions.

The band’s first musical director was Harutyun Apoyan; one year later the position was taken over by Gagik Manucharov, under whose leadership Lokomotiv evolved into a well-organized, multi-genre pop ensemble. The vocal lineup included Aniko, Knarik Cholakhyan, Zhanna Gevorgyan, Narine Mesropyan and Hovhannes Krjyan, who ensured both musical quality and stage cohesion.

The instrumental lineup was multi-layered and constantly evolving. Lead guitar duties were performed at various times by Hmayak Hakobyan, Vardan Tokmajyan, and Artur Manukyan, while bass guitar was often played by the band's artistic director, Garik Manucharov, himself. The keyboard section featured Artur Poghosyan (Iso), Armen Tiran, Sergey Tonoyan, Gagik Sahakyan, and Andrey Papazyan, enabling the band to work in classical pop, jazz-rock, and synthesized styles alike.

A distinctive asset of Lokomotiv was its brass section, which gave the ensemble a big-band and show-pop character. The brass players included Hovsep Ginetsyan, Krist Galoghlyan, and Gugush Tagvoryan. Percussion duties at different stages were handled by Andranik Gabrielyan, Karen Manukyan, and Konstantin Manucharov.

Technical support was provided at a high professional level: sound engineers Gagik Suvaryan and Gevorg Muradyan, along with comperes Yuri Chikunov and Yuri Makaryan, gave Lokomotiv's concerts the character of a polished show and staged performance. Lokomotiv became one of the key collectives of Leninakan's cultural life in the 1980s, combining high performance standards, stage presentation, and youthful energy. Its activity played a significant role in shaping the city's contemporary pop and multi-genre music scene up to 1988.

Zangak children's group

The Zangak children's group was formed in 1984 based on the Leninakan Aesthetic Center as an innovative musical initiative for children and adolescents [1, p.102]. The organizational foundation of the group was established with the support of the Center's director, Susanna Mktrehyan, while the artistic director was Gagik Sahakyan.

The group mainly performed on the stage of the Leninakan Puppet Theatre, presenting children's rock-pop programs. The ensemble included Marina (vocals), who was also the author of several songs.

Zangak also performed at the "Kruncker" café, one of the first children's discotheques in the USSR, thereby shaping a new young audience and fostering public interest in children's stage music. In this way, Zangak emerged in the cultural life of 1980s Leninakan as a new creative model for children and adolescents, bringing together the educational environment, the stage, and contemporary musical thinking.

CONCLUSION: The jazz and rock ensembles that emerged in Leninakan between the 1960s and 1980s formed a distinct cultural layer that extended beyond the official Soviet musical framework and introduced a rare sense of creative independence into the city's artistic life. From the Tsitsernak Big band to Aregak, Kyank, Spyurk, Vialpi, Aragats, Urartu, Biayna, Deghdzanik, Lokomotiv, and Bambir, these groups represent a continuous developmental trajectory in which jazz, rock, pop, and Armenian musical thinking merged into a new artistic quality.

Leninakan's musical environment was distinguished by its pronounced multi-layered character. Academically trained musicians and self-taught rock performers coexisted within the same urban space, while big-band brass traditions developed alongside small vocal-instrumental ensembles. This interaction gave rise to original rock compositions, innovative reinterpretations of Armenian musical material, hard rock and heavy metal tendencies, and a folk-rock synthesis that eventually reached international audiences.

Beyond their artistic value, these groups played an important socio-cultural role. They shaped new models of youth identity in which music became a means of expressing freedom, individuality, and urban belonging. Ultimately, the jazz and rock movement of Leninakan contributed significantly to the formation of Armenian non-academic music and remains an essential part of Gyumri's cultural memory.

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