

Classical Guitar Technique

THE CAMPANELLA EFFECT

By Douglas Niedt

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WHAT IS THE CAMPANELLA EFFECT?

Campanella means "little bell". The campanella effect is a technique some believe originated with lutenists. The sound of the campanella effect makes one think of bells ringing together.

The campanella effect is the result of a unique style of left-hand fingering. A campanella fingering is produced by taking a passage that on paper looks like a scalar segment (as opposed to a chord) and fingering it as a combination of fretted and open strings so that as many notes as possible ring over the previous ones. *It is very much like turning a scalar passage into an arpeggio.* This results in the notes ringing together as a pleasing mish-mash of resonance, sustain, and often pleasing dissonance.

Let's look at a basic linear (moving step by step) D-major scale played with a basic fingering in first position. Example #1:

Example #1.

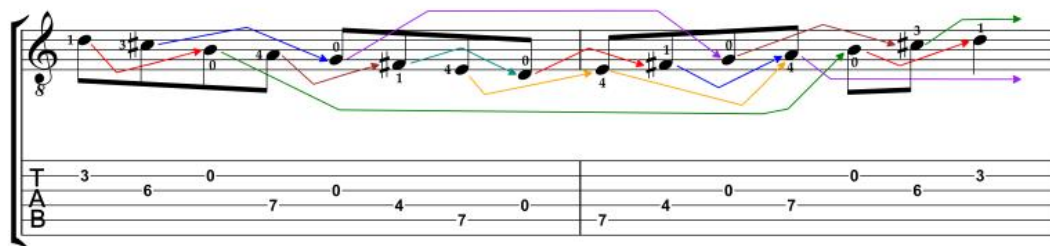
A simple linear D-major scale with basic fingering in first position.
Be sure to damp the open strings to preserve the scalar line.

T
A
B

Now, let's apply campanella-style fingering to the same scale. Example #2:

Example #2:

This is the same scale re-fingered in campanella style.
Notice that each note is held as long as possible to keep it ringing.

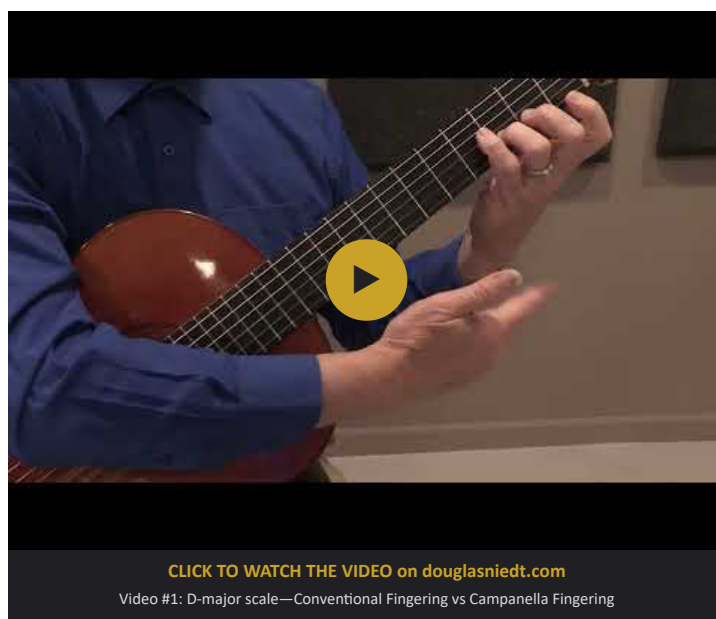


But, re-fingering a passage in this manner is not enough. It must also be played correctly. Note the arrow-lines indicating how long the notes are to be kept ringing. **For the campanella effect to work, do not lift a finger until you are forced to lift it to play another note on the same string.** Also, be careful not to accidentally damp any strings.

Watch me demonstrate and listen to the dramatic difference! Video #1:

★ Be sure to watch on full screen. In the lower right corner of the video, click the full-screen icon:

Video #1: D-major scale—Conventional Fingering vs Campanella Fingering



HOW TO APPLY THE CAMPANELLA EFFECT TO PASSAGES IN REAL PIECES

Pavana No. 1 (Luis Milán)

Let's look at the concept of playing a linear step-wise scale with standard fingering vs. campanella fingering in a real piece. Here is *Pavana No. 1* or *Pavane No. 1* by Luis Milán with a standard fingering you will find in many editions. It is very straightforward but unimaginative.

By the way, I am using standard tuning in these examples, not the vihuela tuning where the 3rd string is tuned to F#. Example #3:

Example #3. *Pavana No. 1* (Luis Milán) m35-42:

A very basic and unimaginative fingering. But used by many guitarists!
Be sure to damp the open strings to preserve the scalar lines.

The musical score for Example #3 shows measures 35 through 42. The treble staff contains a melodic line with various fingering numbers (1, 2, 3, 4) and red dots indicating where to damp the strings. The bass staff shows the corresponding bass line with fingering numbers. Red text annotations 'Damp--' are placed below the treble staff at measures 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, and 40 to indicate where to damp the open strings. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4.

And here is the same passage with the two scales re-fingered with campanella fingering. Example #4:

Example #4. *Pavana No. 1* (Luis Milán) m35-42:

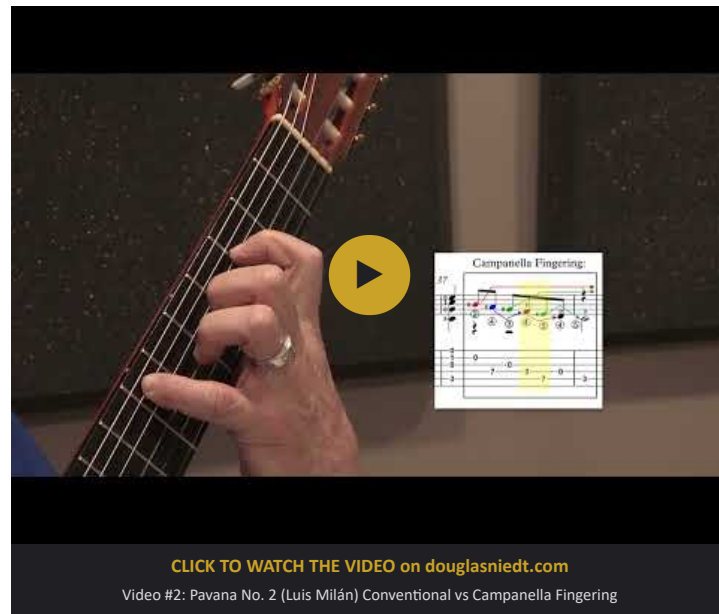
Here, the two scales are re-fingered as campanellas.

Also, this is an improved fingering for the bass line.
Use 4-3-4 to keep the line legato.
Hopping the 3rd finger 3-3-3 as in Example #3, chops up the line.

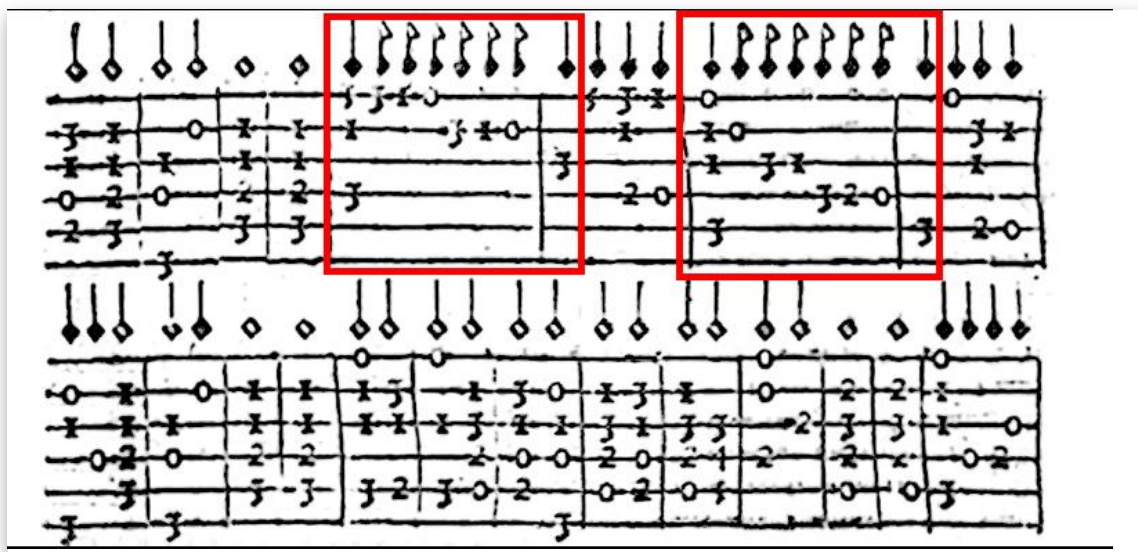
Watch me demonstrate and listen to the difference between the two versions. Video #2::

★ Be sure to watch on full screen. In the lower right corner of the video, click the full-screen icon:

Video #2: Pavana No. 2 (Luis Milán) Conventional vs Campanella Fingering



Interestingly, in the original vihuela tablature from his *Libro de música de vihuela de mano intitulado El maestro* (1536), Luis Milán does not finger the scales as campanellas. Example 5a:



Instead, he uses what looks almost identical to the standard, unimaginative fingering shown in Example #3. But the important difference is that most likely he executed it with the intention of making the choral-like counterpoint crystal clear and connecting the voices. I have notated it below on two staves so you can clearly see the voice leading. Voice 1 is in red, voice 2 in purple, voice 3 in blue, and voice 4 in brown. Example #5:

Example #5. *Pavana No. 1* (Luis Milán) m35-42:

This style of fingering used by Milán preserves the choral-like counterpoint of the four voices.

Be sure to damp the open strings to preserve the scalar lines.

Note: Milán's fingering would be slightly different since the 3rd string of the vihuela was tuned to F#. But the effect would be identical to this fingering.

The passage, written on two staves for clarity, is in 4 voices. They are color-coded:

Red=soprano

Purple=alto

Blue=tenor

Brown=bass

35

Hold F in bass voice

Hold C in bass voice

Damp--

38

G's are doubled. Only play one G.

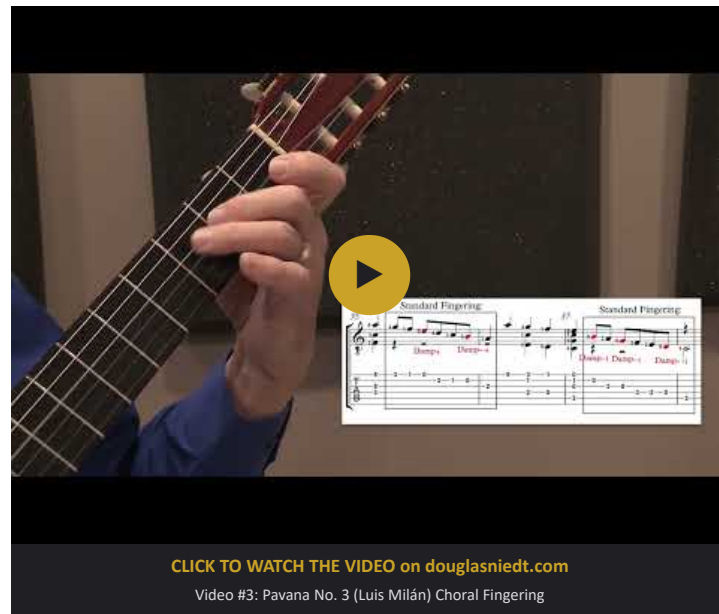
Lift low G as you play open D to keep the bass line clean.

Also, this is an improved fingering for the bass line. Use 4-3-4 to keep the line legato. Hopping the 3rd finger 3-3-3 as in Example #3, chops up the line.

Watch me demonstrate this choral-style fingering. Video #3:

★ Be sure to watch on full screen. In the lower right corner of the video, click the full-screen icon:

Video #3: *Pavana No. 3 (Luis Milán) Choral Fingering*



So, which fingering do we use? Milan's fingering, which emphasizes the clarity of the counterpoint, or the flashy campanella fingering? Some would say one should do what the composer indicated. But what sounds best on the vihuela, lute, or other early instruments will not always sound best on the modern classical guitar. In the end, as with so many things musical, choose whichever sounds best to you.

Non-scalar passages

Passages do not have to be in step-by-step scalar progression to be played in campanella style. Here is a non-scalar or non-linear passage with conventional fingering. Example #6a:

Example #6a. A non-scalar or non-linear passage with conventional fingering:

Here is the same passage fingered in campanella style. Example #6b:

Example #6b. A non-scalar or non-linear passage with campanella fingering:

Watch me demonstrate and listen to this very delightful effect. Video #4:

★ Be sure to watch on full screen. In the lower right corner of the video, click the full-screen icon:

Video #4: Non-Linear or Non-Scalar Passage—Conventional vs Campanella Fingering

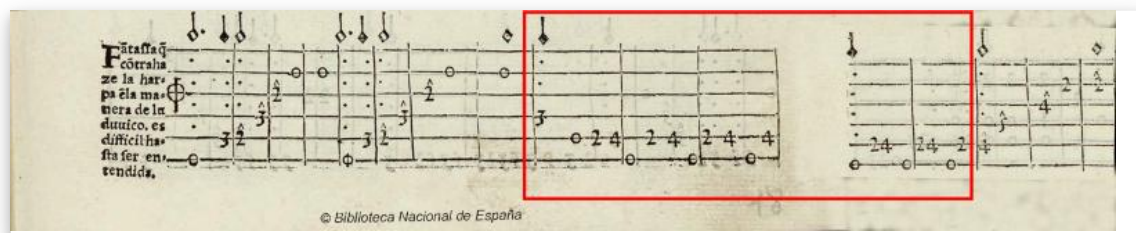
Fantasia No. 10 (Alonso Mudarra)

Let's look at a more striking example. Alonso Mudarra included *Fantasia No. 10* in his *Tres libros de musica en cifras para vihuela* published in 1546. Mudarra adds the descriptive text "que contrahace la harpa en la manera de Luduvico (that imitates the harp in the style of Luduvico)". Mudarra's intent was to imitate the music of harpist Luduvico el de Arpe, who served King Ferdinand II of Aragon. . Luduvico (as spelled by Mudarra) is also seen spelled as Ludovico and Lodovico.

In the *Fantasia*, Mudarra imitates the chromatic dissonances common to Luduvico's harp style. The *Fantasia No 10* is different from any other piece of the period and Mudarra, being very aware of its unique quality and knowing it would sound strange to 16th-century ears,

cautions the player: "From here to near the end there are some dissonant notes; played well, they are not displeasing." He also informs us that "It's difficult until fully understood."

Here is Mudarra's original vihuela tablature for measures 1-16. (By the way, Mudarra's tab is the reverse of modern tab—the bottom line is the 1st string, the top line is the 6th string.) The measures outlined in red are the ones where campanella fingering could be applied. Example #7a:



Here it is in modern standard notation and modern tab. As with the Milán *Pavana*, the examples of the *Fantasia* in this technique tip use standard guitar tuning instead of vihuela tuning (3rd string tuned down to F#). I find the standard tuning makes the piece easier to play and is more conducive to the use of campanella fingerings. Example #7:

Example #7. *Fantasia No. 10* (Alonso Mudarra) measures 1-16

This is the standard and modern tab notation translated from Mudarra's original tablature version.
 Note: This modern tab version is in standard tuning. Mudarra's tab is slightly different since the 3rd string of the vihuela was tuned to F#.

1

Campanella fingering could be applied here

9

14

NOTE: most modern editions of the *Fantasia* halve the note values and accordingly place the bar lines at wider intervals like this. Example #8:

Example #8. *Fantasia No. 10* (Alonso Mudarra)

This is a common modern transcription of the opening measures. The note values are halved. However, the new placement of the bar lines does not communicate the true metrical accent of the music as notated by Mudarra in his tablature.

The image shows a musical score for Example #8, *Fantasia No. 10* by Alonso Mudarra. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system shows measures 1-3, and the second system shows measures 4-6. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The first system has a measure number '1' above the first measure. The second system has a measure number '4' above the first measure. The tablature is written on a six-line staff with letters T, A, B, and numbers 0, 2, 3, 4. The modern transcription uses bar lines that do not align with the original metrical accents.

However, the new placement of the bar lines does not communicate the true metrical accent of the music as notated by Mudarra in his tablature. Mudarra writes the music with the beats clearly grouped in twos. The modern editions usually group them in fours. Performing the piece with Mudarra's metrical accents in groups of two gives the piece a more emphatic and energetic feel.

Now, let's look at the opening eight measures as fingered by Mudarra. Example #9:

Example #9. *Fantasia No. 10* (Alonso Mudarra) measures 1-16

As fingered by Mudarra*

This is the standard and modern tab notation translated from Mudarra's original tablature version.

*Note: This modern tab version is in standard tuning. Mudarra's tab is slightly different since the 3rd string of the vihuela was tuned to F#. And for the same reason, Mudarra's left-hand fingering would also be slightly different as well.

Campanella Section

Not bad at all. As I note in the example, to achieve some semblance of a harp in measures 9-13, the 3rd-string A must be held through, the D#'s must be held for two beats, and the open E's must be allowed to ring freely.

But look at this fingering which uses campanella fingering to the max. Now it really sounds like a harp. Example #10:

Example #10. *Fantasia No. 10* (Alonso Mudarra) measures 1-16

1 Full campanella fingering for measures 9-13:

Campanella Section

Allow ALL the notes to ring together.
DO NOT LIFT ANY FINGER!

9 *p i p i m p i m p i m i m p i m p i m p*

Alternative fingering

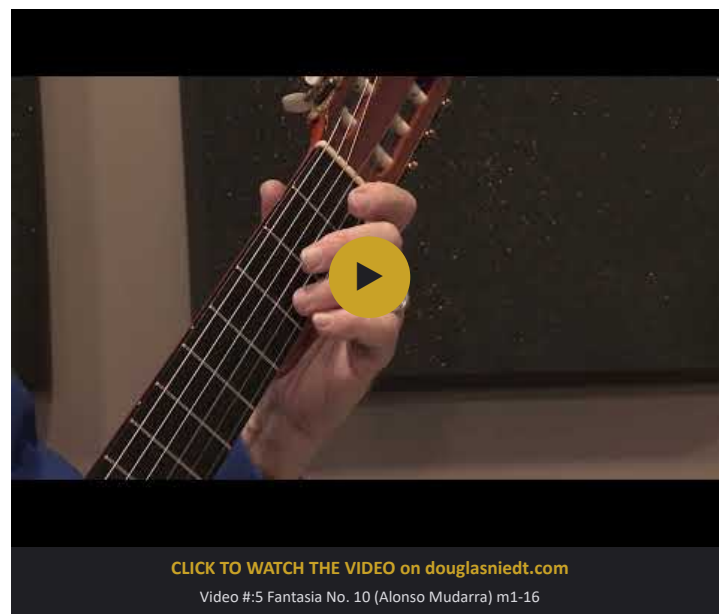
14 IV //

Watch me demonstrate Mudarra's fingering and the full campanella fingering. The difference is striking. Video #5:

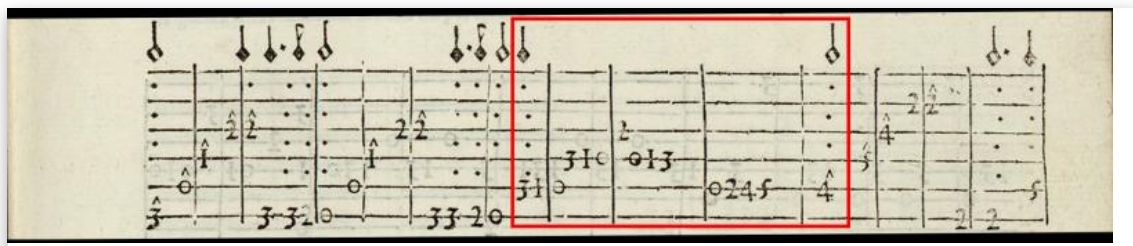
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Video #:5 *Fantasia No. 10* (Alonso Mudarra) m1-16

Video 5 *Fantasia No. 10* (Alonso Mudarra) m1-16



Here is another passage (the highlighted red box) from the *Fantasia* that is also well-suited to campanella fingering. However, Mudarra uses conventional scalar fingering. Example 11A:



Here is the passage (m68-80) in modern notation. This is the standard non-campanella fingering used by most guitarists today. Example 11:

Example #11. *Fantasia No. 10* (Alonso Mudarra) measures 68-80.
Standard non-campanella fingering:

Potential campanella phrase.
Standard fingering (non-campanella).

One could posit that the vihuela, strung with pairs of double strings (like a modern 12-string guitar) and played in a reverberant space gives the impression of the notes ringing together in a resonant manner. But on the modern guitar, I think we can do much better in our quest to imitate the harp of Luduvico by using campanella fingering. Example #12:

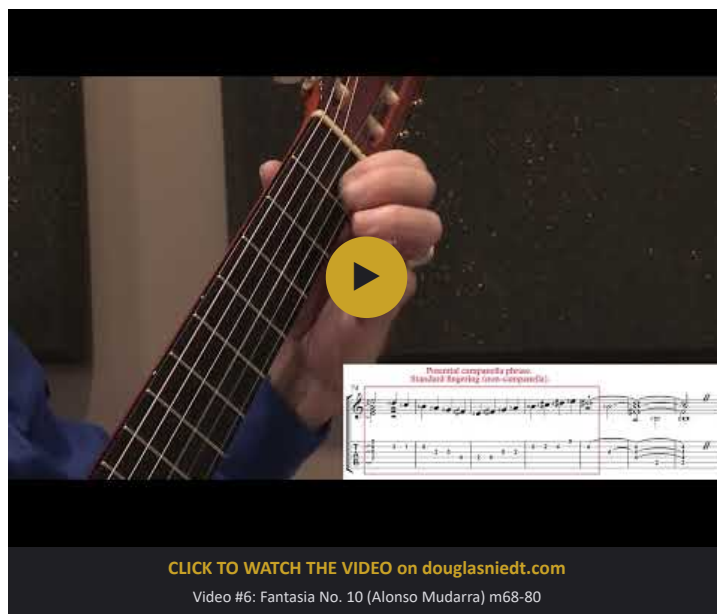
Example #12. *Fantasia No. 10* (Alonso Mudarra) measures 68-80.
Campanella fingering:

Campanella fingering. Do not lift a finger until you must.

Watch me demonstrate the two fingerings and listen to the stunning difference. Video #6:

★ Be sure to watch on full screen. In the lower right corner of the video, click the full-screen icon:

Video #6: *Fantasia No. 10 (Alonso Mudarra) m68-80*



My Lady Hunsdon's Puffe (John Dowland)

Composer/lutenist John Dowland's *My Lady Hunsdons Allmand* (or *My Lady Hunsdons Puffe*, or *Lady Hunsdon's Puffe*, or *my Lady Hunsdons Allmande* and maybe a few other spellings) has this passage which most guitarists play with this conventional fingering. By the way, the notes and rhythms vary in early editions of the piece. The version you have or have heard may differ slightly from this one.

Example #13:

Example #13. *My Lady Hunsdon's Puffe* (John Dowland) measures 12-15.
Standard fingering (non-campanella):

12 Tuning: ⑥=D

Standard fingering (non-campanella):

Tablature (T, A, B lines):

Measure	T	A	B
12	0	0	5
13	0	0	5
14	0	0	5
15	0	0	5

Potential campanella phrase.
Standard fingering (non-campanella)

14

Potential campanella phrase. Standard fingering (non-campanella):

Tablature (T, A, B lines):

Measure	T	A	B
14	4	5	5
15	5	4	5

Nothing is wrong with the conventional fingering. Indeed, Dowland's lute tablature indicates a similar sound. But on the modern classical guitar, the passage really comes to life with campanella fingering. Example #14:

Example #14. *My Lady Hunsdon's Puffe* (John Dowland) measures 12-15.
With campanella fingering:

12 Tuning: ⑥=D

Keep 4th finger down

With campanella fingering.

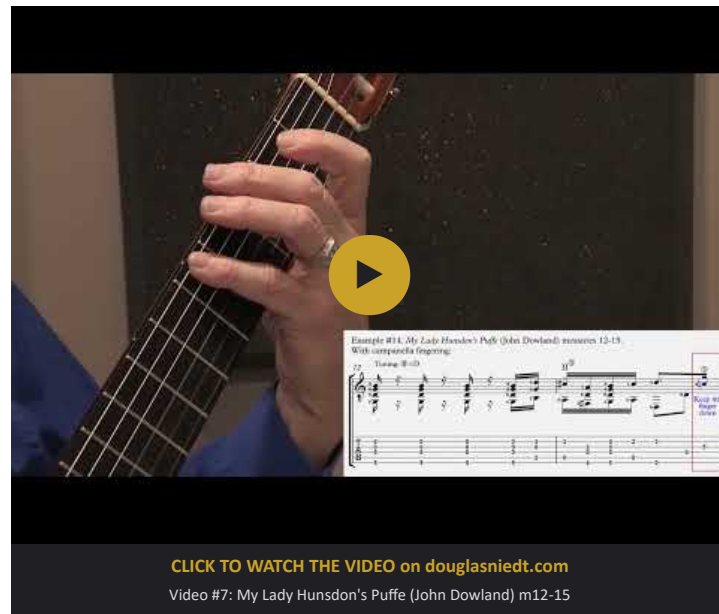
14

Keep 4th finger down on 3rd-string C natural

Watch me demonstrate and listen to the difference between the non-campanella and campanella fingerings. Video #7:

★ Be sure to watch on full screen. In the lower right corner of the video, click the full-screen icon:

Video #7: *My Lady Hunsdon's Puffe* (John Dowland) m12-15



CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com

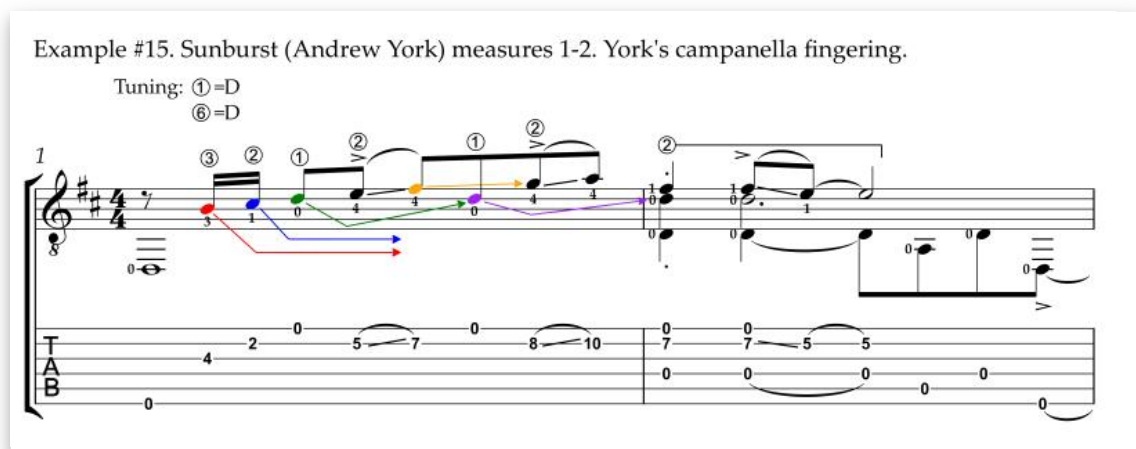
Video #7: *My Lady Hunsdon's Puffe* (John Dowland) m12-15

Usage of the Campanella Effect in Modern, Contemporary Guitar Music

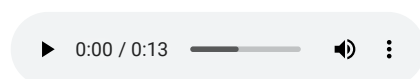
Contemporary guitarist-composers such as Andrew York, Nikita Koshkin, Roland Dyens, Carlo Domeniconi, Leo Brouwer and many others specify campanella fingering in their compositions, often with altered tunings. Here is the campanella effect Andrew York specifies in the opening measures of his famous piece, *Sunburst*. Example #15:

Example #15. *Sunburst* (Andrew York) measures 1-2. York's campanella fingering.

Tuning: ①=D
⑥=D



Listen to guitarist Christopher Parkening play the opening phrase.



0:00 / 0:13

END OF PART 1.

Coming up in part 2:

- How campanella fingering can make a passage easier to play.
- Left-hand technique and fingering
- Right-hand fingering
- When to use the campanella effect