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## Enjoy the beauty, pleasure of birth

Molly Gilmore

By Molly Gilmore

Pregnant women have many choices for giving birth, says filmmaker and activist Debra Pascali-Bonaro. And her film, screening Saturday in Olympia, presents one startling possibility: "Orgasmic Birth."

Yes, said Pascali-Bonaro, that is literally possible - and not even that uncommon. Two of the women in the film have such experiences, and Pascali-Bonaro is hearing from many others who have had similar experiences.

"Birth can produce that," she said. "Our subtitle is 'The Best-Kept Secret,' and I think that is true."

However, the film doesn't focus solely on births that fit the title. It follows 11 women and shows a range of birth experiences.

"The film is really about possibilities," Pascali-Bonaro said. "We never know how birth will unfold for us.

"For some women, the possibility is open in the right environment. For other women, the experience may be ecstatic, may be blissful, may be sacred."

The film is being shown as part of Birth on Labor Day, a nationwide project to raise women's awareness about the broad and positive possibilities for giving birth.

" 'Orgasmic Birth' does a really nice job of weaving some hard facts with wonderful stories," said Lynn Hughes, the Puget Sound BOLD organizer. "They are great birth stories. You really get to know some of these couples and follow their births."

BOLD came to be when playwright Karen Brody offered her play "Birth" to be put on in communities as a way to raise awareness about birthing options, and raise money for groups that help pregnant women.

Hughes of Seattle has been organizing area productions of the play for three years.

This is the first year the production will come to Olympia, and Brody will be here for a talkback session after the Sept. 27 performance.

While Olympia has an active community of doulas, midwives and others supporting alternatives to hospital births, the information in the film and play still is not common knowledge.

"I recently watched 'Orgasmic Birth' with a small group of high-school students," Hughes said. "There was one who thought she was very educated about birth alternatives, and she said, 'I didn't know that I had these options when I am ready to have babies.' "

Pascali-Bonaro said, " 'Orgasmic Birth' is holding open the fact that birth is a part of a woman's sexuality. The same ambience she would want to create to have a positive, pleasurable sexual experience is the same ambience she would want to create to have a positive, pleasurable birth."

The film makes the point that women who have medical intervention - or even simply give birth in a brightly lit room in front of medical staff they don't know - are placing themselves in a stressful situation.

"Think about how animals give birth," Pascali-Bonaro said. "We know that privacy is important to them, darkness is important, feeling safe and protected is important. If we put bright lights and lots of people around a cat that's giving birth, her labor will stop or become very difficult. The same is true for humans."

Pascali-Bonaro said many women still go to hospitals to deliver, even when their pregnancy is uncomplicated. She pointed out that the traditional hospital environment is anything but intimate.

"If you wanted Chinese food, you'd find a Chinese restaurant," she said. "Women make an assumption that they can have the birth they want, but they go to a place where it's not on the menu. That's like wanting Chinese food but going to an Italian restaurant. You aren't going to get it. You are going to get Italian food."

### 'Orgasmic Birth'

What: This documentary reveals the emotional, spiritual and physical heights achievable during childbirth. The film is being shown as a part of Birth on Labor Day, a monthlong event that aims to educate women about childbirth options.

When: 2:30 p.m. Saturday

Where: Capitol Theater, 206 Fifth Ave. S.E., Olympia

Tickets: \$10, available at the door or through [www.boldinseattle.com](http://www.boldinseattle.com). Proceeds benefit the Birth Attendants, Seattle Midwifery School, and Pregnant in Puget Sound.

More information: [www.orgasmicbirth.com](http://www.orgasmicbirth.com) or [www.boldinseattle.com](http://www.boldinseattle.com)

### 'Birth'

What: The play by Karen Brody, hailed as "the Vagina Monologues for birth" by author Dr. Christiane Northrup, is performed around the country each September to educate women and raise money for birth groups. This production is by Seattle's Pregnant in Puget Sound. The performance will be followed by a discussion with the playwright and local doulas and midwives.

When: 7:30 p.m. Sept. 27

Where: The Evergreen State College Recital Hall, 2700 Evergreen Parkway N.W., Olympia

Tickets: \$16

More information: 800-385-9704 or [www.boldinseattle.com](http://www.boldinseattle.com)

**BOLD Red Tent**

What: As part of Birth on Labor Day, the Red Tent is a place where women can gather to share their birth stories.

When: 1 to 4 p.m. Sept. 28

Where: Heart of Wellness Healing Arts Center, 205 Clark Place S.E., Tumwater

Tickets: Free; donations requested. Mothers and nursing babes in arms are welcome. It is important to arrive on time so there will be no disruptions once women have begun telling their stories.

More information: [www.boldinseattle.com](http://www.boldinseattle.com)