

# *La Pendulerie*



**Robin - Osmond**

## **Important Chased and Gilt Bronze Antique Mantel Clock “Allegory of Knowledge”, Louis XV period**

Circa: 1765-1770

Robert Robin (1741-1799)

Case Attributed to Robert Osmond (1711-1789)

Paris, late Louis XV period, circa 1765-1770

Height 52 cm; width 63 cm; depth 26 cm

The round enamel dial, signed “Robin à Paris”, indicates the hours in Roman numerals and the minutes in Arabic numerals by means of two pierced gilt bronze fleur de lys hands. It is housed in a gilt bronze case and framed by ribbon-tied laurel branches; the bezel is adorned with stylised flowers. It rests on an antique borne, or millarium, whose moulded base is decorated with a ribbon-tied laurel leaf frieze. Two beautifully sculpted figures are placed right and left of the dial. One, a seated female figure dressed in a long toga, appears to be looking at the spectator; she holds a laurel wreath in her left hand. The other, a young, lightly draped Cupid, appears to be absorbed in a parchment that is lying on a table with ram’s head legs. Three large tomes lie at his feet. The fine moulded white marble base is elaborately adorned with a very finely chased and gilt entrelac and rosette frieze.

### **HISTORICAL**

The unusual design of the present clock ranks it among the finest Parisian horological creations of the early French neoclassical period. It is attributed to Robert Osmond (1711-1789), one of the most important Parisian bronziers of the second half of the 18th century. Osmond, who enjoyed fame and renown throughout most of his career, particularly excelled in the creation of clocks based on allegorical themes, such as this one. Influenced by the work of his colleague Caffieri, he was one of the precursors of the renewal of the French decorative arts beginning in the mid-1760’s. His work was much appreciated by the important collectors of the period and his reputation quickly spread. Aided by his nephew Jean-Baptiste Osmond, who became a master founder in 1764 and who took over his workshop after his death in 1789, Osmond could boast of having many of the avant-garde elite among his clientele.

To the best of our knowledge, only one other identical clock is known. Bearing the stamp of the crowned letter "F" in the bronze, (probably the inventory mark of the Château de Fontainebleau), it is in the collection of the French Mobilier national – and more precisely, located today in the Archives nationales in the former Hôtel Soubise (illustrated in the ANCAHA bulletin, n°119, Autumn 2010, p. 67; it is also illustrated in E. Niehüser, *Die französische Bronzeuhr, Eine Typologie der figürlichen Darstellungen*, Munich, 1997, p. 213, fig.325).

### **Artist description:**

Robert Robin (1741-1799)

Is one of the most important Parisian clockmakers of the late 18th century. Having received the titles of Valet de Chambre-Horloger Ordinaire du Roi et de la Reine in 1783 and 1786, he had an extraordinary career, distinguished himself by his exceptional contribution to the progress of time measurement during his lifetime.

In 1778 the French Académie des Sciences approved two of his inventions, one of which led to the construction of an astronomic clock representing a meridian drawn on a pyramid, which was acquired that year by the Menus Plaisirs on behalf of Louis XVI. Robin published a "Description historique et mécanique" of the clock. He constructed astronomic mantel regulators with compensation balance, which the Marquis de Courtanvaux, one of the period's most important connoisseurs of precision horology, was among the first to acquire. During the Terreur he made decimal watches and clocks. He is recorded successively at the Grande rue du faubourg Saint-Honoré (1772), rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois (1775), rue Saint-Honoré à l'Hôtel d'Aligre (1778) and in the Galeries du Louvre in 1786.

Robin housed his mantel regulators in sober, elegant cases that were remarkably modern in style. He worked with excellent artisans such as Robert and Jean Baptiste Osmond, Pierre Philippe Thomire, E. Roy, J.L. Beaucour, P. Delacroix, François Rémond, Claude Galle, Balthazar Lieutaud, E. Levasseur, J.H. Riesener, Jean-Ferdinand Schwerdfeger and Adam Weisweiler for his cases; Barbezat, Edmé-Portail Barbichon, Dubuisson, Cave, Merlet and Coteau for his dials, and the Richards and the Montginots for his springs.

Robin's sons, Nicolas Robert (1775-1812) and Jean-Joseph (1781-1856), were both fine clockmakers who continued their father's business.