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Chee the Flea: And the Fabulous Zee Family Flea Circus

Alan Shue
Bug Rhymes Books (February 2011)
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Delightfully narrated by the youngest member of the Fabulous Zee Family Flea Circus, Chee tells the story of one of the world's favorite traditions. This whimsical troupe of performers practices their acts around the yard and in their tree. On every page, *Chee the Flea*, first in a series of Bug Rhymes stories, will thrill youngsters who may never be able to see a real circus, which is a vanishing part of America.

The book's cover illustration features various insects including a bee, an ant, a ladybug, and grasshopper all dressed up in colorful shoes, gloves, and neck scarves as they peer at a poster of a big top tent. They are excited to read: "Circus Tonight." Opening the book, young readers find more insects smiling from posters—"Introducing 'The Flying Zees: Snee, Chee and Bree; Jugglers: Soo and Snoo; Clowns: Hay and Cray; Ringmaster: Uncle Doo; and Daniel, the Roustabout Dog.'" All the performers smile and wave in friendly gestures. They dress in colorful, sequined costumes, and their big, innocent eyes are especially endearing.

The enchanting Zee Family of fleas lives on the back of Daniel, the Dog. Daniel wears a large turquoise collar with an initial D pendant around his neck. He is home to the fleas and is also their moving van, happy to carry his good friends to perform in various locations and help them set up for their acts. After the local bugs have been entertained, he assists in breaking down the tent and structures, and his back provides a place for a soft warm bed for the performers to rest and sleep after their hard work for cheering crowds.

Children will enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of the circus while learning valuable lessons. The importance of practice is addressed as the flea circus members make a series of mistakes during rehearsal: Trapeze artists drop Bree, the aerialist: "'Snee, catch her now, don't wait,' I yell,/ 'Oops, too late,' moans Snee, 'she fell.'" The jugglers let plates fall and the ringmaster forgets the first word to his joke—he tries a dance only to bump his knees and tear his pants. A clown throws a pie too far and hits a car. But afterward they give a great show. The short book also teaches the values of living, working, and enjoying life together while having some exciting entertainment.

Writer Alan Shue and illustrator Elisa Wilson pack a colorful, rhyming adventure story about the world of the big top into thirty-two fun-filled pages. Adorable!
MARY POPHAM (February 18, 2011)

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