

CHRISTOPHE CLARET

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The Soprano by Christophe Claret: Tourbillon minute repeater with four cathedral gongs The Soprano features a musically accurate 4-note minute repeater striking Westminster Quarters on patented cathedral gongs, a 60-second tourbillon and Charles X style bridges, all on a spectacular dial-free view.

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The Soprano features a musically accurate 4-note minute repeater striking Westminster Quarters on patented cathedral gongs, a 60-second tourbillon and Charles X style bridges, all on a spectacular dial-free view. The Soprano pays homage to the roots of Christophe Claret's manufacture, which has innovated in striking complications, tourbillons and sapphire components since its earliest years. Indeed, in 1997 Christophe Claret was the first to incorporate sapphire components – comprising plates and Charles X style bridges – in a wristwatch movement.

The Soprano is a timepiece of contrasts: traditional haute horlogerie with state-of-the-art manufacturing; English Parliament with French King; historic complications with contemporary design; aural indications with visual displays; noble gold with high-tech titanium, and metal components with sapphire elements.

The minute repeater is considered – with good reason – to be one of the most demanding and difficult horological complications to realize due to the marriage of technical complexity with artistic musical tonality. A minute repeater tells the time audibly with two notes created from two small hammers striking two gongs: one for the hours, one for the minutes and a combination of the two for the quarter hours. Even more complex is the Clarion repeater with three notes that can play a simple melody for the quarters.

However, the nec plus ultra of the minute repeater realm is the Westminster – so called for the distinctive tune played by the Big Ben clock at the Palace of Westminster, home of the British Parliament. Big Ben strikes a complex melody for the quarters with four hammers striking four notes on four bells. To provide an even fuller and richer sound than standard repeaters, the Christophe Claret Soprano features four cathedral gongs, each circling the perimeter of the movement twice (a normal gong goes around only once). And to further ensure that the rich sound reaches the listener's ears, the central case band is in grade 5 titanium, a metal known for its superior acoustic properties and used in musical instruments.

A few decades before Big Ben began chiming Westminster Quarters over London, the French king Charles X was making a significant impact on art, architecture and horology. One of the defining characteristics of pocket watches created during this period were stepped bridges, which became known as Charles X bridges. Having spent much of his early watchmaking career restoring beautiful timepieces from this epoch, Christophe Claret incorporated this historic design element into the Soprano.

In 1997, Christophe Claret was the very first to use sapphire bridges (even then Charles X style) and plates in wristwatch movements, and the Soprano makes liberal use of sapphire components to allow visual access into the mechanisms. From the smoked ring circumscribing the movement that discreetly hides yet subtly reveals the cathedral gongs, to the transparent mainspring barrel at the top of the open dial, and turning over to the clear repeater inertia governor cover visible through the sapphire display back.

For further information, please download the complete press release.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBRE TRD98

Dimensions: 27.6 x 46.4 x 8.45 mm

Number of parts: 450

Number of jewels: 39

Power reserve: 72 hours (approx.)

Barrel: Single mainspring barrel in transparent sapphire crystal

Tourbillon:

- Escapement: Swiss lever type
- Oscillation frequency of the balance: 3 Hz (21,600 vph)
- Tourbillon rotation 60 seconds
- Flying tourbillon
- Charles X style stepped bridge
- Parachute shock protection

Functions:

- Hours and minutes
- 4-note minute repeater playing Westminster Quarters
- Mechanical, hand-wound movement
- Transparent mainspring barrel acts as movement state-of-wind indicator: when the movement is fully wound the spring is centered in the barrel

Distinctive features:

- Four visible hammers, four patented cathedral gongs
- Repeater mechanism features silent inertia governor
- Tourbillon regulator with parachute shock absorber
- Charles X style stepped bridges

Case:

- Round
- Dimensions: 45mm x 56.80mm x 15.32mm
- Water resistance: 3 ATM / 30 m / 100 ft

Material:

- 5N red gold and anthracite PVD titanium / Anthracite PVD and black spinal hands. Limited edition of 8 pieces
 - White gold and anthracite PVD titanium / Black PVD and ruby or blue spinal hands. Limited edition of 8 pieces
- Slide: Repeater mechanism is activated by a slide on the left side of the caseband

Crown: Red gold and titanium (red gold case) or white gold and titanium (white gold case)

Strap: Black hand-sewn alligator leather with black stitching (red gold case), red or blue stitching (white gold case)

Buckle: Red gold and titanium (red gold case) or white gold and titanium (white gold case)

Limited edition: Each of the two versions is issued in a limited edition of eight pieces