

# La Pendulerie



**Thomire**

## **Rare Antique Matte and Burnished Gilt Bronze Mantel Clock “Erigone Inebriated”, Empire period**

Circa: circa 1805-1810

Attributed to Pierre-Philippe Thomire

Paris, Empire period, circa 1805-1810

Height 51 cm; width 50 cm; depth 18 cm

The round white enamel dial, signed “à Paris”, indicates the Roman numeral hours and the Arabic fifteen-minute intervals, by means of two pierced gilt bronze hands. The bezel is adorned with olive-leaf and Greek key friezes. The case is made of chased and gilt bronze. The movement is placed in the center of an entablature with applied motifs including two facing panthers that are eating fruits from two baskets, stylized palmettes, fringed draperies, and a pan’s pipe or syrinx and a xylophone, both suspended from ribbons. The clock is raised upon four feet adorned with Bacchus masks and two goats’ legs. Above, a magnificent, lightly clad bacchante reclines on a daybed decorated with a frieze of alternating palmettes and stylized flowers, a tambourine, a thyrsus, and two ewers with lions’ head handles that are placed at her feet. The young woman, who represents the mythological figure Erigone, reclines on a cushion that rests on the curved headboard. The daybed is adorned with rosettes, grape vines, and goats; the bacchante holds a bunch of grapes aloft. The quadrangular vert de mer marble base is adorned with interlaced Greek key friezes, and supported on four truncated cylindrical feet.

### **HISTORICAL**

The myth recounting the love affair between Erigone, the daughter of the Athenian Icarios, and the god of wine Dionysos, is one of the most famous in all Greek mythology. To seduce her, the god took the form of a bunch of grapes, making her drunk. This theme inspired the present clock, whose exceptional chasing and gilding and highly unusual composition support our attribution to Pierre-Philippe Thomire, the most talented Parisian bronze caster of the Empire period. Only a few similar clocks are known today. Among them, one model, featuring variations, was in the collection of the Hessian princes in the Fasanerie Palace in Fulda (illustrated in the exhibition catalogue *Gehäuse der Zeit, Uhren aus fünf Jahrhunderten im Besitz der Hessischen Hausstiftung*, 2002, p. 95, catalogue n° 36). A second clock is in the Peterhof Palace near Saint Petersburg (see O. Swetlitschnaja, *Russische und Französische*

Bronzen des Empire, Aus der Sammlung der Museen von Petrodvoretz, Postdam, 1990, p. 27, catalogue n° 13). Two further clocks are identical to the present example. The first is illustrated in P. Kjellberg, Encyclopédie de la pendule française du Moyen Age au XXe siècle, Paris, 1997, p. 402; the second is in the Louvre Museum in Paris (illustrated in H. Ottomeyer and P. Pröschel, Vergoldete Bronzen, Die Bronzearbeiten des Spätbarock und Klassizismus, Band I, Munich, 1986, p. 379, fig. 5.15.19).

**Artist description:**

Pierre-Philippe Thomire (1757-1843)

Having become a master founder on May 18, 1772, he was the most important Parisian bronzier of the first quarter of the 18th century and the early years of the following century. Initially he worked for Pierre Gouthière, chaser-founder to the king, and as of the mid-1770s he worked with Louis Prieur. He later became one of the official bronziers of the Royal Sèvres Factory, creating bronze he bought the stock of Martin-Eloi Lignereux and became the main supplier of bronze furnishings for the imperial palaces. He also had a number of wealthy several of Napoleon's marshals. He retired in the mid-1820s and died in 1843.