

N° 1

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**JEAN-JOSEPH ROBIN (1781-1856)**

**RARE FOUR-GLASS PORTICO MANTLE CLOCK**



Paris, circa 1850

Chased gilt bronze case with bevelled glass on all four sides

H. 51 cm (20 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"); W. 34 cm (13 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"); D. 24 cm (9 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>")

Signed *Robin à Paris* - large enamel dial signed by the enameller *Baudet*

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Derek Roberts, *Precision Pendulum Clocks, France, Germany, America and Recent Advancements*, 2004, page 36, fig. 26-10 repr., erroneously dated 'circa 1790'.











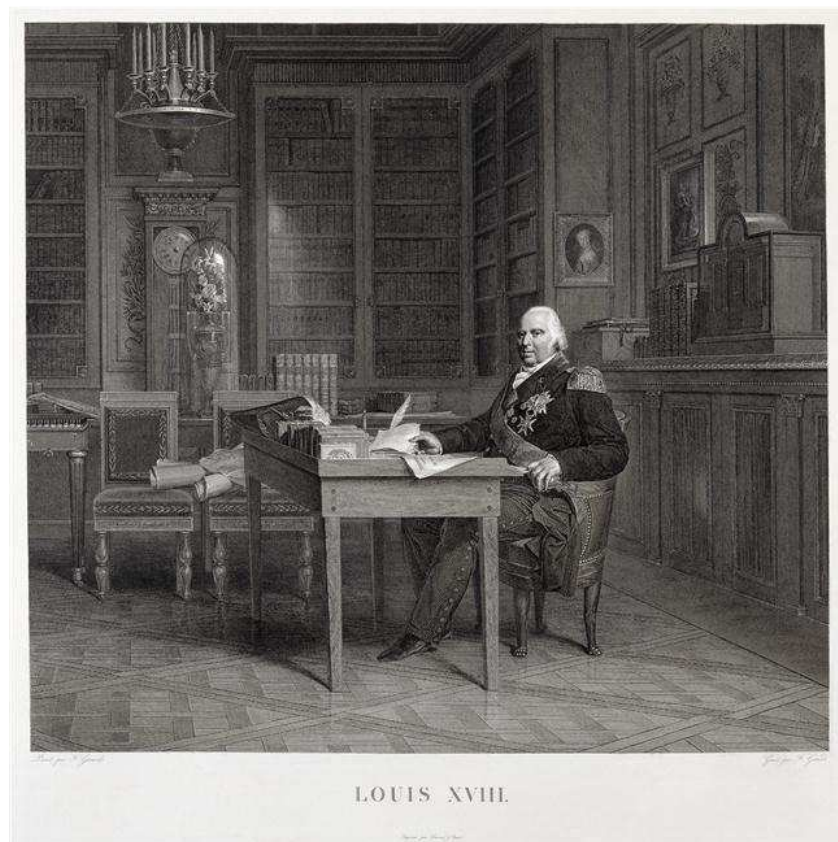
Four-glass gilt and chased bronze mantle clock, signed *Robin à Paris*, circa 1850. Chased gilt-bronze case, flat thick bevelled glass on all sides, domed bevelled glass for the three circular dials.

Large main enamel dial, signed by the enameller *Baudet* on the reverse, with five concentric indications: half-seconds, hours with Roman numerals, minutes with a gold dot every five, months of the year and days of the year. Four concentric steel hands indicate the seconds, minutes, hours and the annual calendar. The first three hands in blued steel, the calendar hand in straw-coloured steel. Lower subsidiary enamel dials: the days of the week on the left and the age of the Moon on the right.

Countwheel strike with vertical hammer and silvered bell placed on top, heavy gridiron pendulum with gilt bob, pin-wheel escapement and steel suspension, together with a constant-force remontoire make for great precision.

Autonomy: 30 days.

Jean-Joseph Robin followed admirably in the footsteps of his father, Robert Robin, 'Privileged Merchant-Watchmaker of the King following the Court and Councils of His Majesty.' A major figure of French horology during the reign of Louis XVI, Robert Robin (1742-1799) had a reputation for excellence that lasted throughout the First Empire and the Bourbon Restoration. As Colombe Samoyault-Verlet noted in his description of *Louis XVIII in his study at the Tuileries Palace* (c. 1823, Versailles, Galeries historiques), a painting by the artist François Gérard: 'It is very rare to find in the expository reports of the Royal Household the King's true opinion in matters of taste. The only precise mention I was able to note was one concerning the large regulator by Robin situated in the King's study. In 1818, when this item had to be taken in for repairs, the glass being broken and the bronze in need of cleaning, the Royal Household inspector wrote: "This mantel clock is a masterpiece of horology, it keeps perfect time down to the second. It was made by M. Robin, *père*. The King is very fond of it." ' (*Un âge d'or des arts décoratifs 1814-1848*, Paris, Grand-Palais, October 10 - December 30, 1991, p. 54).



After François Gérard, *Louis XVIII in his study at the Tuileries Palace*.

© Photo RMN/Gérard Blot

The laudatory jury report of the 1819 Exhibition of French Industrial Products (*Rapport du jury de l'exposition des produits de l'industrie française*), makes known that Jean-Joseph Robin (1781-1856) enjoyed the same status as his father: 'Mr. Robin *fils* presented two very finely executed astronomical clocks; He maintains the high reputation earned by his father's numerous and important works. The jury considers that Mr. Robin is still very worthy of the 2nd class silver medal, equivalent to the bronze medal that he was awarded at the last exhibition' (Sect.III., 'Horlogerie astronomique', p. 251).

At the start of his career, in partnership with his brother Nicolas-Robert (1775-1816) under the company name *MM. Robin frères, rue Saint-Honoré n°320*, Jean-Joseph Robin, instilled early on with a respect for family tradition, transformed some of his late father's models signed *Robin aux Galeries du Louvre à Paris*. A regulator today at the Lambinet Museum in Versailles (Inv. 947) reveals how he re-adapted the dial and movement to the latest standards; as Catherine Cardinal explains in the following excerpt from the catalogue of the exhibition *La révolution dans la mesure du temps* (A revolution in timekeeping): 'One of Robin's sons, who affixed his name to the present dial, converted the dial and movement, after 1805, to be compatible with the duodecimal hour and Gregorian calendar.' (*La révolution dans la mesure du temps : calendrier républicain, heure décimale 1793-1805*, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Musée international de l'horlogerie, 1989, p. 68). Under the Restoration, Jean-Joseph Robin earned the title of 'Clockmaker to the King and Madame', the Duchesse d'Angoulême, daughter of Louis XVI. Continuing as 'Clockmaker to King' under the reign of Louis-Philippe, he signed his timepieces *Robin Horloger du Roi*. Over the course of these consecutive periods, he had the opportunity to work for the Sèvres porcelain factory (Manufacture de Sèvres), and to collaborate with the most talented artists and artisans of the period; we can trace his pieces thanks to two richly decorated 'Borne' mantel-clock models for which he created the dials and movements. The first model, known as *Le point du jour* (Day Break), decorated with a Sèvres porcelain plaque painted by Leguay, was created in early 1824 (Musée du Grand Trianon de Versailles), and executed after a sketch by Jean-Charles-François Leloy (designer from 1816 to 1844). Its delicate imitation-agate ornamentation is comparable to the second model, *La pendule d'Anaximandre* (The Anaximander mantel clock), which entered the Sèvres retail shop in 1838 and was subsequently delivered to the Mobilier de la Couronne, or royal household, for the Palace of Saint Cloud on 31 May 1839.



**‘Le point du jour’ (Day Break)**  
**Movement by Jean-Joseph Robin**  
 Versailles, châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon  
 (inv. no. T54C)  
 © Photo RMN/Gérard Blot



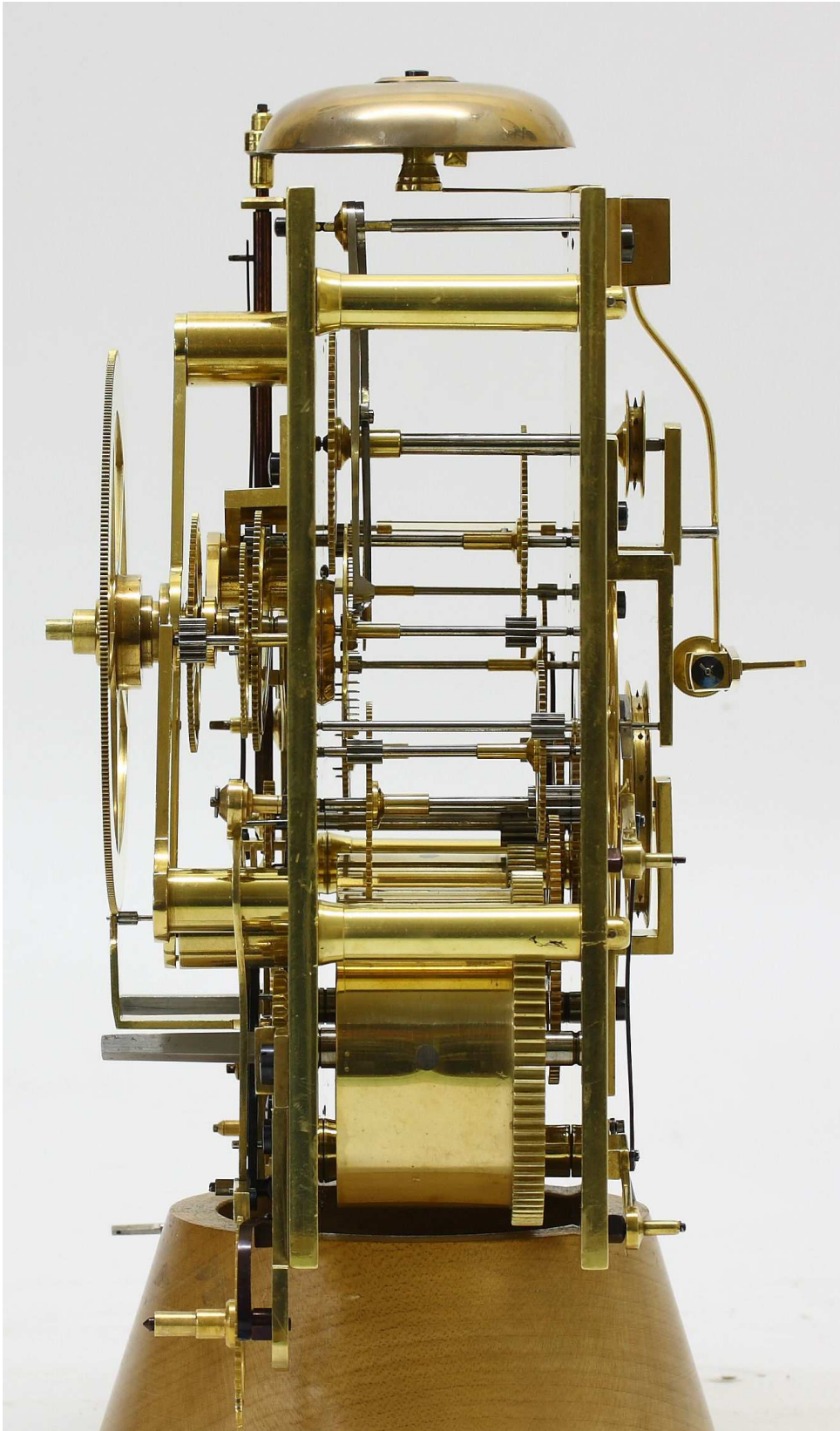
**‘La pendule d’Anaximandre’ (The Anaximander Clock)**  
 Signed *Robin H. er du roi*  
 (inv. no. MNC 16397)

The design of this ‘borne’ (or milestone-shaped) mantel clock with its gently sloping sides composed of porcelain plaques mounted in finely wrought bronze, was created by Alexandre Brongniart, then director of the Sèvres porcelain factory.

Less heavy, aesthetically speaking, the four-column ‘portico’ mantel clock presented here favors the extraordinary complexity of its horological mechanisms by making them visible. Among the last of Robin’s timepieces, this creation can be considered one of the most beautiful of his long career, which, beginning under the First Empire, ended – without an heir – at the dawn of the Second Empire. A unique piece, concentrating a maximum number of multiple complications in a minimum number of clocks, it was designed in the same spirit of excellence as the exceptional timepieces showcased at the Universal Exhibitions.



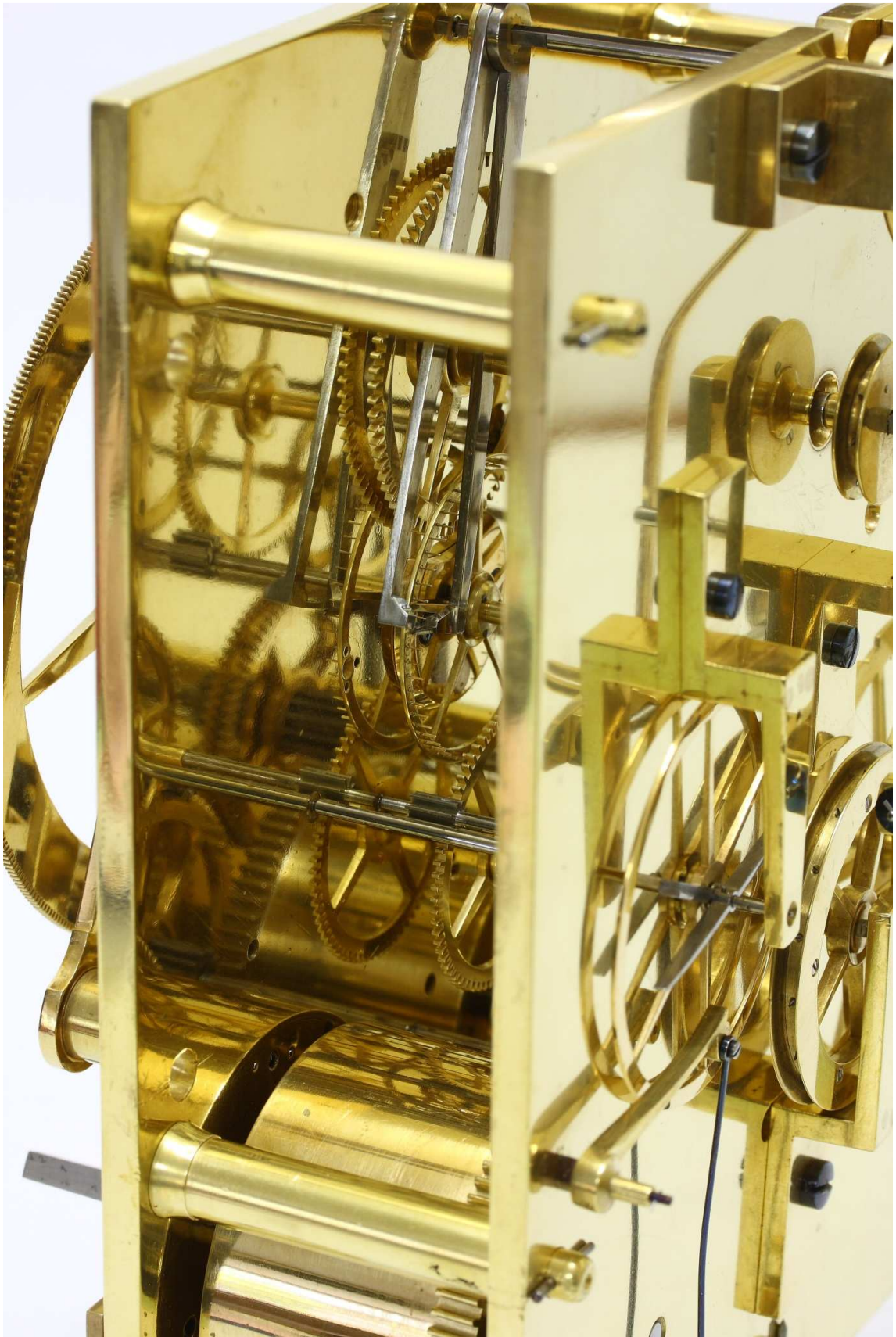






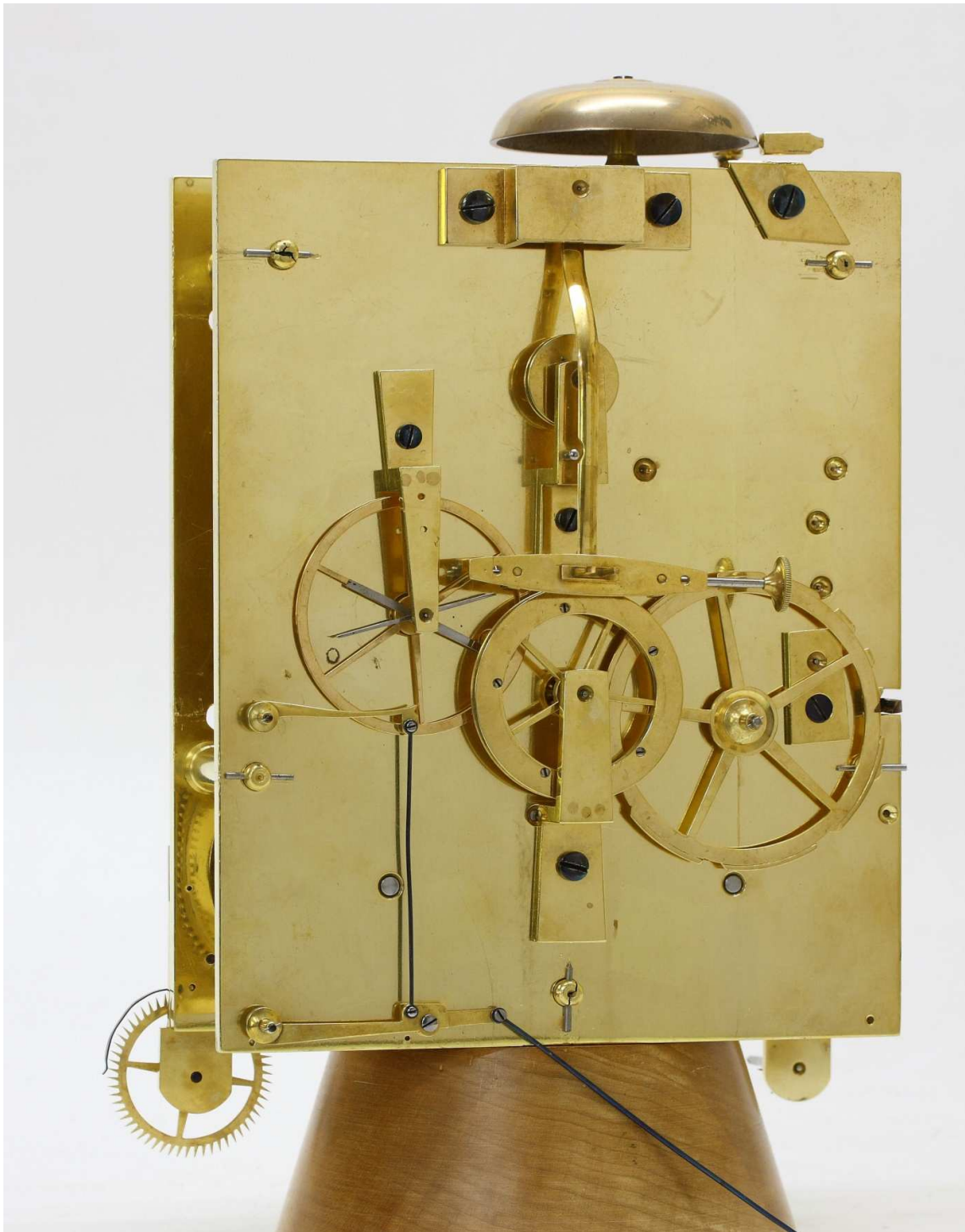












**Another mantel clock by JEAN-JOSEPH ROBIN**  
*Sold by Jacques NÈVE in 2009*





## LOUIS XVI MANTLE CLOCK

Glass on all four sides, chased gilt and patinated bronze  
Enamel dial with Roman numerals and outer Arabic numerals  
Signed *Robin à Paris*.

Bibliography: *Tardy, French Clocks The World Over, Part II*, pp. 138-139.

Finely pierced gilt hands, the hour hand bearing the monogram R, blued steel centre-sweeping seconds hand. Countwheel strike on a bell, heavy gridiron pendulum with a double-faced Apollo. Movement with deadbeat escapement on a sixty-teeth wheel visible at the rear, and signed *Robin Fils à Paris*.  
Chased gilt-bronze case with moulded top surmounted by a patinated bronze figure of *Amour menaçant* (Menacing Love).

Elaborately pierced ornamentation depicting a mask and grapevines below the dial and a bow above. Rectangular breakfront base with a bas-relief frieze representing playing *putti* on the front, and finely pierced scrollwork to the sides and back. Bronze work of excellent quality with original gilt.

The patinated bronze figure of *Amour menaçant* was modelled after the marble original made by Etienne Maurice Falconet for Madame de Pompadour and exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1757.

Excellent precision timekeeping. Autonomy: 30 days.