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## Backyard antics for adults and kids alike

Lauren Millar, National Post

Presented by



If you have a young child, you are no doubt familiar with TV's *The Backyardigans*, about a colourful group of characters who make the most of their playdates in a shared backyard space. While a stage version of the television show makes its way across the country, the Post's Maryam Siddiqi and her four-year-old friend Lauren Millar spoke with Janice Burgess, the creator of the series, and learned that even orange moose wear pants.

**Q** Many of the show's episodes have humour that's appealing to adults as well as kids. Is that intentional?

**A** I'm always pleased to hear that adults are watching with kids, but my philosophy is that children are watching by themselves, and there's a reason for that. I have to make sure that everything that we do is something kids will understand and enjoy. So I really try to think of that four-year-old sitting in front of the television set.

I also want to make sure that everything we do is something that will do no harm to a child watching alone-- that a parent wouldn't have to be there and say, "You have to be careful with scissors." I try to not do things that kids can't imitate. The way that we do that in *The Backyardigans* is by making things fantastic. You can fly a helicopter, you can ski down a mountain. These are things that a preschooler can't do, so there's no danger of their trying to do it.

**Q** You've had Alicia Keys and Cyndi Lauper sing on the show -- how did they get involved?

**A** Sometimes when we do special episodes, we have a big song that we think would be great to have a special voice for, so we just ask people and sometimes they say yes. We happen to have been very lucky twice. In Season 4, for Christmas, Conan O'Brien is going to be the voice of Santa Claus. He won't sing, but he's going to be our first dramatic performance by an adult. We're pretty excited.

**Q** I'm going to hand over the questioning to Lauren, my four-year-old friend. Her first question: Why does Uniqua have antennae? Is she an insect?

**A** Uniqua is not an insect. She is an unique creature; she's the only one like herself, as it were. Hence the antennae, and the pink spots and everything else about her. That's just the way she is.

**Q** Why does Tyrone wear a shirt but no pants?

**A** I think of them as pants.

**Q Her dad asks: How does he put his hands in his pockets?**

**A [Laughs heartily.] That's funny. - The Backyardigans airs on Treehouse TV. Visit [treehousetv.com](http://treehousetv.com) for local air times. The stage production *The Backyardigans: Sea Deep in Adventure* is currently touring Canada. It stops in Thunder Bay, Ont., tonight, Toronto on Oct. 3 and Ottawa on Oct. 10. For other dates and ticket information, visit [thebackyardigansontour.com](http://thebackyardigansontour.com).**

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