

How to play Canon in D (Pachelbel)

Easy Fingerstyle Guitar arrangement by Damon Winter

[The following is a transcript of my original tutorial video]

Hi, I'm wedding guitarist Damon Winter Today we look at my arrangement of Canon in D by Johann Pachelbel. This much loved wedding standard is instantly recognizable, making it a good choice for non-wedding gigs as well. You can see my performance of Canon in D and download the TAB, notation and Sibelius file at www.EasyFingerstyleGuitar.com.

PART A

The key signature contains no sharps or flats: we are in the key of C major. The time signature is 4 – 4, or, four beats per bar where each beat equals a crotchet. The tempo indication is *andante sostenuto*. The former indicates an easy walking pace; think of a bride walking down the aisle, and the latter indicates that notes should be held wherever possible to create a sustained or flowing effect. The first four bars making up part A are arpeggios of the chord sequence repeated throughout. The chords are C major, G major, A minor, E minor, F major, C major, F major and G major. The melodic movement here is in the bass, so bring that out clearly with rest stroke thumb. Notice you have barre chords in bars three and four. Both are F major held for the first two beats of each bar. Both contain a note they share with the chords that immediately follow them. That note is 'C' located on the first fret of the second string. The key to legato chord changes in these two bars is to make sure the 'C' note continues uninterrupted from the second half of beat two into the first half of beat three.

PART B

In part B the melodic line is found in the top part; that is the part with stems pointing upwards. Try to highlight and sustain the melody notes so that they stand out clearly supported by a somewhat quieter arpeggio middle voice and that famous repeated bass line. Rhythmically we can see the top line is almost exclusively quavers. We can count the top line in any bar of part B like so: "1 and 2 and 3 and 4." When practicing the bass part separately it's also a good idea to count using quavers. This becomes mandatory in bar 13 where a slight rhythmic variation in the bass tells us that we have now heard the main theme of Canon and D and are heading towards a variation on that theme in the next section.

PART C

In part C the very distinctive solo section begins. Our smallest rhythmic unit is now the semiquaver and there are plenty of them. Our tempo has not increased but the effect is of heightened movement and excitement enhanced by the ascending and descending slurs also known as hammer-ons and pull-offs. Take care with these slurs to keep them rhythmically even. I have noticed a tendency in this section for students to favor the second note and pairs of semiquavers linked with a slur creating a short l-o-n-g effect. Prevent this by carefully counting and tapping and clapping each bar. It sounds like this: "1 e and ah 2 e and ah..." Your metronome is a willing servant to help you get this 8 bar section up to speed so use it.

PART D

Part D returns us to a predominantly quaver rhythm in the top line, but the main melody is not repeated verbatim. Instead it is expanded and features semi-quaver filigree in bars 30 and 32 reminiscent of the previous solo section. We feel a sense of homecoming and the inevitability of returning to the tonic from bar 37 when

once again the melodic line returns to the bass. We finish with a strummed C major chord at the eighth fret.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Canon in D is a must have piece for all wedding guitarists, but its universal appeal should make it essential for all finger style guitarists. It is commonly used as the processional music at weddings and if you should find yourself playing Canon I in D for this reason I recommend memorizing it first. That way you can keep your eyes on the bride as she walks down the aisle and gracefully wrap up the piece a moment or two after she arrives at the altar. You may find yourself deleting sections on the fly if her walk down the aisle is very short. Conversely you may find yourself repeating sections if it is a long walk. I have done both on multiple occasions. Happily the structure of Canon in D lends itself to such adaptation. Have fun with my arrangement. You can download the TAB, notation and Sibelius file and watch my performance www.EasyFingerstyleGuitar.com

Feel free to like, leave comments and subscribe for more videos like this. Until next time I'm wedding guitarist Damon Winter. Thank you for watching.