



AN IMPORTANT CHELSEA PORCELAIN
CASED MUSICAL CLOCK, BY STEPHEN RIMBAULT

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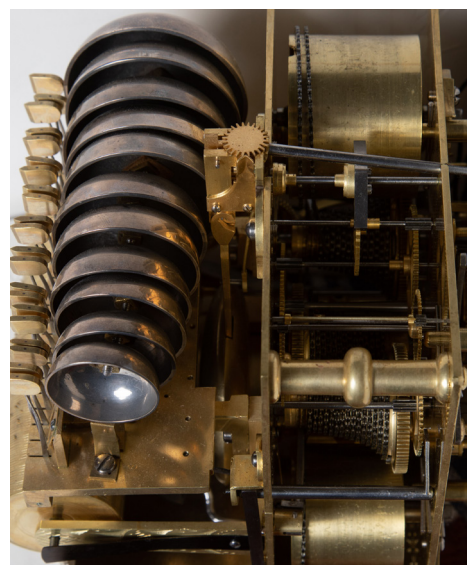


An important Chelsea porcelain cased musical large table clock, the triple fusee movement by Stephen Rimbault, with anchor escapement, striking on the hour, and with a single strike to denote the half hour, and pull repeat. The hourly musical movement playing one of seven tunes on a carillon of bells, the tune changeable by pulling a cord. The rectangular case of rococo form, with domed top, surmounted by an urn, and with four smaller urns at the corners, each with gilt metal flame finial, decorated in gilt with exotic birds in wooded landscapes, within gilt cartouches, the cobalt blue ground with sprays of gilt flowers and leaves, the scroll moulded corners picked out in gilt, on four scroll feet, the sides pierced with rococo scroll panels, round white enamel dial with black Roman numerals, the reverse with an ormolu mounted glazed door, 17 ½" high, circa 1760-65, the movement signed Stephen Rimbault fecit.

Provenance; A European Private Collection

Stephen Rimbault (active 1744-1788), was an eminent Huguenot clockmaker, based in Great Andrew's Street, St Giles, London, particularly known for his musical clocks, often with between four and twelve tunes, normally playing at three hourly intervals.

Examples of his work are held in many important public collections, including the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Many of his clocks were retailed overseas, and an elaborate example, formerly in the Chinese Imperial Collection, is now at the Palace Museum, Beijing. Another Chelsea musical clock of this form, from the collection of Lady Ludlow, is now at Bowes Castle Museum. The Ludlow example now lacks a number of original



elements, including the rear door and the musical movement. A further example, which appeared on the market in 2008, was reputedly a gift from the Dukes of Alba, relations of the Dukes of Berwick, to King Carlos III of Spain, circa 1768.

The only other known model of a Chelsea clock case (as opposed to more commonly found watch stands) is also represented in the Lady Ludlow Collection, which she acquired from Albert Amor on 28th February 1925 for £650. This model is surmounted by figures emblematic of the Elements, and the Ludlow example is signed 'Stephen Rimbault London'.

Rimbault is closely associated with the portrait painter Johan Zoffany (1733-1810), who he came to know through the organ maker Antonio Beloudy. Beloudy would set out the pins on the musical barrels of Rimbault's clocks, and for several months Zoffany painted elaborate dials for the clocks. A fine portrait of Rimbault by Zoffany now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

This recently rediscovered clock is a significant addition to the small number of known Chelsea porcelain cased clocks, and also to the recorded musical clocks by Rimbault.

Bibliography;

Catalogue of the Lady Ludlow Collection of English Porcelain at The Bowes Museum, Unicorn Press, 2007

Hugh Langmead, Clock Cases and Watch Stands made at the Chelsea Porcelain Manufactory, a paper read to the English Ceramic Circle (Transactions, Volume 21, 2010)

