

# La Pendulerie



**Deverberie**

**Fine Chased, Gilt, and Patinated Bronze Antique Mantel Clock “The Coffee Bearer”, Directoire period**

Model Attributed to Louis-Simon Deverberie

Paris, Directoire period, circa 1795-1800

Height 29 cm; width 29 cm; depth 9.5 cm

The round enamel dial indicates the Roman numeral hours and the Arabic quarter hours and minute graduations by means of two gilt bronze hands; it is set in a gilt bronze barrel into which a young black man, barefoot and shirtless and holding a stick, pours a sack of coffee as he looks toward the spectator. His face is very expressive and greatly contribute to the clock's realism. On the other side of the barrel, a naturalistic palm tree lends balance to the composition. The octagonal chased and gilt bronze base is decorated with bas-reliefs depicting bees and two young black children who are gathering twigs together. The base is raised upon five oval bead-decorated feet.

## **HISTORICAL**

The black man as “noble savage” was rarely used as a decorative theme in French or European horological creations before the late 18th century. It was not until the end of the Ancien Régime – and precisely during the final decade of the 18th century and the early 19th century- that the first clocks known as “au nègre “ or “au sauvage” began to appear. They reflect a philosophical movement expressed in literary and historical works such as Paul et Virginie by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (which

was published in 1787 and depicted the innocence of man); Atala by Chateaubriand (which restored the Christian ideal); and Daniel Defoe's masterpiece Robinson Crusoe (published in 1719). The present clock depicts a young black slave such as those who worked in colonial plantations. It may be attributed to the bronzier Jean-Simon Deverberie.

Very few similar clocks are known to date. Among them, one example was sold by Sotheby's, London, on December 5, 1980, lot 127; a second example is illustrated in P. Kjellberg, *Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age au XXe siècle*, Paris, 1997, p. 344; a further similar clock, whose dial is signed Gamot à Lille, is illustrated in E. Niehüser, *Die französische Bronzeuhr*, Munich, 1997, p. 156.

### **Artist description:**

Jean-Simon Deverberie (1764-1824)

Was one of the most important Parisian bronziers of the late 18th century and the first two decades of the following century. Deverberie, who had married Marie-Louise Veron, appears to have made a nearly exclusive speciality of clocks, candlesticks and candelabra, adorned with exotic figures, and particularly Africans. He registered many "au nègre" clock models, especially the models known as "l'Afrique", "l'Amérique" and "Indien et Indienne enlacés" (the drawings are preserved in the Cabinet des Estampes of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris). His workshop was located in the rue Barbette in 1800, in the rue du Temple in 1804, and in the rue des Fossés du Temple from 1812 to 1820.