

La Pendulerie



Imbert - Poisson

Elegant Chased and Gilt Bronze Neo-Classical Clock Love Conquering Time, Louis XVI period

Jean-Gabriel Imbert, horloger reçu maître en novembre 1776

Case by Michel Poisson, reçu maître fondeur en 1772

Elegant Chased and Gilt Bronze Neo-Classical Clock Love Conquering Time

Paris, early Louis XVI period, circa 1775 - 1780

Height 48.5 cm; width 31.5 cm; depth 15.5 cm

The enamel dial, signed Imbert l'aîné, indicates the hours in Roman numerals and the minutes in Arabic numerals; the architectural case is of finely chased gilt bronze. The beadwork bezel is framed by ribbon-tied olive branches and a superb mascarón of a bearded man, symbolising Time, freely inspired by a model by André-Charles Boulle. The fluted pilasters on either side of the dial are flanked by hanging leaf and laurel berry branches; at the summit is a winged child – Allegory of Love - seated on clouds, holding a laurel crown, his quiver filled with arrows. The base is decorated with a laurel torus, friezes of interlacing motifs and rosettes, and rests on flattened bun feet decorated with striated bands.

The composition of this elegant allegorical clock was particularly appreciated by horological collectors of the end of the Ancien Régime. The fact that several similar examples bear his stamp allows the case to be confidently attributed to the founder Michel Poisson. It is also interesting to note that the watercolour study for the original design, which was used by the bronzier when he fashioned his model, is today preserved in the library of the Paris Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (illustrated in

J-D. Augarde, *Les ouvriers du Temps*, Genève, 1996, p. 139, fig. 98). Only a few rare identical clocks are known, among them a clock signed Poisson in the collection of Mme Maren Otto (see J-D. Augarde, *op. cit.*, p. 139, fig. 99). A second clock with a white marble case is illustrated in P. Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age à nos jours*, Paris, 1997, p. 176, fig. B; a third, with dial signed Louis Musson, is pictured in E. Niehüser, *Die Französische Bronzeuhr*, Munich, 1997, p. 124, fig. 201; and a clock whose bronze case is signed Poisson and the dial signed Imbert l'aîné à Paris, is illustrated in P. Verlet, *Les bronze dorés français du XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1999, p. 259, figs. 287-288.

Artist description:

Jean-Gabriel Imbert, known as Imbert l'Aîné (1735-95) was born in Devalon in the Burgundy region of France; in his youth he travelled to Paris, where he worked for his brother-in-law, Jean-Charles Olin (husband of Imbert's sister Anne). He worked firstly as an *ouvrier-libre* (a worker not affiliated with a guild) then became a master clockmaker in 1776 and a *deputé* of his guild in 1780. Four years later he declared bankruptcy but continued to work. For many years his younger brother Jean Edme, known as Imbert le Jeune (1741-1808), worked with him. By 1767 Imbert l'Aîné was established at Carrefour de la Roquette, by 1781 at rue Planche-Mibray, three years later at rue des Arcis and at the time of his death in June 1795 at rue de Monceau.

Imbert l'Aîné worked with excellent suppliers: Richard and Gaspard Monginot supplied his springs; his enamel dials were generally made by Georges-Adrien Merlet, Elie Barbezat or Bezelle. Imbert's clock cases were made by a range of Parisian *fondeurs* in particular Robert and Jean-Baptiste Osmond, Nicolas Bonnet, Michel Poisson, Jean Goyer, René-François Morlay Léonard Mary and of course François Vion, while some were gilded by Le Cat and H. Martin. Examples from his work may be found in the Musée Carnavalet in Paris, the Residenzmuseum in Munich, the Palazzo Reale in Turin, and several museums in Spain. Imbert l'Aîné counted among his clients the marquis de Brunoy and the duc de Deux-Ponts.