BE IN SHAPE to play.

Houston Methodist Center for Performing Arts Medicine knows that to give the best performance, all musicians have to **BE IN SHAPE** to play. To achieve this, artists should follow these guidelines.

**Breaks.** Take a five-minute break for every 30 minutes of playing.

**Ergonomics.** Make sure that your practice equipment and instruments are properly fitted and adjusted to the appropriate height and size to reduce unnecessary stress on your body.

**Intelligent practice** is better than intense practice. Several short, meaningful 30-minute practices are more efficient than a two-hour unfocused session.

**Night.** Make sure that you get a good night's rest. Adolescents need eight to 10 hours of sleep for optimal health and performance. Adults need seven to nine hours of sleep per night.

**Stress.** Do your best to minimize stress. Do not ignore the mental and emotional stress that can affect your muscles and joints. Consider relaxation techniques and breathing exercises that may help performance and relaxation. If your stress becomes too much, reach out to a counselor.

**Hydrate.** Always make sure that you are well hydrated. Keep a full water bottle in the practice room. Aim to drink at least 48 to 64 ounces of water daily. It is important to drink every hour during practice and more if you are practicing in a hot climate or sweating a lot.

**Avoid texting,** computer work, or writing during rest periods. You need to give your hands a rest during breaks while engaged in heavy periods of playing.

**Posture.** Always maintain good posture whether you are playing or not playing:

- Spine erect and supported
- Shoulders drawn back and dropped away from the ears
- Legs and feet in a neutral, relaxed stance; hips level and balanced on the seat
- Head held centered on the neck — no craning, twisting or tilting

**Evaluate yourself for ‘Red Flags.’**

- Are you experiencing persistent numbness, tingling, shooting or stabbing pain while playing?
- Does your pain continue for several hours or longer after you stop playing?
- Does your pain inhibit your playing ability and impair performance?
- Have you noticed a significant loss of muscular strength or range of motion (stiffness)?
- Does this pain wake you up at night?
- Is the pain inferring with activities of daily living?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, you should seek a medical evaluation. Call the Houston Methodist Center for Performing Arts Medicine Artist Health Line at **713.394.6088** for a referral.