



Series Description

Tots TV Series, Season 2

Tots TV is a combination of possibility, imagination and exploration. It captivates young children through the adventures, explorations and special friendships of

Tilly, Tom and Tiny. The Tots live in a secret cottage in the woods with their friend Donkey (who is, in fact, a donkey) and a mischievous creature (unseen by the Tots) called Furryboo. Targeted to children aged two to five and beyond, this charming half-hour series for children is available weekdays on PBS. (Please check local listings.)

A mixture of puppetry, live action, and animation, **Tots TV** is filmed outdoors in real locations. It is designed to be a natural extension of children's creative play and to encourage their imaginations. It is also the only children's television program in the U.S. that features a main character who speaks only Spanish. Through their real-life experiences and fantasy play, the Tots learn important lessons about the world.

Each of the Tots has a distinct personality and character traits. Tilly, who speaks only Spanish, enjoys sharing secrets with the other Tots. She is also the most self-assured of the Tots and tends to act on impulse. Tom, the oldest Tot, is thoughtful, dependable, and supportive of the others. He is

full of facts and enjoys telling them. Tiny, the youngest Tot, is always ready to plunge into new adventures. His naivete often leads him into situations that make Tom and Tilly uncomfortable.

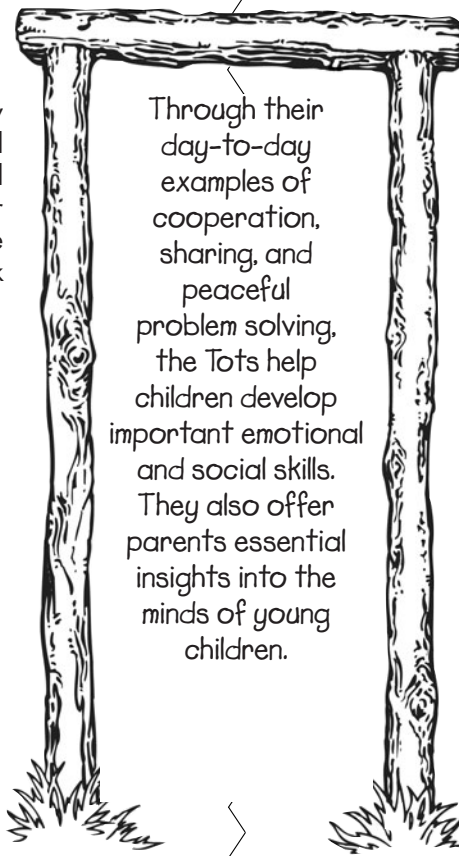
All of the Tots love to read, share stories and make up songs.

The Tots share many adventures together. Some are real-life adventures, like visiting a children's shoe store or watching a baby vulture learn to fly. Others are purely pretend, like hunting for a hippo in a garden.

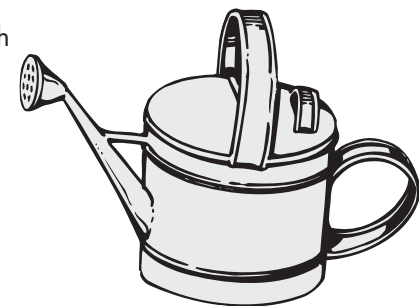
Sometimes the Tots observe real-life children to see what they would do in similar situations. They also learn by observing grown-ups, such as Jane, who is an expert on animals. Their Bolsa Magica, activated by Tilly's flute, helps the Tots in sticky situations.

Against this backdrop of real-world experiences and creative fantasy, **Tots TV** is both educational and fun. Through their day-to-day examples of cooperation, sharing, and peaceful problem solving, the Tots help children develop important emotional and social skills. They also offer parents essential insights into the minds of young children.

Tots TV was launched on PBS in October 1996 with 40 half-hour episodes.



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Series Description (cont'd)

Tots TV Series, Season 2

In October 1998, it expanded its franchise with 25 new programs plus a one hour special, "The Tots TV Big Treasure Adventure." A **Tots TV** online site called *Tots TV Theater* extends the value of the series through its original and newly enhanced features. Highlighting learning through play and shared communications, the site features puppetry and play scripts as well as hands-on activities.

The series is part of PBS' Ready To Learn programming which helps to prepare preschoolers for classroom readiness. **Tots TV** is created by Ragdoll Productions (UK) Ltd. in association with Carlton International Media Ltd., and produced in partnership with The itsy bitsy Entertainment Company. *Tots TV Theater* Web site is developed by Outreach Extensions and The itsy bitsy Entertainment Company in association with PBS Online. ☆





Production Companies

Dear Station Colleagues:

What fun it is to introduce you to the second season of educational outreach for the award-winning preschool series, **Tots TV!**

Tots TV is a multi-award-winning preschool series about best friends, adventures and story-telling. These new materials were developed to address three critical areas of concern to a young child: the use of language, exploration and play, and friendship-forming skills.

The Tots love stories and language. They ask questions, they name what they observe, discuss their thoughts and ideas about what they do, see, hear and feel. They make up silly songs and funny words. The Tots love language and their world is rich with speech. One of the Tots even speaks a different language!

The Tots also love adventures. In every episode, Tilly, Tom and Tiny venture forth to visit a new and interesting place away from home. Because they are on their own, they choose how slowly or how quickly they will move — they choose how long or how quickly they will look at something new — and they choose when it is time to go home. The Tots' adventures unfold in the way a preschooler understands — slowly enough for a young child to see, and close enough for a young child to observe and to learn.

The Tots are not perfect people. They spill, lose toys, break things, are moody and occasionally hurt each other's feelings. They are also courteous, affectionate, encouraging and funny. Sometimes they give each other a great big kiss! The Tots are best friends and show, in their actions and their words, what it takes to be a good friend.

The Tots are, in fact, a great deal like you and me, and the young children in our families.

We hope you find these materials useful in your efforts to help young children get ready to learn and succeed both in school and in the community. We invite you to share your comments and questions with us at any time.

With all good wishes, and many thanks for your support of **Tots TV**.

Kenn Viselman
President

Eileen Potrock
Director of Communications

Tina Waganer
Director of PTV Relations



Interview

with Mercedes DeVriarte, Ph.D.

Following is an interview with Mercedes DeVriarte, Ph.D. Dr. DeVriarte is an associate professor in journalism at the University of Texas and an educational consultant for the **Tots TV** outreach campaign.

Q: *Tots TV* is unique in its depiction of characters who speak two different languages. How realistic is it for children to interact and become friends with other children who do not speak the same language?

A: It's very realistic, actually. It was quite a familiar exchange. Small children don't seem to need to know exactly what is being said all the time. I think there's a lot of intuitive communication, especially in the pre-literate age group. Between sign language and sound, each child can chatter away speaking his own language and seeming to do just fine.

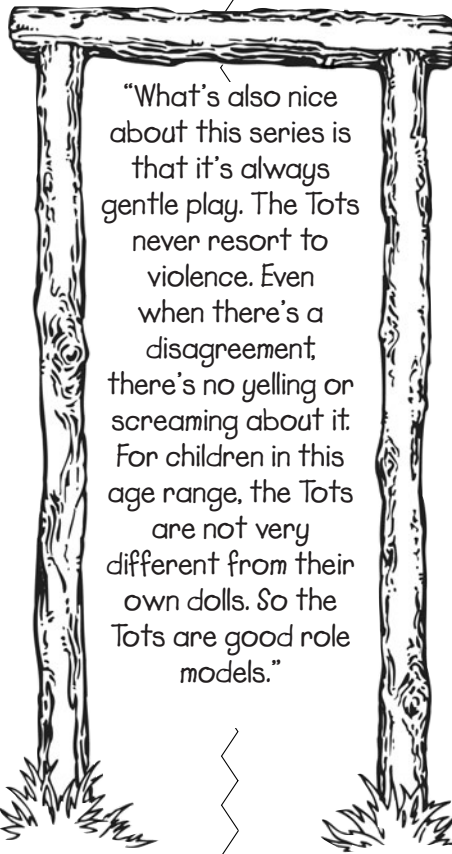
Q: Do you think that children who watch the program will pick up any of the Spanish?

A: If children watch it long enough, they'll pick up the language. However, they will probably pick up more through osmosis. There is a lot of repetition in the series, which is the natural way to learn language. The show is structured to allow that. There's also a lot of compromising and problem solving, and language doesn't hamper that. The Tots do a lot of negotiating in this series, and they do it in two languages. So actually the verbal communication seems to be just one component of all the communication going on in the series.

Q: Do you think a bilingual program for children is a good idea?

A: Sitting here in the Southwest, it seems to me long overdue. Given the changing demographics in the U.S., it is probably the most useful kind of program we could do for children. And bilingual

communication is presented in a positive way here, which is refreshing.



"What's also nice about this series is that it's always gentle play. The Tots never resort to violence. Even when there's a disagreement, there's no yelling or screaming about it. For children in this age range, the Tots are not very different from their own dolls. So the Tots are good role models."





TOTS TV PRODUCTION

Interview (cont'd) with Mercedes DeVriarte, Ph.D.

Q: *Diversity is also an important theme in Tots TV. How is the value of diversity expressed through the Tots?*

A: First of all, everybody has a different color hair, and some of it is quite improbable. Because of the variety of hair colors, it's therefore quite ordinary to see different skin colors. None of this is ever remarked upon in the show. Sex roles also are unremarkable in the show. And the different sounds expressed through different languages are not remarked upon. Whatever class was supposed to be represented by the clothing in the series, everyone dressed the same way. Virtually anyone could be dressed that way. So there are a lot of models of equality in this show.

Q: *This series has a strong emphasis on the importance of play in a child's life. How do you think the concept of play is presented here?*

A: What's nice about this series is that you see a mixture of fantasy and reality in the Tots' play. And a lot of their play seems intuitive. They all seem to come up with the same idea simultaneously. So there's a lot of sharing of ideas. And again, nobody really has to have his own way. There are just times when they all sit down and find a common interest and pursue it.

What's also nice about this series is that it's always gentle play. The Tots never resort to violence. There's no poking fun at other people. There's no watching of violence. Even when there's a disagreement, there's no yelling or screaming about it. For



children in this age range, the Tots are not very different from their own dolls. So the Tots are good role models.

Q: *How is friendship depicted in Tots TV?*

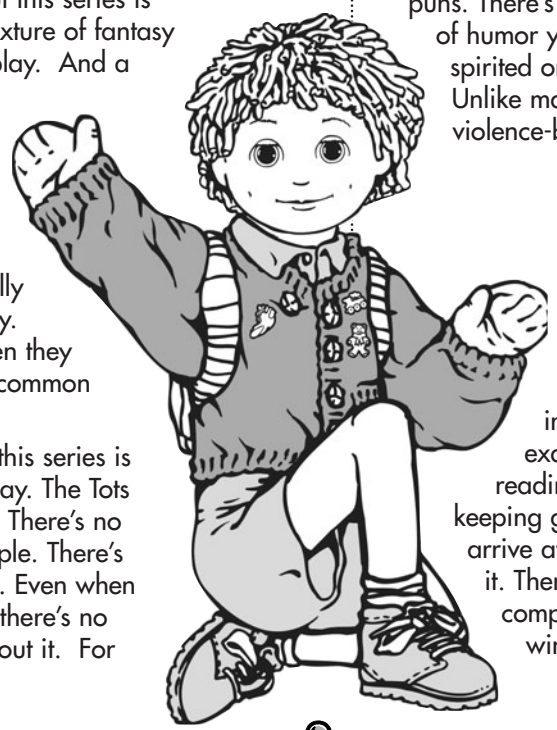
A: Friendship is very evenly distributed among the three characters. They all get along so well. You don't have, even in play, characters getting angry with one another. And since you have a cross-gender friendship, it also seems very egalitarian. It's not always the guys taking the lead. Sometimes Tilly takes the lead.

Q: *What do you think of the humor in Tots TV?*

A: It's what I call tee-hee humor. It's very appropriate for the age level. It's very obvious and simple. It's not based on word play or puns. There's a lot of body gesturing, like the kind of humor you see in kids. None of it is mean-spirited or sarcastic. There is no hint of cruelty. Unlike many cartoons, none of the humor is violence-based.

Q: *What other attributes do you see in this series?*

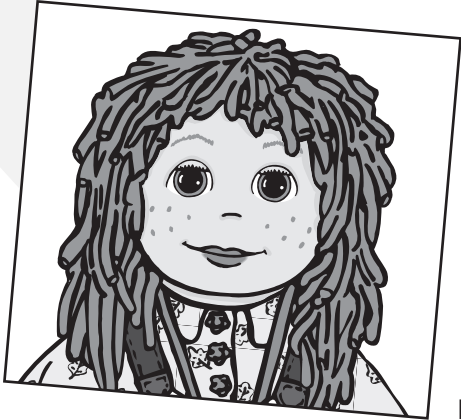
A: There's a lot of good value-building in this series that helps make children responsible citizens. Some of it is direct, some is indirect. During quiet time, for example, the Tots often are shown reading books. There's a lot of peace-keeping going on, too. They figure out how to arrive at a consensus, and they just go with it. There isn't a big emphasis on competition. Nobody has to be the winner in a disagreement. ☆





The Tots

Tilly, Tom and Tiny



Tilly speaks only Spanish. She is very expressive and loves to tell secrets to the other Tots. One of Tilly's favorite places to be is in the garden exploring its many wonders. Whether Tilly is decorating their secret cottage or calling Tom and Tiny on the telephone, she is always creative. Tilly is very energetic and eager to participate in activities with Tom and Tiny. Because of her independent nature, Tilly sometimes goes off on her own. She always carries her magical flute around her neck — which is most needed when the Tots are in trouble. "Ay Ay Ay!" is her favorite catch phrase, and she also knows the words which activate the Bolsa Magica. Tilly is the most self-assured Tot and usually acts on impulse.



Tom Being the oldest Tot, Tom often guides Tilly and Tiny and encourages them to join his play. He is very thoughtful and dependable, and likes to think things through. Tom often provides support for the other Tots, although he loves to play tricks on them. Even though Tom often knows more than Tilly and Tiny, and fills them in on the facts he has learned, he is also challenged in new situations. On his many explorations, Tom loves to make up songs about his new discoveries. He also loves to play dress up and assumes many different roles. He is proud to wear his glasses which he takes off only at bedtime or when he has a nap.



Tiny is the youngest Tot. He is very impulsive, always ready to plunge into new things and experiments. His naivete often leads him to explore situations that would make Tom and Tilly wary. He sometimes finds himself in trouble, but can usually think quickly enough to save himself (and the others). He is the proud keeper of the magic sac, Bolsa Magica, which he wears out on the Tots' adventures. Tiny loves his "home-made" binoculars which he uses to get a closer look at things in the world. His sweater has all of his favorite pins on it. Tiny is constantly learning how to share with the other Tots and, like them, loves to read or tell a story.



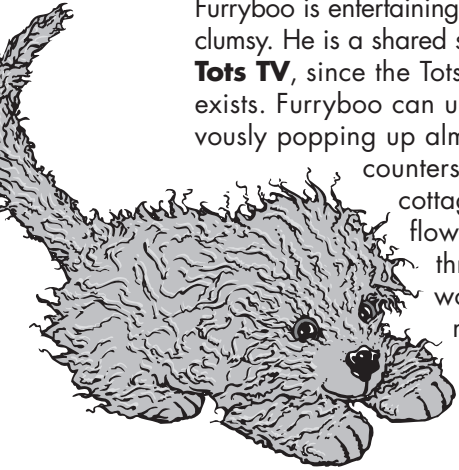


The Other Characters on Tots TV

Furryboo, Donkey, Jane, Jack, The Cottage & The Bolsa Magica

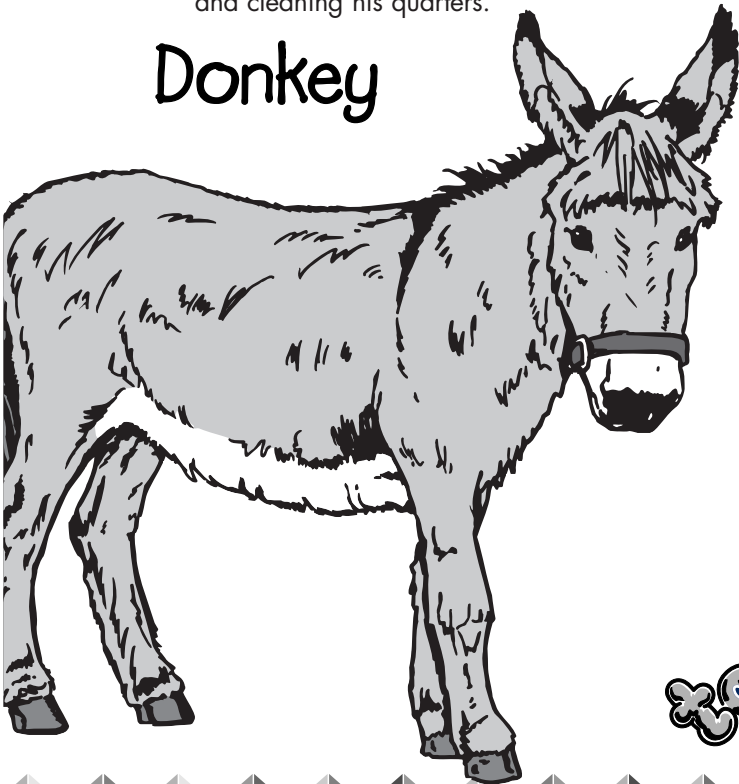
Furryboo

Furryboo is entertaining, adorable and a little clumsy. He is a shared secret with the viewers of **Tots TV**, since the Tots are unaware that he exists. Furryboo can usually be spotted mischievously popping up almost anywhere: over the counters, on beams in the secret cottage, peeking through flowers in the garden and through leaves in the woods. When something is missing at the Tot's house, Furryboo is almost certainly behind it.



Donkey lives in the barn next to the Tots' secret cottage. Tilly, Tom and Tiny care for him and treat him as a trusted friend. He is an exceptionally good listener, so the Tots readily confide in him. They also spend time feeding him, brushing him and cleaning his quarters.

Donkey



Jane & Jack

Two grown-ups are a regular part of **Tots TV**. Jane is a teacher who works with animals and points out their attributes and behaviors. Jack is an off-beat guy who manages to make ordinary things fun for the Tots. Both Jane and Jack, who are present in different story segments, are unable to see the Tots – although the Tots learn a great deal from watching them. Another character is Mr. Noah who appears in separate animated segments with his ark full of animals and engaging stories.

The Tots' secret house is a cozy, thatched cottage in the woods. It is their own magical place of play, friendship and responsibility. The Tots treat their secret house with respect and are always cleaning up and putting their belongings in their own special places. The Tots let young viewers share their secret and explore the environment with them.



The Cottage

The Bolsa Magica

The Bolsa Magica is a necessity for the Tots' adventures. Tiny always carries this colorful magic sac when the Tots venture forth to explore the world. Tilly's flute activates the Bolsa Magica which helps the Tots out of sticky situations.

