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New Book of the Play BIRTH heralded as

“The Vagina Monologues for birth”

Examines The Issues of Being Born Through the Eyes of Mothers

BIRTH, (AuthorHouse; \$19.95; August 2008; ISBN: 9781434377418), a documentary-style play by playwright and birth activist Karen Brody, begins with eight low-risk educated mothers describing the beautiful birth of a dog who gives birth uninterrupted with love, touch, and words of encouragement. “I wanted what my dog got” the eight women say together at the end of act one in the introduction. From there readers learn, through Brody’s telling of eight birth stories, that getting “what my dog got” - an uninterrupted, encouraging birth - in America is not so easy at most hospitals today.

BIRTH is the first play to put mothers center stage to talk about childbirth. Through storytelling BIRTH makes it clear that maternity care is facing a crisis when it comes to supporting mothers needs. Women are not at the center of their birth experiences, they are routinely expected to ask for drug intervention which, Brody’s play shows, has resulted in an explosion of unpredictable birth experiences for low-risk mothers.

Yet despite the grim hospital birth picture presented in the paperback edition of BIRTH the play also shows that a small percentage of mothers are determined to reclaim the power of childbirth by choosing midwifery, doulas and homebirth as a way to obtain a pleasurable birth experience.

Thousands of audience members, to critical acclaim, have already experienced BIRTH as a play since its 2005 premiere. In 2006 BIRTH, led by Brody, sparked a theatre for social change movement called BOLD that inspires communities around the world to create childbirth choices that work for mothers (www.BOLDaction.org). BOLD performances of BIRTH raise awareness about childbirth to over 10,000 people annually and have raised over \$85,000 for organizations dedicated to creating childbirth choices that work for mothers. In September 2008 there will be over one hundred BOLD performances of BIRTH around the United States.

BIRTH explores the physical, emotional and political factors that are influencing low-risk mothers giving birth today. After interviewing over one hundred low-risk mothers Brody chose eight women's stories to paint a portrait of how low-risk mothers are giving birth. Mothers we meet in BIRTH include:

- **Amanda**, who adopts the mantra “My Body Rocks!” as she pushes her son out without drugs in a hospital surrounded by her husband and a doula.
- **Beth**, who is clear she wants a planned c-section because she is not paying her doctor to be nice to her or remember her name. “I’m paying him to deliver a healthy baby.”
- **Vanessa**, who wants all women to know when they’re giving birth “it’s going to feel like the baby is coming out of your butt,” had an epidural vaginal birth and experienced a third degree tear.
- **Lisa**, who had a c-section without her full consent, believed she was coerced into the cesarean. “It felt like the birth of my baby was a death,” she says after her birth.
- **Janet**, who had an epidural vaginal birth with few complications. “My OB was screaming like a soccer mom” with encouragement, she says.
- **Sandy** had an out-of-control birth from the moment she arrived at the hospital ending in a disappointing c-section due to what the doctor said was an “11 pound” baby. “My 11 pound baby weighed in at 6 pounds 6 ounces,” a shocked Sandy says after the birth.
- **Natalie**, who wanted a natural birth, labored for a long time in a park and at home, but when she got to the hospital her labor stalled. Under threat of a c-section she pushed her baby out vaginally with an epidural but just at the end she was given an episiotomy without her consent. “My vagina will never be the same again,” she says.
- **Jillian**, who tells her four birth stories during the play: two disappointing births in the hospital with drugs, one in a hospital with midwifery support, and the final one at home surrounded by her midwife, family and friends “eating scrambled eggs at 8 centimeters.”

“ The most important message from BIRTH, and the BOLD global movement, is that a mother should be able to choose where and how she births her children,” says Brody. “Our society needs to shift its thoughts away from thinking birth is an illness to a vision of birth as a normal process, a sacred moment where a woman needs dim lights, quiet voices and encouraging words – not to be rescued from the pain.”

This special paperback edition of BIRTH includes a foreword by bestselling author and women's health expert Christiane Northrup, MD, an introduction and reflections on the play by Karen Brody, emails and stories written to BOLD on how the play has impacted communities around the world, and photos from performances of the play.

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PRAISE for BIRTH:

Kudos to you, Karen Brody, for getting the words and the images just right. And for gifting the world with this moving, life-changing work of art... a magnificent, funny, and wonderfully wise play.”

- **Christiane Northrup, M.D, FACOG, author of *Women’s Bodies Women’s Wisdom and Mother Daughter Wisdom***

“Brody’s play is a powerful new means of communicating the importance of birth issues to the public.”

- **Henci Goer, author of *The Thinking Woman’s Guide to a Better Birth***

“Brody pulls no punches, and gets right into the dirty details of the birth process in a way I’ve never encountered...It was fantastic.“

- **Dianna Tucker Baritot, *New York theatre reviewer***

“A strong feminist statement in the tradition of “The Vagina Monologues” and “Menopause: the Musical.”... This theatrical experience is bold and in-your-face and is not for the wimpy who want to avoid dealing with birth-centered material or gender and sexual realities.”

- **Citizens-Times, *Asheville, North Carolina***

Karen Brody’s critically-acclaimed play, *Birth*, is currently playing in theatres around the world as part of BOLD, a worldwide arts-based movement inspiring communities to create childbirth choices that work for mothers. Brody, who has experience as a doula, has written for *Mothering Magazine* and several other publications. Brody produced a short film about BOLD, *Being BOLD*, in 2007. Before becoming a writer she was a community organizer working with women’s groups around the world. She is the founder and Artistic Director of BOLD.

BIRTH

**Karen Brody
AuthorHouse**

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