

CAMPANOLOGY

Text by ISABEL SAURAS

"If the language of bells did not exist, we would have to invent it. The sound of bells expresses emotions better than any other musical instrument. Not only because they can be heard everywhere, but also because they reach us inside, in the place where emotions become memories."



"Someone said that the difference between a dancer and a bell-ringer is that the first one dances because he listens to the music, while the other dances to produce music"

his body and soul to his passion. "To become a bell-ringer, one must be a professional, however, this work is done in a very altruistic way, which assumes a great contradiction." Little by little, electric motors replaced the manual work simplifying thus the tasks but erasing centuries of history. Today, finally, people are aware of this important cultural heritage typical of villages and towns. "Fortunately, the manual bell ringing carried out at the Cathedral of Valencia was recognized as an Heritage of Cultural Interest, the highest protection awarded by the government. Moreover, the activity of the ringers was acknowledged by the jury of the Europa Nostra Awards 2016 as a model of management and enhancement of heritage".

In the past and even today, bell-ringers announce important events as well as significant moments of the day, they were punctual clocks announcing the end of the working day in a village or the beginning of a major festival. At the end of the XVII century, striking mechanisms became a part of the personal timepieces, watches with a glorious sound. During the absence of electricity, the sound announced the exact time and it was not necessary to light oil lamps. A mechanism that sounded the hours, quarters and minutes replacing the bell with a set of rings made of coiled wire which occupied a smaller space and made different sounds was designed one century later. At the end of the

XIX century, the minute repeater mechanism was perfected to a form we know today. Thierry Stern, President of the Swiss company Patek Philippe, feels an absolute devotion for the watchmaking craft and, therefore, in the manner of his father, grandfather and great-grandfather, he personally approves the final sound of each new watch which leaves the Genevan workshops. The wristwatches Patek Philippe include minute repeater mechanisms which are considered one of the most complex in the world, not in vain it takes on average between 200 and 300 hours of work to assemble such a mechanism. Apart from knowledge and expertise inherent in these watches, their appeal lies primarily in the melodious chimes, product of rigorous acoustic tests.

En "SPEND IN Magazine" we have been advocating, in every of our 81 publications, the authentic, the real essence of things which, in our opinion, is the true meaning of luxury. And therefore, for us it is a great pleasure to be able to give voice to people who carry out, with dedication and fervour, the traditional crafts to maintain their value and protect them from falling into abeyance.

In Valencia, we had the opportunity to meet Francesc Llop i Bayo who is a bell-ringer and

restaurateur by profession and has renovated some of the most important Spanish bells. His words hint at the passion he feels for his job as well as at the interest in conveying the importance of preserving this craft dating back to the middle ages which has been on the verge of falling into oblivion. "People think that a bell-ringer must be very strong, and it is not true, the important aspect is to feel rhythm. Someone said that the difference between a dancer and a bell-ringer is that the first one dances because he listens to the music, while the other dances to produce music. That harmony between the ringer and the bell allows me, with a little bit of effort, to convey deep

emotions." He tells us that he has been fascinated by this craft since his childhood, "I met the last traditional bell-ringers from the city of Valencia. Their bell-ringing can only be explained from the past because they made reference to things, times, and lost people and nobody understood the real meaning of the sounds they produced. Soon after they were replaced by engines and no one was interested in this loss. "That cultural shock made me discover two fundamental aspects of my life: bell-ringing and anthropology which helped me understand this craft." So he devoted himself to social anthropology and museum studies until retirement has allowed him to surrender



Patek Philippe Grandmaster Chime Reference 6300. 20 complications, 3 gongs, with 5 different striking chimes (grande and petite sonnerie, minute repeater, alarm with time strike, date repetition).