The Campanella Effect, Part 2 (conclusion)

By Douglas Niedt

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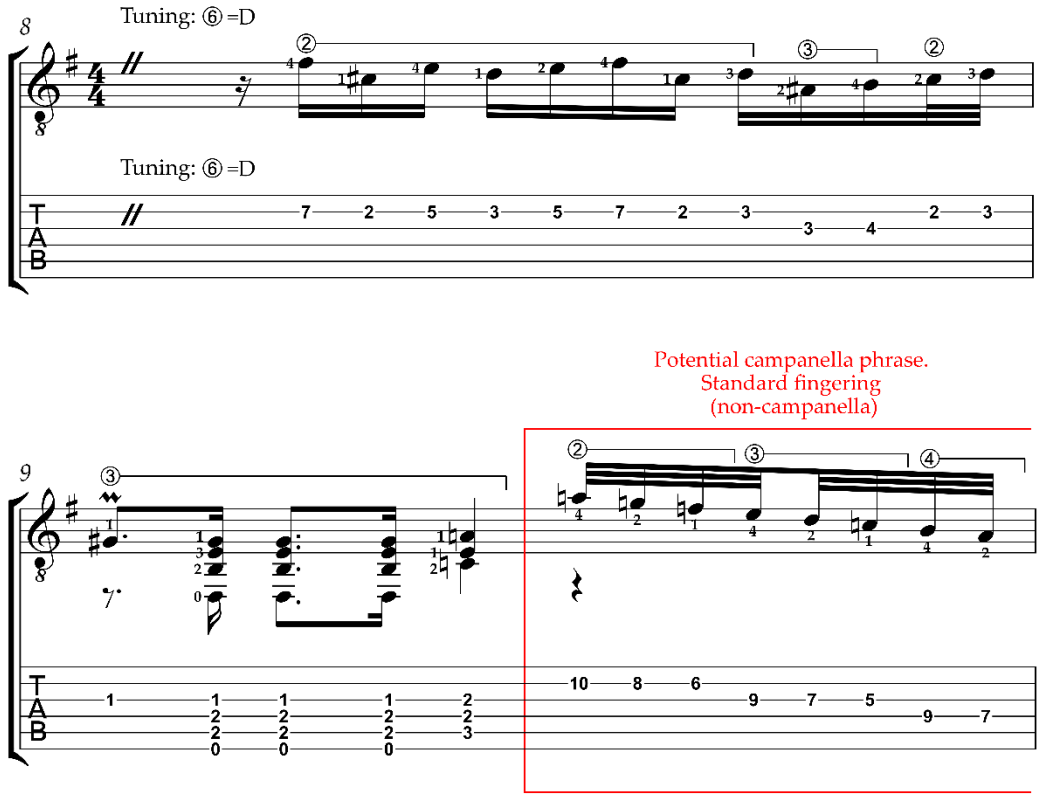
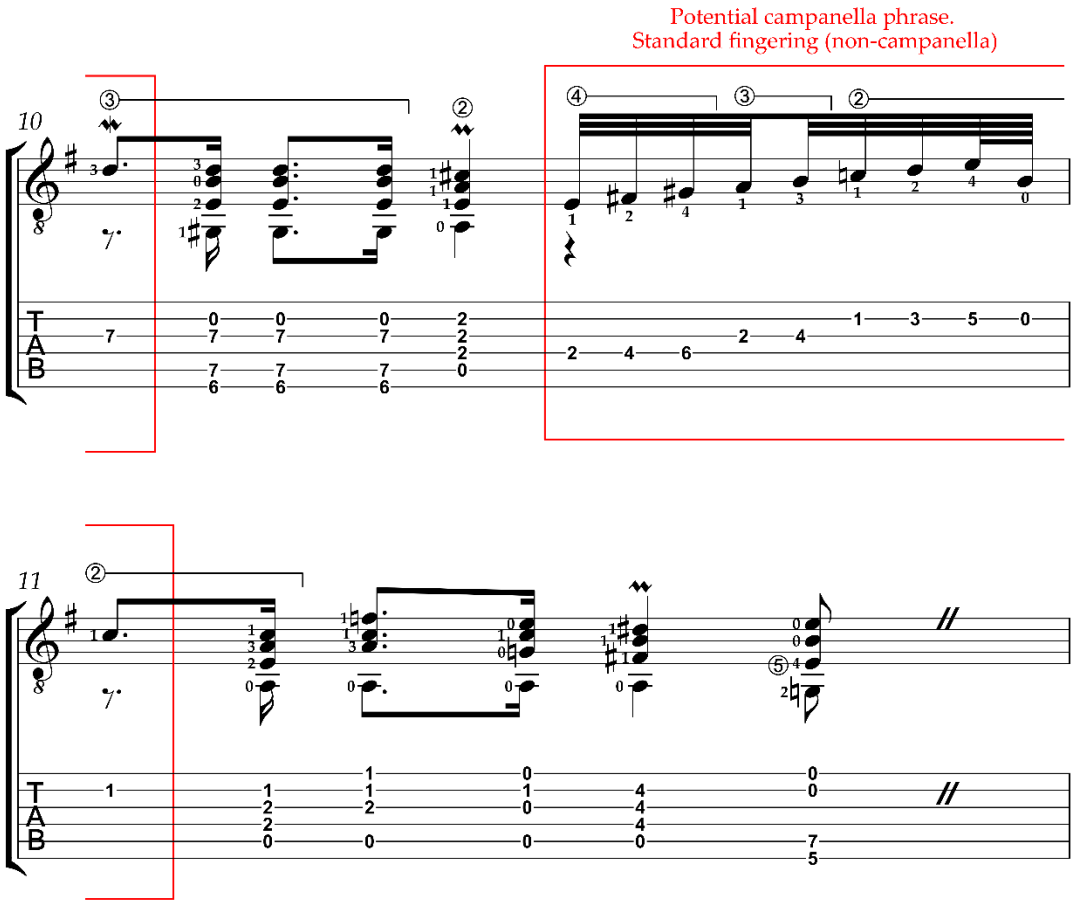
Sometimes, campanella fingering can also make a passage easier to play

Fast Scales

The *Preludio* or *Prelude* or *Präludium* or *Praeludio* or *Præludio* to the *Lute Suite No. 1 BWV 996 (in e minor)* by J.S. Bach contains several fast scales. Depending on the tempo at which one chooses to play the *Preludio*, and whether one chooses to play it in strict rhythm or freely, those scales can be difficult to play. Let's look at measures 8-11. Example #16:

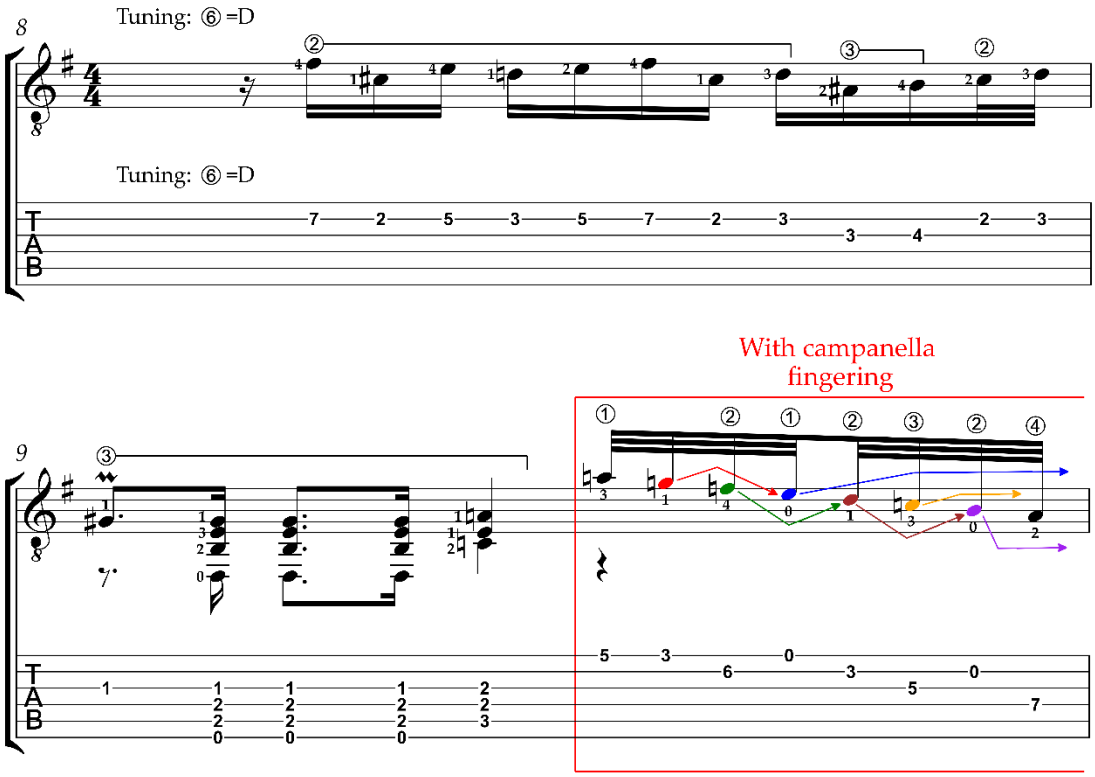
Example #16. *Praeludio* (J.S. Bach) measures 8-11. From *Lute Suite No. 1 BWV 996 (in e minor)*
With standard fingering:

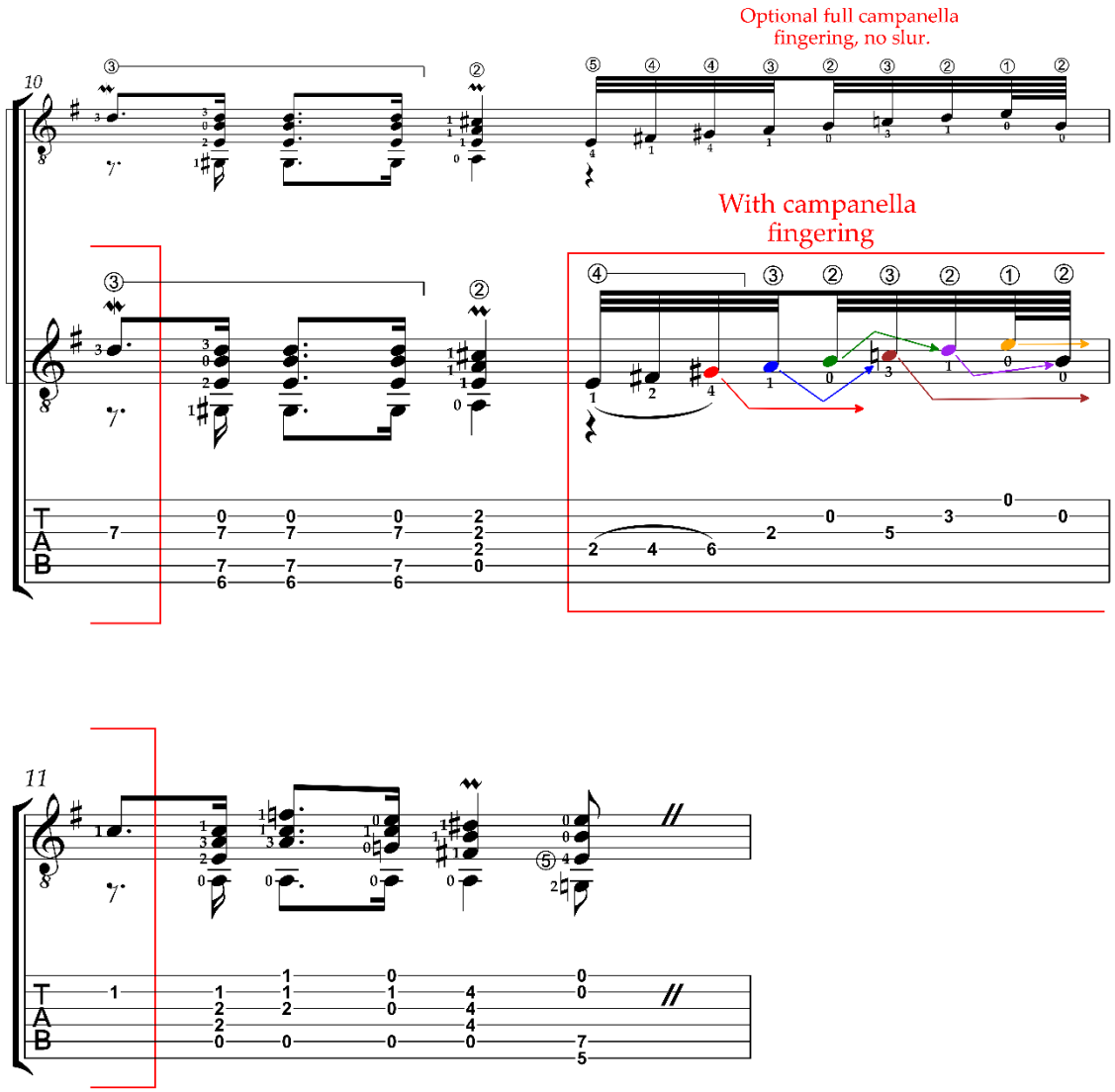




But for some players, playing the scales with campanella fingering may be easier, especially at high speed. The downside is that for some, the stretches may be difficult. Example #17:

Example #17. *Praeludio* (J.S. Bach) measures 8-11. From *Lute Suite No. 1 BWV 996 (in e minor)*
With campanella fingering:



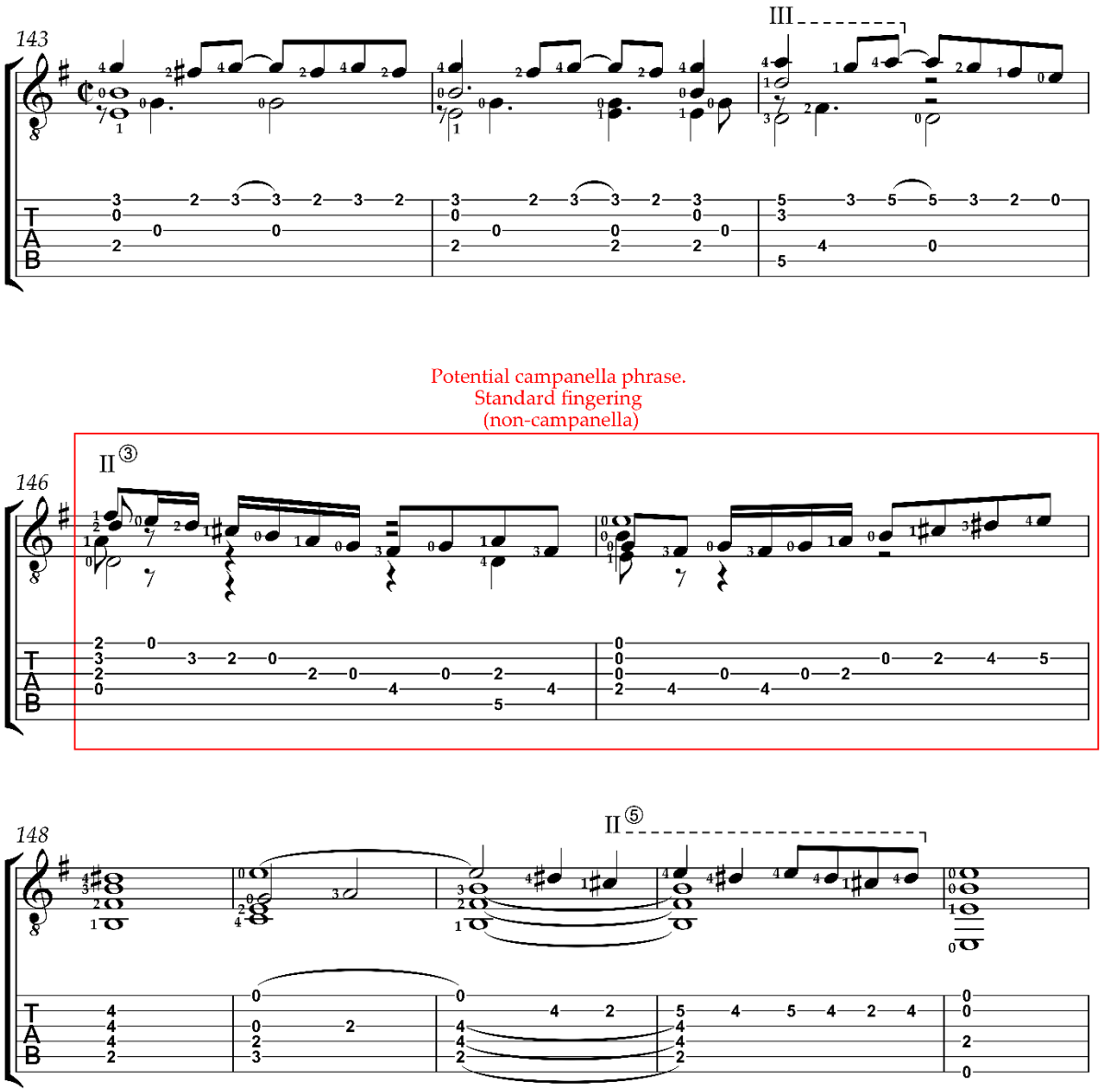


Watch me demonstrate both of these fingerings. Video #8:

Fantasia No. 10 (Alonso Mudarra) Revisited for Speed

For another example let's look again at the Mudarra *Fantasia*. At the end of the piece, as we hit measure #143, things are ripping along and Mudarra hits us with a final climatic virtuoso scale in measure #149. Here is the standard, non-campanella fingering. Example #18:

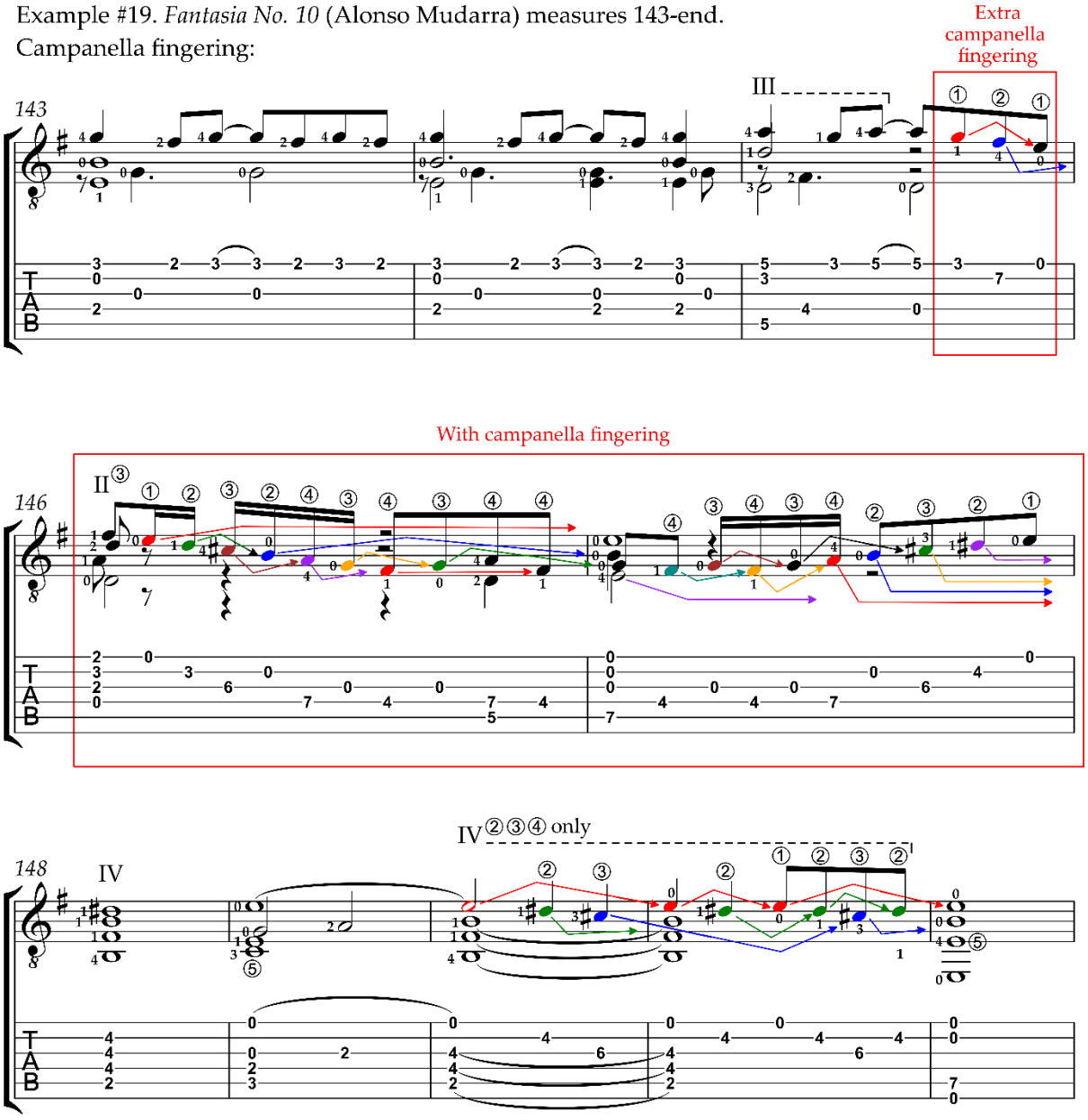
Example #18. *Fantasia No. 10* (Alonso Mudarra) measures 143-end.
Standard non-campanella fingering:



Once again, nothing is wrong with that fingering. It sounds impressive. But it does require that one be able to play fast scales.

Now look at the same passage fingered in campanella style. Example #19:

Example #19. *Fantasia No. 10* (Alonso Mudarra) measures 143-end.
Campanella fingering:



Many guitarists find the campanella version to be easier to play at high speed than the plucked scales. Plus, it sounds magical at any speed in its harp-like resonance. And, it maintains that resonance to the very end.

Listen to me demonstrate the two versions. Video #9:

LEFT-HAND TECHNIQUE

For the campanella effect to work, all the notes of the campanella passage must ring freely against each other as long as possible. As I demonstrate in the videos, maintaining the sustain of fretted notes often necessitates difficult stretching. Keeping open strings ringing often requires atypical positioning of the hand, wrist, and elbow. Playing on the absolute tips of the fingers is a must—keep the left-hand fingernails short.

Your success with campanella fingerings will also be dependent on the shape and width of your fingertips. Players with thin fingers and tapered fingertips will find campanella fingerings to be relatively easy and may not need to make significant changes in their hand, wrist, or elbow positions. Those with wider fingers and less-tapered fingertips will need to make larger changes in their positioning to prevent their fingers from damping strings.

In most cases, the fingers must drop onto the strings vertically. If the tip joint leans back, the back of the finger will damp the adjacent string, ruining the campanella effect.

Your guitar can also help or hinder your execution of campanella fingerings. If the action (the height of the strings above the frets) of your guitar is high, it can be difficult to play a campanella passage without damping the open strings.

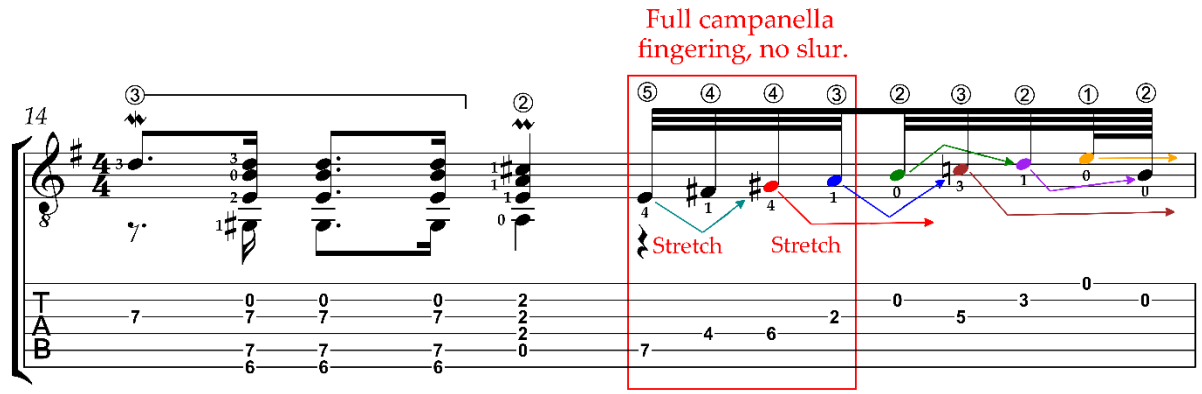
A FEW THOUGHTS ABOUT LEFT-HAND FINGERING

Sometimes a campanella passage can be fingered in either a lower position (closer to the 1st fret) or a higher position (closer to the 12th fret). It will be much easier to play without accidentally damping strings in the lower position since the strings are closer to the frets. On the other hand, any difficult stretches will be easier in the upper position since the frets are closer together. If a passage can be played in two different positions, try both. See which works best for you.

The 4th finger is the thinnest and most tapered at the tip. Players with large fingers will usually encounter fewer problems if they use the 4th finger instead of the thicker and less tapered 3rd finger whenever possible.

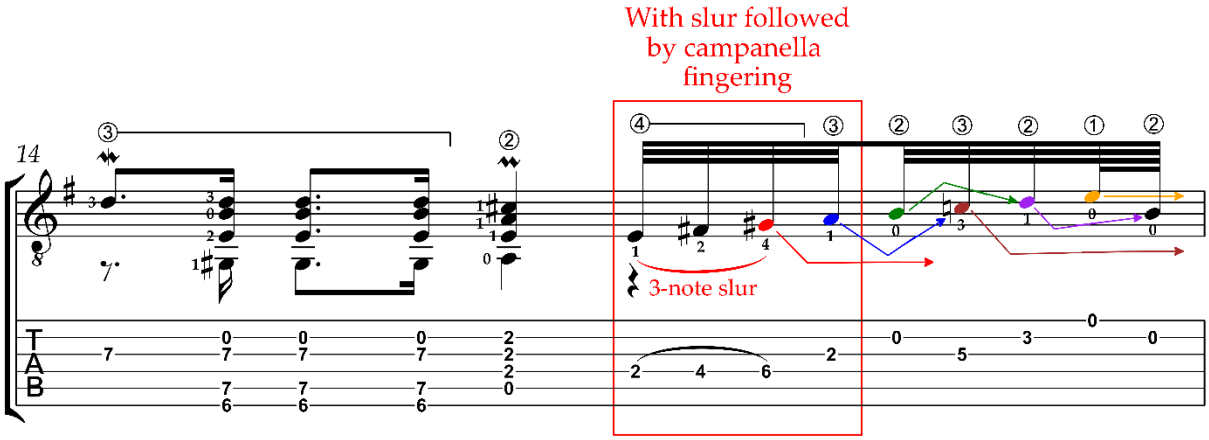
The addition of slurs (hammer-ons or pull-offs) at the beginning or within a campanella passage is sometime preferable to plucking the notes. For example, the campanella scale in measure 14 of the Bach *Praeludio* could be played with full campanella fingering. Example #20:

Example #20. *Praeludio* (J.S. Bach) measure 14. From *Lute Suite No. 1 BWV 996 (in e minor)*



But doing the two large stretches plus the shift for the first four notes is a little unwieldly. Instead, fingering the first three notes as a three-note slur preserves the flow of the notes and makes the passage easier and more dependable to play. Example #21:

Example #21. *Praeludio* (J.S. Bach) measure 14. From *Lute Suite No. 1 BWV 996 (in e minor)*



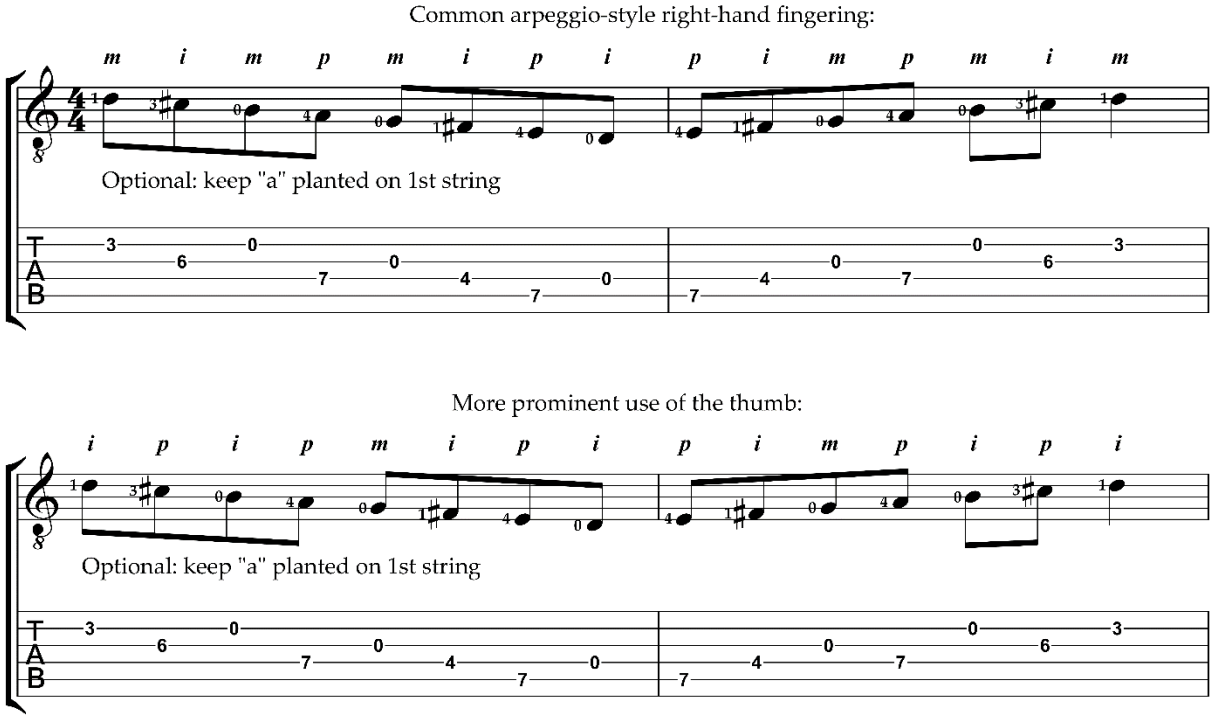
RIGHT-HAND FINGERING

For the campanella effect to sound its best, it must be played effortlessly and with fluidity by the right hand, often at a fast tempo. Usually, a combination of "p", "i", and "m" works best. The thumb aids in string crossing and makes the patterns fast and easy to play. But be careful not to accent the thumb. It

usually should blend with the fingers. The "a" finger is used occasionally but try to avoid instances of "ma" or "am". Both are more difficult to play fast than "ia" and "ai" or "im" and "mi".

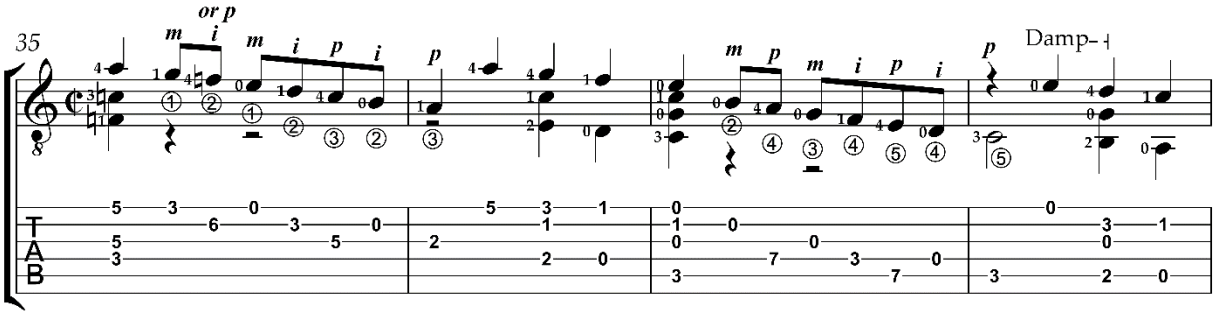
Here are two approaches to the right-hand fingering of a D-major scale in campanella style. Example #22:

Example #22. D-major scale in campanella style. Right-hand fingering options:



And here is a suggested right-hand fingering for the campanella scales in our Milán *Pavana No. 1*. Example #23:

Example #23. *Pavana No. 1* (Luis Milán) m35-42. Right-hand fingering:



Watch me demonstrate the right-hand fingering for campanella passages. Video #10

WHEN TO USE THE CAMPANELLA EFFECT

Sound is the first consideration

Because the campanella effect is so distinctive in its sound, it should not be used indiscriminately. It distracts rather than enhances when used in the wrong setting. But when used well, it sounds great. Plus, it can enhance other musical factors such as interpretation.

For example, the scale passages of the Bach *Praeludio* above, sound great with or without campanella fingering. However, this *Praeludio* is in two parts. The part I quote above is the first part which Bach marks "Passaggio". This is followed by a second part marked "Presto" which is a fugato (a fugue-like piece that is not a complete or strict fugue). Playing the pseudo-improvisatory *Passaggio* in a fairly free rhythmic style with campanella fingerings in all the scales provides a delightful contrast to the more stringent musical style that follows in the *Presto* fugato with its linear counterpoint in distinct voices played in even rhythm.

The Mudarra *Fantasia* and harp-like passages in other pieces certainly come alive with campanella treatment.

Ease of playing

I consider this to be an added benefit of campanella fingering rather than a reason to use it. Again, sound always comes first. You would not want to choose to play a passage with campanella fingering just because it is easier to play that way or that you can play it faster with campanella fingering. It must sound good in the passage and fit in with the context of the piece as a whole.

Historical authenticity

If a piece is a transcription, especially from vihuela, lute, or early guitar tablature, some players insist on authenticity. They follow the original tablature as closely as possible in an attempt to capture the composer's original intent. Certainly, that is always the correct first step.

However, if one sticks to the original score as closely as possible but the passage or piece doesn't sound good on the modern classical guitar, we have a problem. Either the piece is not suitable for the guitar, or changes need to be made to adapt the piece properly to the modern classical guitar.

My point is that even if campanella fingerings are not indicated for a passage in the tablature of an early-music piece, sometimes their use on the modern classical guitar can be a very positive addition (as I believe they are in the Milán, Mudarra, and Bach examples above). But as always, to each their own. If you prefer a non-campanella fingering for a passage, that is fine. You are the final arbiter. Play what sounds best to you.

SUMMARY

The campanella effect has a very unique sound. When used appropriately, it can bring a passage alive with its stunning resonance. Depending on whether any difficult stretches are required, it can sometimes make a passage easier to play. Campanella passages sound impressive and may be used in a wide variety of musical styles.