

David Spies – Racine Symphony Orchestra Tuba Player

How long have you performed with the RSO?

I have performed with the RSO since 2005.

When did you first start playing your instrument?

I started playing tuba in 7th grade, but started on baritone in 6th grade.

What is your favorite piece to play?

I love playing music of all types and periods, but I really enjoy late 19th and 20th century repertoire. I particularly like performing *Petrushka*, *Firebird*, and *The Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky, and music of Dmitri Shostakovich and Paul Hindemith. However, Brahms' *Second Symphony* is a wonderful work as well. Orchestral arrangements of music by J.S. Bach as well as Bach *Cello Suites* are always rewarding.

What motivates me to keep playing?

The tuba was patented in 1835, so it is a relatively recent instrument. Even though over 2000 new works for tuba were composed in the last 40 years, historically there is no music originally composed by mainstream orchestral composers that included tuba until Brahms, Dvořák, and Tchaikovsky.

I love playing different types of music, and so my musical palette is diverse. I've learned to play several instruments in addition to tuba. Some music I perform regularly includes:

- **Big band jazz:** (Tuba and Bass Trombone) Bob Mintzer, Stan Kenton, Dizzy Gillespie, Maynard Ferguson, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Miles Davis, etc.
- **Chamber Music:** Brass Quintet; Tuba Quartet
- **Klezmer:** Eastern European secular Jewish party music; I have performed for the past 10 years with a band called Yid Vicious Klezmer Ensemble.
- **Popular and Rock Music:** I perform as part of horn sections for a tribute band called Hirt Alpert (Al Hirt/Herb Alpert/Hugh Masekela/Bob Crew Generation/etc.) as well as a rock band from the 1980s called Swamp Thing (of whom one of the members started The Knitting Factory in NYC).

What advice do you have for young musicians and those just starting to learn an instrument?

- Take your music classes seriously in elementary school. (I earn money playing guiro, tambourine, and recorder, and the only training I have had on those came from elementary school music class.)
- Don't be afraid to try and fail at first. It gets better the more you play, and then it becomes a wonderful experience. No one can take it away from you.
- Listen to any and all music, and don't let anyone tell you music you like is no good. It's all good, and you can find others online who love it too.
- Learn to play an instrument and learn to sing. I sang all through elementary, middle and high school. When you play, you 'sing' through your instrument.
- Listen to different types of music every day. You never know when you will be called as a musician to play a different musical style than you are accustomed. (It WILL happen.)
- Listen to better musicians than you every day on other instruments or voices. They will teach you more than you will know.
- Go hear live music. Often. Recordings are snapshots; live performances BREATHE!
- Play what you hear. You'd be surprised at how close you may get to what you actually hear in your head.
- Keep learning new stuff. It keeps your brain nimble and plastic.