



# The Russian Embergher.

**Dedicated to Mr. Ginislao Paris**  
*Musician, Mandolin enthusiast*  
*and Inventor from Russia.*

Let us start by telling about our great find - A Liuto Cantabile (also called mandolncello) made by the “Stradivarius of Mandolin”, Roman luthier Luigi Embergher in early 20th Century.

The instrument has not been played for the last 40-50 years, but luckily it has been stored properly, with strings removed and it is in a reasonable condition.

The instrument turned out to be of a high end level and of an unusual construction type. It has a double top and uncommon bracing system yet all the Embergher signature features are present, such as radiused fingerboard, elongated body shape and the highest level of craftsmanship.

There are two labels inside:

"Adresse: Luigi Embergher, ROMA, Premiata fabbrica Via delle Carrozze 19" and "Mandolino a doppio fondo sistema Ginislao Paris."



(Labels inside Embergher's Liuto Cantabile)

So what does Ginislao Paris means? Was it a name of a musical instruments' dealer in Paris? Dealers' labels were often attached later by the shops or distributors next to the maker's label in vintage musical instruments. On another hand “sistema” means System, a construction type in Italian.



(Luigi Embergher's Liuto Cantabile before restoration.)



The extensive search of Russian sources resulted in some interesting finds - Ginislao Paris was actually a person's name.

Ginislao Paris established and led "The society of amateur Mandolinists and Guitarists" in St. Petersburg, Russia in early 1880's. In fact it was a proper mandolin orchestra of eighteen people, the very first in Russia and very popular at the time. The great Russian folk music enthusiast and "Father of balalaika" Vassily Andreev was playing in the same concert with Ginislao's orchestra in 1887.

According to Flaviy Sokolov's monography "Vassily Andreev and his Orchestra", It was Ginislao's mandolin orchestra that inspired Andreev to turn from his solo balalaika performances to the creation of a full Russian folk instruments orchestra that brought him worldwide fame.



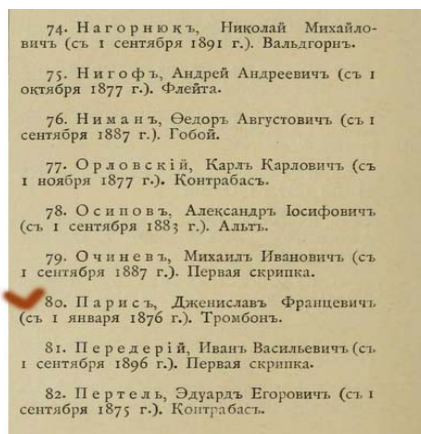
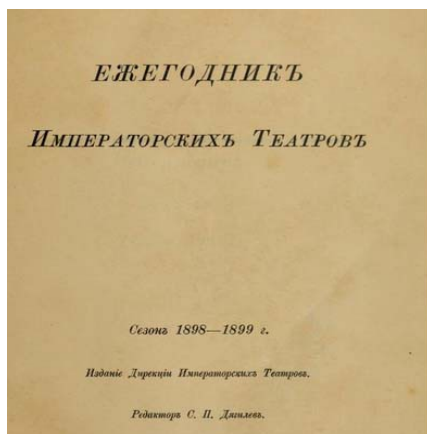
(Vassily Andreev with his Balalaika)

Russian (and later American) ballet dancer Michel Fokine, the great Anna Pavlova's friend and colleague, in his memoirs recalls playing mandolin in Ginislao Paris' ensemble and later joining Andreev's Russian orchestra on domra (Russian 3 or 4 string instrument of mandolin scale and tuning) before giving up playing on stage in favour of his ballet career.



(Michel Fokine (centre) playing mandola)

Not much else is known about Ginislao Paris. His main occupation was surprisingly playing trombone in the Russian Imperial Opera Orchestra in Mariinsky theatre in St. Petersburg. We found an old theatre reference book, citing his work there from 1876 as well as another source (Pavlotsky's reference) mentioning his retirement year as 1900 and his russified name version Djenislav Frantzevich Paris.



(Imperial Theatre's Yearbook 1898 -1899)

Ginislao Paris is obviously not a Russian name. Russian Imperial Theatres, directly financed by the Imperial Court of Russia, was a lucrative job place. The book lists many foreign employees, including many Frenchmen in the theatre's French Drama section. Where did Ginislao come to St. Petersburg from? Was he French, German, Italian, or perhaps Portuguese? It yet remains a mystery. Paris is presumably a surname of French origin, but many people around Europe share it. His russified name contains a patronymic, which derives from his father's name - Franz, this way it transliterates from Russian. But the original could well be Francois or Francesco rather than standard German version, commonly used in Russia. Our guess is between Italian and French or perhaps a mix of both. The first name, Ginislao, is very rare. It sounds Italian, such as Ladislao, a more common Italian name. "All Petersburg" reference books (a yearly equivalent of the 'Yellow Pages' in the Imperial Russia) lists Ginislao's addresses, first near St Isaaks Cathedral and later not far from Nevsky prospect, up until 1917. What happened to him after the Russian revolution is yet to be discovered. He must have been well into his retirement age back then.



(All Petersburg 1903 and All Petrograd 1917 cuttings showing Ginislao Paris Addresses)

The Embergher's Via delle Carrosse's address enables us to roughly date the instrument. Luigi Embergher had a workshop at this address from 1906 to 1913. Ginislao retired from Mariinski theatre orchestra in 1900. It is likely he devoted himself to improving mandolin construction in his active retirement years and this led him to commissioning Mr Embergher to build his line of instruments. Luigi Embergher's connection with Russia is well documented. Tsarina Maria Fyodorovna had ordered a No.8 Artistico mandolin from Luigi Embergher's workshop. The Tsar's family members were all amateur players and patrons of fine music and had ordered numerous musical instruments from leading makers around Europe.

Embergher mandolins were well known in Russia and were available for ordering through reputable musical instrument dealers. The following catalogue page of St. Petersburg's musical instrument dealer offered for sale: "The Roman Mandolins.

The best copies of famous maestro Embergher.” saying “These mandolins are known for their tender full tone and elegant, yet not too showy decoration. And most importantly by it’s elaborated craftsmanship, noticeable shape and by it’s important enhancements, namely radiused violin-like fingerboard that enables virtuoso-like players and artist mandolinists to quickly and easily archive all the classical highs.”



(Jakov Rozmyslov 1912 Catalogue page)

Logic suggests that not only Liuto Cantabile had been ordered from Mr. Embergher, but perhaps a whole quartet of mandolin instruments, though perhaps just one of each, due to the high cost of Embergher's special orders.

Our guess proved right. Our research has lead us to a rare catalogue of a Russian State musical instruments collection from 1972, describing the mandolin of the same type:

"Mandolin with labels: "Mandolino a doppio fondo sistema Ginislao Paris" and "Adresse: Luigi Emberger Roma Premiata Fabrica 19 via delle Carrozze 19" Lavishly decorated instrument. Segments are not seen as body and back of the neck are covered with decoration of tortoise shell, ivory and mother of pearl. There is the 2nd top inside the body (sub-top) that is placed under the main top in a parallel way. Neck head is of a violin type with modern-type screw machine heads. Length 62cm. - No. 2433"



патки, колки деревянные, дл. 54,6 см — № 304  
 Мандолина, с этикетками: «Mandolino a doppio fondo sistema Ginislao Paris» и «Adresse: Luigi Emberger Roma Premiata Fabrica 19 via delle Carrozze 19». Роскошно отделанный инструмент, сегменты не видны, корпус и шейка покрыты украшениями из черепахи, слоновой кости, перламутра. Внутри корпуса 2-я дека (субдека), расположенная параллельно первой, головка скрипичного типа, колки механические винтовые современного образца, дл. 62 см — № 2433  
 Мандолина, с надписью: «Brevetto E. Secchi Carate

The fact that the mandolin's body is fully covered with tortoise shell suggests that the instrument is based on Embergher's Artistico model No.7 or No. 8. The same book's foreword (page 7) mentions the very mandolin again. "From the other musical instrument types we have to mention those unique and valuable items such as: Glass Harmonicas...mandolins, mandolas and liutos made by D. Filano, L. Salsedo and L. Embergher, whose mandolin amazes with the unique combination of luxurious decoration and excellent sound quality."

**Our Liuto Cantabile is, no doubt, of the same type and had most likely been ordered with the mandolin which is presently in the museum's collection, as a part of a quartet. Needless to say that it is one of a kind, a unique instrument of great importance, probably the only one Liuto Cantabile of this type in the world.**

The instrument is currently being restored to it's former glory by Lutherie Decorte Belgium. Kurt Decorte and his assistant Els Beckers are the major Embergher restoration experts worldwide.  
[www.lutheriedecorte.be](http://www.lutheriedecorte.be)

Keep track of the restoration process and our research updates on the website:  
[www.russian-embergher.com](http://www.russian-embergher.com)

All enquiries should be directed via e-mail to the instrument's owner: [victor@speranski.com](mailto:victor@speranski.com)

