

KULTURTID

”A NUMBER” by Caryl Churchill

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There are many important and relevant questions being addressed in the intimate black box theatre that is Krudttønden in Østerbro right now. That Theatre Company’s latest premiere of “A Number” by Caryl Churchill puts under the microscope the issue of human cloning. It might be possible, but is it ethical and what are the consequences? Before the premiere there was an intense 45 minute debate with a packed audience with: Pia Søltoft, Vicar of the Marble Church and former head of the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, Joshua M. Brickman, Associate Professor of Stem Cell and Development Biology and Mickey Gjerris, Associate Professor of Bioethics.

This question started the session: *If the techniques are available to clone a human being, why is it not happening?*

Three good reasons NOT to surfaced;

- We have to have legislation in place to prevent human cloning taking place.
- There will too many fetuses lost in the process.
- No one actually wants to be a clone.

This debate was a prologue for the play that followed. Floodgates of anguish swept over us as Salter, the father, and his son – or rather sons – began to tell their tale. We won’t reveal the plot here, but we can say that this father is played by Ian Burns and that his three sons on display are played by Rasmus Emil Mortensen.

This is not a “feel-good” story, where audience and characters get everything satisfactorily solved by the end of the evening. On the contrary, it leaves us asking more questions: What happened to the father prior to the cloning? What happened to his wife? Did he lose his 1st son and then decided to take matters into his own hands in a way that wasn’t completely thought-through, irresponsible and was he duped by the genetic specialist at the hospital?

From the outset we are gripped and drawn into by these doubts and mysteries, lies and truths and we ponder on the human dimensions of cloning as the fast-paced dialogue plays out before us.

Ian Burns and Rasmus Emil Mortensen both excel in their anguish and disharmony. Ian Burns is unbelievably good as the sad father with poor excuses for his earlier behaviour and guilty conscience, and Rasmus Emil Mortensen impresses with each powerful presentation of the three sons during the duration of this 1 hour long play.

With this latest production That Theatre not only delivers entertainment, but plenty of food for thought. So, go in and see this play and go home enriched – and if you’re a teacher, take your students in with you.

