

FAST TRACK



EDITED BY STEPHEN J. DUBNER

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

GRAND DAME

PEOPLE THOUGHT, FOR heaven's sake, will she ever finish it?" says Lorene McClintock.

She is talking about herself. There have been 30 years of researching, testing, and fine-tuning—one year alone for selecting the typeface. But now it is done. *The McClintock Piano Course: A New Experience in Learning* is McClintock's lifework, 201 lessons in two boxed sets. The course is designed for adults to learn, on their own, to play *musically*, without the painful, choppy tones that plague beginners.

McClintock makes her way over to the Steinway and plays a wistful piece that she composed. "Makes you cry almost, doesn't it?" She is in her sixties, perhaps, and still has her soft Texas drawl.

When McClintock began teaching, she noticed that students would take so long to decipher a note, look at the keyboard, and finally strike the key, that what they were playing did not sound remotely like music. So she created a couple of three-

dimensional aides: a keyboard concealer and interval keyblocks. The concealer kept students' eyes on the sheet music, and the blocks helped them master the interval



Lorene McClintock: Piano lady.

between particular keys.

By testing and refining the lessons over the years, McClintock has left no room for confusion.

"When you're practicing, it's almost as though she's looking over your shoulder," says Fred Blakeslee, a retired high-school principal from Pinebush, New York, who saw an ad for the \$388 course in the *National Review*.

(Interested parties can call 800-428-0018.) Someday, he

would like to play "the kind of pieces that somebody at a party plays at the drop of a hat." When contacted, Blakeslee was up to lesson 47; its title: "What Is a Rest?

What Is a Slur? What Is a Staccato Note?"

It seems that some of McClintock's followers are learning not only to play the piano but to apply her lessons to their everyday lives. An otolaryngologist from Holland, for example, changed the way he performs microsurgery (he was influenced by lesson 14's advice on finger positions).

What to do after a 30-year project has been finished? "I have no intention of writing anymore," McClintock declares. "There's not another word I have to say."

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Photograph by Kelly Campbell.