

(introductory music)

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MARYN: Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Hi, everyone. Maryn here with a very *Taking Back Birth* subject today. Pretty philosophical but sometimes your brain and your heart just go to those places in birth. And birth is something that really never leaves my brain or my heart. And so although I love teaching clinical topics and more in depth education topics for midwives and for mothers, some days it just comes back to philosophy and what I believe. And I really want to share this with you today because I think it's part of the growing vision that we have here at Indie Birth. And honestly, I think it's part of this growing vision that so many of us have to see where the paradigm of birth is going and not looking to change birth or fix birth or improve birth or any of those things.

Birth is really fine. It's kind of our attitudes and philosophy around it. So some talking today about that. Thinking a lot about what midwifery is. I'm always thinking about that. And there's the political side which I'm not really going to get too much into today. Probably a little bit though. I can't lie. There's always some politics in there when you're talking about this stuff. But focusing on what the art is of these things that many of us do or are interested in or even as mothers, this thing we're searching out someone to guide us and to support us and to really, really be present and to be with us when we're having our babies. That is what midwifery is, what it has been. Now, of course, the political insertion there is in many places, such as here in Arizona, the state owns the term midwife, so one is not allowed to call themselves a midwife or use that term if they are not licensed by the state.

And, of course, many of you know from these podcasts and just being involved in midwifery in general that that's a sad thing because what the state is calling midwifery isn't really the truest definition, and it's certainly not where we're headed. And that's where I want to focus today. So, again, I've been thinking a lot about this art. And if you'll indulge my little personal story here, many of you know as well that before being involved in birth and midwifery I was a musician for many years professionally, went to college for that, and spent many years performing in some of the largest cities in the world. So you can't separate yourself from your past entirely. I many not do that anymore especially to make any money. But the art doesn't leave a person. I truly believe that. So anybody that considers themselves artistic or an artist in any way, shape, or form, whether that's visual art or, again, music or some other art form, it's always with you. And it will always be with you.

And for me, midwifery and birth encompasses a great percentage of what I felt in music meaning just the expression and the freedom to interpret although there is a very large amount of learned knowledge. There's so many similarities for me between the two. So I really got thinking about this just, again, on a really personal level. I was Los Angeles a few weeks ago where I got to meet the amazing Dr. Stuart Fischbein, who we will have on a podcast soon and who will be at our Indie Birth conference in January 2016. And it really got me thinking. Spending time with him was illuminating and amazing, and I think he's definitely one of these people, ironically, because he is a doctor who is not a midwife that is illustrating this amazing blend of artistry in what they do in working with women.

So that definitely got me started thinking about it and then, again, just personally being in a really big vibrant city like LA just brought back a lot of memories. Smells and sounds and sights of a big city when that was part of your life formerly is really, really special. Kind of makes you remember things you haven't thought and all those kind of things. So for me, it just renewed a creative spark. Now we're always working here at Indie Birth to create new content. Something is always going on and being created, and so that really became clear to me. That okay. What am I doing personally? I'm creating. I'm still creating even if it's in the birth world. But I'd always like to do more of that, and that's kind of what this trip showed me that midwifery and birth can be just as artistic and just as beautiful as music. But we have to see it that way. So luckily, Margo and I here—she's not here actually right now. But here at Indie Birth are definitely on the same page. And that's probably not surprising. But we've both been thinking so much about this concept that is there something that we could call the new midwifery. And, again, it's not something we're owning, but let's put a name to what we're talking about. Traditional midwifery—and it gets really confusing, right? Because we might call ourselves traditional birth attendants almost for lack of a better description.

Words mean so much, but yet sometimes it's confusing to use certain phrases. So we might call ourselves that. But is what we're putting forth or we're putting our vision on really traditional midwifery. And then we both came to the conclusion that it probably isn't although there is so much knowledge and wisdom in the traditional knowledge that midwives hold and have held forever, for centuries, but that's not where we're going. That's where we came from. And that's only part of this new vision. So the other part of this vision is, in fact, incorporating all of the great stuff that we've learned traditionally that work in birth and with moms and babies and blending it with what we know now, what we know now as modern women living in 2015 with all these resources at our fingertips, with the Internet, with being able to travel, with being able to see birth even without being there, being able to see and analyze birth in different cultures, in different countries. This is a whole new spin on midwifery and traditional midwifery that is part of our future.

So that's what I want to talk about. I don't know if that makes any sense at all. But midwifery is art combined with the new which is science and knowledge and research and probably some technology too at least occasionally. That gives us this new vision of midwifery. So for me, I really got comparing music and midwifery on this long car drive back from Los Angeles to Arizona. And I had this light bulb moment that I want to share with you which is even music, in my case as a professional musician who went to conservatory, very much the same box that licensed midwifery has made for us today. And that was not apparent to me back then. I was young, right? In my 20s. And I just wanted to be the best musician I could be. I wanted the coveted symphony job of which there are only about two a year in the whole entire country or maybe even world. It's a very, very, very competitive field to be in.

But it's so easy, and I'm no exception. To have gotten swept into leaving music as an art a lot of the time because in the professional music world, especially when jobs are so scarce, there's this intense need for perfection. It's more about the rules. It's more about how metronomic or how robotic almost you can play. And, again, I don't know how much sense this makes to 99% of people that aren't aware of this strange lifestyle that some of us have had. But I still have many friends involved in the professional music world, and I do not envy them. So this is classical music, if that makes any difference. So if you flipped on the radio station for classical music, there is no improvisation—almost never anyway unless you're doing some kind of solo piece. And if it's a group type piece, it's all about perfection. There isn't a stray note. There isn't a wrong note. There isn't something out of place out of time.

Now I would definitely argue as a more mature person now that there is very much art in that system. Of course, right? There's art in Beethoven and Mozart and Bach. But as a young musician who is just learning the ropes and trying to fit in and wants to succeed, it's so easy to be, again, trapped in this box. And you totally forget—and I know at least so many of my colleagues did when I was in music school. So many of us forgot that music was even art. And although we were artistic and inside of us we felt this need to self express, the situations we were in with the teachers we had and the really, really hard cord audition procedures—again, we, most of the time, weren't playing music. We were trying to be perfect. And I'll just tell you since most of you don't have this experience. When you go to take an audition, you fly across the country. Now I played the oboe. And you arrive at, say, the LA Philharmonic. And there's hundreds of other people. And everybody is competing for one job. One job that whoever gets it will sit in that chair almost literally until they die. So these jobs only open up, let's say, every 50 years. So it's a really big deal. And there's only about five orchestras like that in the whole entire United States.

So to say it's competitive is an understatement. But what I'm trying to drive home, again, is that when you get your change, most of us wouldn't have fallen back on the

artistic interpretation or the self expression interpretation. It was about being absolutely flawless. To the point where many people even took beta blockers, which are drugs that kind of calm you down. Now I never did. I was pretty young. And honestly, I don't think that was as big a thing back 20 years ago. But funny enough on my way home from LA, again, a couple weeks ago, I was on my phone. My husband was driving, and I thought it would be fun to Google some of the people that I had played music with. Anyway, lo and behold, I came across this really interesting interview with another professional oboist, who I knew at least way back then. An article was about musicians and beta blockers.

And it just reminded me, again, so much of birth. Like people have gotten to this point where they're not even willing to be artists anymore. They're more concerned about staying in the box. They're fearful. The rules and regulations, for lack of a better description, are what rule music. And if you want to stay, if you want to fit in that system, you will do just about anything. You will even take drugs before you get on stage to play a symphony concert. And that was what the article said. This oboist saying, "We just can't afford to even breathe wrong. We have to be,"—it's almost inhuman. She didn't say that, but that was my interpretation. There is no room for the natural process of even breathing during a concern or during a solo piece. It is absolute perfection, and it even said in the article that you miss a note. There is something wrong you're fired. I mean especially if you don't have tenure for one of these big important jobs.

So kind of gone on for awhile like that, but, again, it just was such a light bulb. I didn't realize this when I was in school that so much of what I did was not creative. It was very fear driven. It was not natural. It was sterile. It was almost like the feeling of a hospital. No room to move. There was one way to do it. Clinical. If you can imagine art or music being clinical and very rule or textbook based, then imagine it because this was the scenario that I was in and, again, many musicians still find themselves in. Now, of course, just to put the normal disclaimer to address that devil's advocate. Many of these people are amazing artists, and, of course, that's probably the name of the game in that field. I don't know. I didn't stick it out. But the name of the game would be to find your voice, to find your art amongst all of that and be successful. And there is definitely many musicians that are able to do that. And they are the true artists.

But for me, I got out of that field because of what I was feeling. And, again, I didn't really have that all hit home until recently. So I got tired of it. After I had a baby or two and I was still going off to these gigs and having to be this perfect musician when I barely had time to practice especially when one practices eight hours a day. With two little kids, it's not exactly possible. But most of all, my love for this clinical process was not there. I still love music, and I loved it at the time as, again, more of the artistic process. But being a robot was not my cup of tea. So I got out of that. And then I

realized that's exactly what's happened to me in midwifery. That's exactly what's happened to a lot of people in midwifery. That the state of midwifery today whether we call it state licensed midwifery or medwifery—that's not my favorite term. It's pretty derogatory.

Anyway, midwifery today is not art, at least not in my perception. And that's a generalization, of course. There are, just like in music, midwives doing amazing things and being creative and supporting women and learning and all this great stuff. But in the general sense, midwifery today in the U.S. and in many other countries is kind of going down as something that is rule and regulation driven with no room for any kind of creativity. But the thing is I would definitely argue—and this is the point of the podcast that birth and midwifery are art. They are art driven. They are creations. And they are soul driven. So a birth ebbs and flows. There is space. There is a speed up. There is a slow down. There is not a perfect metronomic rhythm. And so when we have rules and regulations governing, especially midwifery home birth, we take away any ability to see that birth as art and to allow that mother to function as an artist.

And I really, really, really believe at my core—and, again, this is why I got out of music and into midwifery. This is where my truth is that I believe that the mom and baby are the creative source. They are the creative power. And that, as midwives, our role is not one of artist. We are not the ones directing or creating. We're witnessing the art. We're there for support. We're there to tailor our care individually and uniquely for this mom and baby. And, again, I'm just not seeing that. I'm not hearing women express that that's what they're finding in mainstream midwifery today.

So who wants to be boxed in once they realize the truth? That's what I want to know. Again, I was someone that was boxed in years ago in the music world. And I can totally see how women are boxed in in the birth world. When it was me, I didn't even realize it. I was just so deep in it, and I was obsessed with doing it as I should, with getting permission, with having someone else tell me how good I was. And that's, of course, essentially what an audition is anyway. We think you're good. If we think you need to be better, then we'll tell you that too. But it's not really a very individualistic—wow. That's a big word. Process.

So, again, birth as a creative process. How do we honor that as moms? We just are. We recognize that what we're going through is unique. That this work of art has never been created before. What we're in with our baby from maybe preconception for the rest of our lives has never been done before exactly this way. And that just sounds, I guess, maybe really idealistic or not as grounded. But I think that has to be at least 50% of what this new midwifery vision is. That we so acknowledge despite our differences in religious beliefs or spiritual beliefs—that we all acknowledge that moms and babies hold the keys to their own process. And it is their experience. And as

midwives, we hold the space. We watch her create. We help her, for sure, if she needs it as best we can although we're all very aware that no one can do it for her. And I want to know where these midwives are. And if we're not seeing a lot of them—we're not finding a lot of them that are left or are in creation themselves, then what do we do?

And, again, I think—or I know here at Indie Birth that is one of our main focuses. So besides educating women and talking with them like this, it's also to talk to those women out there that have a desire to really walk with women, to be a true midwife, to join this view of new midwifery. This may even include midwives that have been practicing for years and years. Maybe they're disillusioned with the state run midwifery. They recognize as well that their traditional model isn't really—I don't want to say enough. But isn't appropriate to carry on into the future because times are changing. And so they make throw up their hands. These amazing, wonderful, experienced midwives not wanting to participate in state run midwifery and think they're done. They have nothing to offer. They don't know where they're going. So we're offering this to them as well.

Every woman has this in heart. I do believe it. It doesn't mean you need to hear it or honor it or even express it. But I think, as women, we all know how birth is supposed to go. We all know who is responsible for creating, and we all want that when we want someone to walk with us or support us. That's what, I think, we all want. And that, again, is what we're trying to create or put forth resources for here at Indie Birth. This place where midwifery is an art, and the mother is in charge of the creation. Yet the other side is this new vision, as I said, that there is science and knowledge and technology and research that allows the midwife to really stand back and offer this woman even more options from this place of knowing that we're really lucky to be at, at this point in time.

So, again, we're not seeing this being created in the way that we really believe it should be right now. And that is what the future is all about. That midwives witness this, that they want to be part of the creation, and that they are also valued and appreciated just as the artist is. So if that sounds good to you, if you're seeing this new vision or this new midwifery into the future here whether it's our immediate future or whether we really do have to wait it out and it's our daughters and granddaughters that really get to experience it, if you're feeling that, if you're seeing that with us, we'd love for you to get involved with Indie Birth. We'd love to hear from you. We'd love to hear your birth story. We'd love to talk with you on a consult. We'd love for you to check out our classes. Our Indie Birth midwifery conference is coming in just five months, January 2016. And this entire concept, this concept that I've been talking about for the last 30 minutes is what the conference is based on this year. This blend of sacred and science. This new midwifery that we really want to be a part of shaping, to bring out into not only this country but this world, so that more women are led to support other women this

way. And we no longer focus on the negative or the old paradigm. We're not protesting at hospitals and asking for permission. We're not anyway. Our focus is on creating what we want to see.

So if you would love to join us, please check out indiebirth.com/conference and join us here in beautiful Sedona in just a couple months. We have some amazing speakers. Dr. Fischbein, as I mentioned, and many others, who may not be as well known, but I can assure you totally embody this idea of sacred science. So thanks so much for listening today. Please check out our conference link. Ask questions if you have them. And we really look forward to involving you in this creation of new midwifery.

(closing music)