

N° 39

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**BAGUELLIN à Versailles**

**EMPIRE-PERIOD ASTRONOMICAL SKELETON CLOCK WITH  
QUARTER STRIKE ON THREE BELLS**



Signed *Baguëllin à Versailles*  
**Circa 1810**

H 53cm (20 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> "), W 33cm (13" ), D 17cm (6 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ")





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### **EMPIRE-PERIOD ASTRONOMICAL SKELETON CLOCK WITH QUARTER STRIKE ON THREE BELLS**

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Large, tall and sturdy movement of triangular shape, with three trains, for the time, the hourly strike on the lower tone bell and the quarter strike on the two higher tone bells. Visible *Graham* deadbeat escapement situated behind the rear plate, with a heavy gridiron pendulum with thermal compensation, a gilt pendulum bob and knife-edge suspension. The two different strikes are controlled by their own countwheels. Autonomy one month.

Enamel dials, the main chapter ring indicating (from the outer to the inner) the 31-day calendar, the seconds and minutes rail, the hours in Roman numerals, and the days of the week with their zodiacal signs on the opposite side. The open centre allows for a good view of the motion and the calendar work. Five blued steel concentric hands give all the indications, the hour and minute hands with gilt tips for ease of time reading. The upper dial shows the moonphases and age of the moon. Both bezels in very fine ormolu.

The whole movement is mounted on two ormolu platforms with eight turned toupee feet, mounted in turn on a black Mazy marble base with four turned ormolu bun feet, decorated in the manner of the bezels.

H 53cm (20  $\frac{3}{4}$  "), L 33cm (13" ), P 17cm (6  $\frac{3}{4}$  ")



Its triangular shape makes this clock particularly interesting, it was very unusual for that period to show all the inner wheels and workings of the movement in this fashion, keeping with the upmost aesthetism. This clock is undoubtedly the masterpiece of this Versailles-established clockmaker, who might have died quite young.

A great view on all the movement in motion, and the presence of a moon dial would explain the domestic use for astronomical observations, but it has also a very practical use: before a long journey, one had to know in advance the periods of night visibility for safety reasons, as well as for finding one's way. Moonphases were also used by the mariners to predict the tides at port; and thus plan for their sea travels.

This type of clock is emblematic of the scientific progress of the end of the Age of Enlightenment. Clock- and watchmakers were part of the scientific establishment. As they became very fashionable, skeleton clocks were sought after by very wealthy clients. They were regarded as decorative objects with a scientific purpose.

Hubert Sarton of Liège was probably one of the first clockmakers to introduce this style of clocks and to make them fashionable. He produced a great number of skeleton clocks as it was a way to demonstrate his know-how and to unveil the genius of the clockmaker as an inventor and creator. As everything in motion was visible, owners were able to impress their guests by showing the prowess of the makers.





