

# La Pendulerie



**Lepaute - Osmond**

**Important Gilt Bronze Antique Cartonnier Mantle Clock “Clockmaker’s Model”, Louis XVI period**

Lepaute Horloger du Roi à Paris

Movement attributed to Jean-André and Jean-Baptiste Lepaute

Case by Robert Osmond (1711-1789)

Paris, early Louis XVI period, circa 1775-1780

Height 43.5 cm; width 50.2 cm; depth 25.7cm

The round enamel dial, signed “Lepaute”, indicates the hours and five-minute intervals in Arabic numerals by means of two pierced gilt copper hands. The magnificent architectural case is made entirely of finely chased gilt bronze. The bezel is adorned with a twisted rope motif; the movement is housed in a drum case decorated with stylised leaf motifs. It is supported by scrolls decorated with rosettes and branches against a matted ground; the clock is surmounted by a seed and leaf finial. The quadrangular platform rests upon a chased gilt bronze base decorated with beading and a frieze of stylised acanthus leaves; it in turn rests upon a blue turquin marble base that is raised upon four flattened ball feet.

## HISTORICAL

The unusual design of this cartonnier mantle clock is attributable to Robert Osmond, one of the most important Parisian bronziers of the second half of the 18th century. Its architectural case is comparable to that of similar models signed by or attributed to Osmond. One example is illustrated in Tardy, *La pendule française, 2ème partie: du Louis XVI à nos jours*, Paris, 1975, p. 301, fig. 2; a second example is illustrated in P. Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age à nos jours*, Paris, 1997, p. 177, fig. E.

The term “clockmaker’s model”, which we use to designate the present model, is due to the fact that the few identical examples known are all signed Lepaute. This suggests that the Lepautes may have specially ordered the model from Osmond, and would thus have been the only ones allowed to sell it.

Among the other known examples, one clock appeared on the Parisian art market in 1962 (Me Ader, Palais Galliera, December 13, 1962, lot 186); a second example was formerly in the Jacques Doucet collection (Me Lair-Dubreuil, June 6, 1912, lot 267). The latter model is unusual in that it is surmounted by a group of children similar to those seen on certain clocks created by Robert Osmond in the early 1770's; this further supports the attribution of the present example to Osmond (see H. Ottomeyer and P. Pröschel, *Vergoldete Bronzen, Die Bronzearbeiten des Spätbarock und Klassizismus, Band I*, Munich, 1986, p. 229, fig. 4.1.9).

### **Artist description:**

Lepaute Horloger du Roi à Paris

This is the signature of the brothers Jean-André Lepaute (1720-1789) and Jean-Baptiste Lepaute (1727-1802), remarkable clockmakers born in Thonne-la-Long in Lorraine who were both horlogers du Roi.

Jean-André came to Paris as a young man and was joined by his brother in 1747. The Lepaute enterprise, founded informally in 1750, was formally incorporated in 1758. Jean-André, who was received as a maître by the corporation des horlogers in 1759, was lodged first in the Palais du Luxembourg and then, in 1756, in the Galeries du Louvre.

Jean-André Lepaute wrote a horological treatise (*Traité d'Horlogerie*), published in Paris in 1755. Another volume, entitled *Description de plusieurs ouvrages d'horlogerie* (A Description of several horological pieces) appeared in 1764.

In 1748 he married the mathematician and astronomer Nicole-Reine Etable de la Brière, who among other things predicted the return of Halley's Comet.

Jean-Baptiste Lepaute, received maître in December 1776, was known for the equation of time clock he constructed for the Paris Hôtel de Ville (1780, destroyed in the fire of 1871) and the clock of the Hôtel des Invalides.

The two brothers worked for the French Garde-Meuble de la Couronne; their clocks were appreciated by the most important connoisseurs of the time, both in France and abroad, such as the Prince Charles de Lorraine and the Queen Louise-Ulrika of Sweden.

Jean-Baptiste took over the workshop when Jean-André retired in 1775.