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**Ultimate gift
guide 2015**

THE BEST LITTLE LUXURIES FOR
THE FESTIVE SEASON, PLUS TOP 10
GIFTS FOR BILLIONAIRES

ROBERTA NAAS ON CHIMING WATCHES



There is an elite category of complicated timepieces in the watchmaking world that always captures hearts and souls: the chiming watch.

These are rare musical wonders that audibly chime the time via a series of gongs and hammers that move with the push of a slide to set off the melodies. Easily one of the most beautiful and alluring watch types ever made, they are so time consuming to build (often taking years of research and development) that they are always made in extremely limited numbers, resulting in both long waiting lists and high price points, often hundreds of thousands of dollars.

There are several different types of chiming timepieces ranging from minute repeaters to grand and petite sonneries, and small derivatives thereof. Repeater watches generally sound the time through a long spiral gong and tiny hammers that strike the gong to chime the hours, quarter hours and minutes



Christophe Claret
Soprano

on demand. Sonneries chime the time in a similar manner, but often do so automatically on the hour, although many of today's pieces have a silent mode.

While most chiming watches work via two hammers, some have three, four and even five - each chiming a different note. Then there are the other factors that play a role: pitch, speed, tone, vibration, materials used - and even the tempering of them.

The watches date back to the 1700s when people used the chiming clock to tell time after dark without having to light an oil lamp. While electricity may have eliminated that need, no upstanding watchmaker could eliminate this captivating and complex complication from its portfolio.

This year German brand A. Lange & Söhne introduced a new sound mode on its beloved Zeitwerk Minute Repeater watch. Priced at \$497,000, it is unique as its mechanism sounds the hours, the

A. Lange & Söhne
Zeitwerk Minute
Repeater



Patek Philippe
Ref. 5207



minutes and also the 10-minute intervals (instead of quarter hours, as with most repeaters). Additionally, the platinum watch offers a jumping hour and jumping minute time indication.

Audemars Piguet also introduced a new repeater this year - one that has been eight years in the making. Designed in tandem with stringed instrument expert and the École Polytechnique Fédérale De Lausanne science and engineering institute, the Royal Oak Concept RD#1 watch takes the soft and alluring repeater sound and makes it louder. It won't surprise me if the technology finds its way into an Audemars Piguet timepiece.

Meanwhile, Patek Philippe's newest repeater, Ref. 5207, incorporates a tourbillon escapement and an instantaneous perpetual calendar. The brand is expert in creating chiming watches with one rule: it never releases a timepiece without the owner and president of the brand, Thierry Stern, listening to it first. If the sound isn't perfect according to his trained ear, the watch goes back for adjusting and tuning. This is perhaps why most of these limited edition pieces are already spoken for by the time they are made - and seeing one in a retail store is almost as rare as owning one.

Finally, there is Christophe Claret, which uses high-tech materials with classic renditions in the coveted Soprano watch. The minute repeater, which retails for around \$485,000 in white gold, comes with a Westminster chime, has four patented cathedral gongs and four visible hammers, and is enhanced with sapphire bridges and a 60-second tourbillon - making it a complicated work of technology with a superb sound.

Roberta Naas is timepiece editor of Gotham and Hamptons. She also contributes to Forbes.com and is author of five books.