



Wearing white and black sheep's noses, actors Steve Auger and Catherine Hughes set the stage for *The Clone Show* with the true story of the cloning of Dolly. Photo: Stanley Rowin

SEND IN THE CLONES

By **Beth Schachter**

Imagine a future when human cloning and other genetic manipulation of people is not only possible, but practiced. What ethical problems might these brave new technologies pose? As the house lights dim and the stage comes alive at the Boston Museum of Science, professional actors Steve Auger and Catherine Hughes invite Fenway High School students to confront some tough questions. "If you had died as an infant, would you want your parents to have cloned you? If you could design your kids to be stronger, smarter, more beautiful, would you do it? If you could give yourself immortality by having yourself cloned, would you? Should you?"



Wrap it up in any fancy words you please, but you want to make a copy of yourself..., actress Catherine Hughes tells actor Steve Auger in the one-act play, *The Living Will*, part of *The Clone Show* trilogy. Photo: Stanley Rowin

The Clone Show is a trilogy of one-act plays written by Boston playwright Jon Lipsky. In "A New Life," a couple is mourning the death of their infant daughter Lili. The wife wants to create a genetic clone "to give our baby another chance at life." The husband objects; creating a genetic copy of Lili does not ensure that the new baby would have their departed daughter's spirit or soul, he says. He also argues that the cloned child would bear an unreasonable burden—fulfilling the expectations her parents had for Lili. (*See accompanying excerpt.*)

Two other plays pose different dilemmas. "The Body Shop" considers the ethical challenges that accompany the ability to cut and paste embryonic DNA to give babies a predetermined helping of beauty, brains or brawn. "The Living Will" presents a man who seeks to continue his bloodline by cloning himself—not once, but many times.

With support from HHMI, the museum has developed a novel strategy for complementing and enhancing the science classroom experience: commissioning professional playwrights and actors to write and perform plays on ethical issues of modern science. A previous production examined ethical questions raised by the Human Genome Project. The actors stage the plays in individual high school science classes, at the museum or at their schools.

Participating school groups study the scientific topics covered in the plays before attending the performance, preparing themselves for an informed discussion, explains Mike Alexander, the museum's program manager for science theater. A spirited exchange among audience and actors follows each performance.

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"A clone of a person wouldn't be that person," one Fenway student observed after a recent performance of *The Clone Show*. "Cloning isn't for the child; it's for the parents," said another.

The idea of genetic enhancement of unborn children appealed to a few of the students. "Why not help them feel good about themselves?" one asked. But another objected, "It wouldn't really be my child; it would be an ideal creation." The museum selects actors who are eager to lead teen discussions on science and ethical issues, and science advisors help prepare the actors for their unusual roles. If someone asks a question that the actors cannot answer on the spot, they research it and e-mail a response to the teacher.

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4000 Jones Bridge Road Chevy Chase, MD 20815-6789
(301) 215-8500 E-mail: webmaster@hhmi.org

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It would be Lili inside. That's all that counts, a grief-stricken wife tells her husband as they discuss cloning their dead baby, in the one-act play, *The New Birth*.

Photo: Stanley Rowin

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The first scene of *The Clone Show* is called "The New Birth." In this excerpt, a husband and wife argue about whether to create a clone of their infant daughter who recently died.

HUSBAND: Are you out of your mind?

WIFE: It would be Lili inside. That's all that counts.

HUSBAND: Her DNA. Her genetic code. That's all.

WIFE: That's enough.

HUSBAND: Margaret, for godsake listen to yourself. Do you really want to go down this road?

WIFE: Don't you understand? Why doesn't anyone understand? I just want my baby back.

HUSBAND: It won't be our baby! You know that! A clone is no different than a twin . . .

WIFE: Yes, a twin.

HUSBAND: But a twin is not the same . . .

WIFE: But a twin is very much the same . . .

HUSBAND: No, they're different . . .

WIFE: I know they're different . . .

HUSBAND: They just look alike . . .

WIFE: But they have so many of the same . . .

HUSBAND: But their spirit, their souls, their personalities . . .

WIFE: —The same potential . . .

HUSBAND: —Are completely different . . .

WIFE: I don't care! And I'm not crazy. I know she wouldn't be our baby. But at least something of Lili would live on in . . .

HUSBAND: Only in our minds.

WIFE: Yes, in our minds. You want me cursing God for the rest of my . . .

HUSBAND: So you'll play God, to keep from cursing . . .

WIFE: Don't you get that superior air. You're just afraid.

HUSBAND: Afraid?

WIFE: Afraid to keep her memory alive. Afraid to mock death.

HUSBAND: Yes, mocking death scares the hell out of me.

When I see you like this . . .

WIFE: Like what?

HUSBAND: Inside your own head. Did you ever think of the new baby? Did you ever think of her?

WIFE: What about her?

HUSBAND: She would always be Lili in your mind. She would always have to live up to your great loss, what a terrible burden . . .

WIFE: No, I would love her. I just want to love her . . .

HUSBAND: Then let Lili go.

WIFE: Nooo . . .

HUSBAND: Let her go.

WIFE: I can't. I can't.

HUSBAND: Why not?

WIFE: Because she deserves to make a difference in this world. If she could just have a second chance.

HUSBAND: If you could have a second chance, you mean.

Don't deny it. You just don't want to deal with your grief. I know, I've been there . . .

WIFE: Oh yeah you've been down Donnelly's every night

throwing back a few. That's where you've been, and don't deny that!

HUSBAND: I-I'm sorry, I'm just trying to clear my mind . . .

WIFE: You deal in your way, I'll deal in mine.

HUSBAND: You're right. I-I'm not . . . I can't stand coming home to this. When there's nothing we can . . .

WIFE: But we can do something. . . . All we need to do is sign the papers.

HUSBAND: They should never have told you this was possible. They should never have opened up this door.

WIFE: Why not? We have the power . . .

HUSBAND: A terrible power . . .

WIFE: No, just a comfort.

HUSBAND:—Over life and death! Don't you see? To make a copy of Lili, they're going to have to destroy another life.

WIFE: No.

HUSBAND: The potential for another . . .

WIFE: How?

HUSBAND: You can't put her DNA into an egg without taking DNA out. The DNA of another baby waiting to be born . . .

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