Leave No Fret Unplayed

Have you played every fret on your instrument? Think about it: you pick up your instrument every day for years, you practice exercises, scales, chords, songs, sequence after sequence of notes but there may very well be notes that remain unplayed. The most obvious unplayed possibilities probably rest high up the neck, after it has met the body and where it takes some finger yoga to clearly play a note. There may be some less obvious ones too. Maybe you've just never had a "reason" play the 9th fret of the G string. How lonely these frets must feel, how they must burn with jealousy about the first 3 frets hogging so much attention. There they sit, neglected, unnoticed, yearning for touch, for the chance to show you what they can do. Give them the companionship of your fingertip. Let them know you see them and most importantly, let them be heard. Don't rush. Take your time and make sure you get a high quality note on every fret. Really listen to it and hear what it has to offer. If you have more than one instrument, get to it.

This might sound silly at first but I believe there is a deeper lesson in taking the time to do this. It has to do with being less task oriented in our approach to practice, engaging our curiosity and letting ourselves be surprised. Don't just play what you're told to play, what feels safe or what can be predicted. Search for new experiences. Ask yourself questions like: What would happen if I did this? Why not play this note? What might *that* sound like? Not only will it lead you to a more intimate connection with your instrument and to a greater sense of musical freedom but it will bring you into the same sort of mindset that some hunter gatherer had when they plucked the string of their hunting bow and thought, "Hey, sounds pretty good." A handful of strings later and look how far music has come.

Peculiar Travel Suggestions

We're in deep winter and many students have fled or are fleeing to regions as varied as Tucson, Costa Rica, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Argentina. For those of you who like me see themselves staying put for the foreseeable future, you can still

travel the world from your couch with nothing more than a pair of headphones. I've created this playlist for you. It will take you to Chile, Mali, Brazil, India, Nigeria and many other global destinations. You may hear familiar instruments played in unexpected ways, others you may not have known to exist and ways of making music that might take your ears to wonderfully new places. I hope you enjoy and if you do, please let me know what stands out to you!