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## Tatiana Maslany, multitasking star with many faces on sci-fi thriller 'Orphan Black'

BY FRAZIER MOORE, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS JUNE 11, 2015

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This image released by BBC America shows Tatiana Maslany portraying Cosima in a scene from "Orphan Black." Now in its third season, the highly acclaimed series has won the 29-year-old Maslany a special brand of cult adulation, even something bordering on celebrity. She plays several characters on the BBC America series airing Saturday at 9 p.m. ET. (Steve Wilkie/BBC America via AP)

NEW YORK, N.Y. - A half-century ago, teen star Patty Duke wowed viewers playing dual roles (identical cousins!) on her hit sitcom.

These days on "Orphan Black," BBC America's sci-fi clone-fest, Tatiana Maslany has lost count of the roles she plays.

"More than seven, I think," she says, adding that, in a single scene, she has played as many as four distinct characters interacting seamlessly. She's a crowd all by herself.

Now in its third season (airing Saturday at 9 p.m. EDT), the series began with con artist Sarah (played by Maslany) witnessing the subway suicide of Beth (played by Maslany), who, to Sarah's shock, was her spitting image. Always out to find an angle, Sarah claimed for herself Beth's much-cushier identity, only to learn that she and Beth were clones along with a growing number of other lab-created "sisters" (played by Maslany) — and that all of them are in serious peril.

The highly acclaimed series has won the 29-year-old Maslany a special brand of cult adulation, even something bordering on celebrity.

"A girl recognized me at the airport," says Maslany, though adding

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hastily, "I was wearing my 'Orphan Black' backpack. It's such a good backpack!"

Animated and candid with a luminous smile, Maslany is a woman blessed with rather specific features who, nonetheless, on-camera can marshal them in seemingly countless variations. As she slips into her repertory company of roles, it is hard, then downright jarring, for the audience to realize they all are one woman's handiwork.

"This show is an incredible training ground for an actor in terms of sparking my imagination and keeping me present," she says. "It's so stimulating, to switch up characters twice a day, and jump into each role without fear or embarrassment."

Besides Sarah, who serves as the clones' de facto leader, they include Alison, the soccer mom; Helena, a maniacal Ukrainian; Cosima, a brilliant scientist, and more.

But this season, Maslany's clone posse has been met with an opposing team. A new cloning initiative named Project Castor has loosed a gang of male clones on the world. They all are played by Ari Millen, whom Maslany describes as "super-trained and super-awesome."

She laughs at the notion voiced by some disgruntled fans that introducing male clones somehow threatens the series' supposedly feminist agenda — and even upstages Maslany's bravura display.

"That's so funny," she says, "as if feminism can be explored only if women are in positions of power. Do people think the female clones will instantly become the men's girlfriends and just cook for them?"

"This doesn't change the fabric of the show, it reinforces the story we're already telling. It's about autonomy, and the lack of it; about ownership of your body and image. It's about gender stereotypes, which we explore and bust open. This is all still very relevant to women — and to men, too."

While Maslany savors serving up her smorgasbord of characters, she takes pains to praise her fellow cast members — who include Kristian Bruun, Jordan Gavaris, Kevin Hanchard and Maria Doyle Kennedy — "for their amazing character work."

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