Celebrating Australian Playwriting

Australian Script Centre

The Woman Who Knitted Herself a Child

by Catherine Fargher

EXTRACT

This script is distributed by The Australian Script Centre
77 Salamanca Place Hobart 7004 Tasmania Australia
email admin@ozscript.org
www.ozscript.org
ph +61 3 6223 4675
fax +61 3 6223 4678

Voices

Scientist - in her 30's. Working in cloning technology.

Water woman- the voice of female scientist swimming underwater.

Child – a girl around 7-8 years old. Playing and knitting a baby/doll

Young Woman- the voice of female scientist at 18.

Synthetic Computer voice- a computer generated voice describing the reproductive cloning process in detail.

Radio voice-over - a series of broadcast snippets of scientific information.
Character voices – a number of cameo voices in the memory scenes, includes:
Boyfriend/Snake, Doctor, Mother, Rose (child's friend), Boys, Counselor, Female Doctor.

Sound Spaces

Child's knitting/playing space- sounds of rocking chair, bag of wool, click clack of needles, also playground sounds.

Laboratory space – hum of Lab machines, centrifuge and incubators, teat pipette, Petri dishes and fluids.

Dr's surgery circa 1970's- sounds of surgery and surrounding garden suburb, pop songs associated with the 70's, Opera Music associated with Dr's surgery.

Underwater space – sounds of waterworld/sea landscape, that water woman is snorkeling in. Seaweed, breathing, snorkeling sounds, bubbles, fish movements.

Mitochondrial Water's Soundscape- a music/ sound space that features biological sounds associated with reproductive cells and fluids in which cells divide. There are echoes of voices, barely audible, perhaps the voices of cells, or perhaps spirit voices, of beings waiting to become. This sound space is ambient and evocative both of body and memory.

Child

Sounds of a child sitting on an old rocking chair and starting to rock. A squeal of glee. Rustling sounds of a knitting bag with wool and patterns in bag.

Child:(As if reading pattern)

Casting on a sleeve.

With a pair of number 10 needles, cast on 21 stitches.

2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, ….21!

More rustling in the bag. Click clack of needles hitting together.

Child:

Pink wool, red wool, yellow wool. Nana's needles!

Work in rib… knit one, purl one.

I'm making an arm!

The moment

Sounds of water rushing, breathing as if through a snorkel, breath as a head bursts through the surface from swimming/snorkeling.

Water Woman

Like needles! I'm snorkeling deep in the water when I see them. The sun's rays piercing through the surface, catching strings of weed and algae with their shafts on the way down. I go deeper. Take a breath, push really hard with my back legs, head towards a dark space in the rock. Catch a glimpse of it… I don't know what…pulsating towards me…a moving ball of light, thousands of tiny silver shapes darting this way and that. Like tiny stitches. Like shivers through my body. Moving across each other, making patterns. Changing like quicksilver. Awesome. Hundreds of tiny fishes moving in one body. Creatures coming into being. They split around me and I'm surrounded. They're knitting me into their shape, I'm inside the skein.

A brief hint of Mitochondrial Water's Sound- a musical/ soundscape that features biological sounds associated with cells and fluids in which cells divide.

DNA

Sounds of a centrifuge machine in a laboratory. Assorted clinking of Petri dishes or pipettes.

Scientist:

Petri dishes. Centrifuges. DNA sequences. Don't ask me how many. I've been working on animal viruses for 3 years. Finding vaccines for sheep. You insert the virus protein into the plasmid, mass produce the clones and injecting them back into the animal. You sequence the DNA so you can look for common threads, some sort of pattern.

It's tiring …the long hours...but exciting…I'm hooked. Like a fish fascinated by the lure… even when it knows the spike's there.

When I first started, we did the DNA sequencing the old way. You'd put the protein DNA into the machine and insert the gel, expose it to the radiation and the results came… there would be the four DNA bases…Guanine, Cytosine, Thymine and Adenine showing up green and blue in vertical columns. Little stitches across the gel. It was always a thrill seeing what pattern you'd get each time. I kept some of them, they were so beautiful.

Child

Sounds of a child sitting on an old rocking chair. Click clack of needles.

Child:

(Excited) I'm never bored. Fern stitch, moss stitch, seed stitch, honeycomb stitch. My grandma says there are new ones that aren't even invented yet!

One two buckle my….I'm knitting a foot.

