



# Grand Obsession: A Piano Odyssey

*Perri Knize*

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**Grand Obsession: A Piano Odyssey** Perri Knize

**NEW YORK TIMES "EDITOR'S CHOICE." WASHINGTON POST "BEST OF 2008."**

**This "lucid yet lyrical, analytical yet deeply affecting" (*Washington Post*) memoir of one woman's immersion in a fascinating, international piano subculture, reminds us that reason can't always account for what calls to us, but answering that call can lead to life's most profound experiences. Now in paperback.**

The daughter of a professional musician, Perri Knize was raised in a home saturated in classical music, but it wasn't until midlife, in the midst of her successful career as an investigative reporter, that she realized she'd missed her true calling--the piano. After a year of lessons, she decides to buy a piano of her own and begins a search for a modestly priced upright. Inexplicably she cannot be satisfied with any upright she plays, and instead she falls madly, illogically, in love with a rare German grand she discovers in a New York showroom. After a long dalliance, Knize refinances her house to buy this "magic" instrument she dubs "Marlene," after Dietrich, for its sultry voice. But when Marlene arrives at her home in Montana, the sound that transfixed her is gone, the tone dead and dull. One piano tuner after another arrives to fix it, but no one can.

Rather than send the piano back, Knize embarks on a mad quest to restore the instrument to its rightful sound--and to understand the reason for its elusive power. Putting her investigative skills to work, she falls down a rabbit hole into a hidden world, discovering a tribe of concert artists, dealers, technicians, composers, designers, physicists, philosophers, passionate amateurs, and instrument builders--intriguing and eccentric characters all--whose lives have also been transformed by the spell of a piano. She even hikes into the Austrian Alps to learn how the special trees used to build her piano are grown and harvested. With each step of her journey, Knize draws ever-closer to uncovering the reason her piano's sound vanished, how to get it back, and the deeper secret of how music leads us to a direct experience of the nature of reality.

Beautifully composed, passionately performed, *Grand Obsession* is itself a musical masterpiece.

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