

CHAPTER 5: THE MIRROR

Style: Scofield Ballad | **Key:** Ab Major | **Tempo:** 60 BPM | **Time:** 4/4

OVERVIEW

"Sparse, haunting voicings with wide spreads."

The Mirror is the emotional center of the Trio Tunes collection. At 60 BPM, every note matters. The "mirror" concept refers to the contrary motion counterpoint in Chorus 3—when one voice ascends, the other descends, creating a reflective, palindromic effect.

Playing Tip: Use volume swells; control the decay. Let each note breathe.

THE FORM

16-bar AABA form:

A Section (Bars 1-8):

Abmaj9	Fm9	Dbmaj7#11	Ebsus Eb7	
Abmaj9	Bbm9	Gbmaj7	Cm7 Fm7	

B Section (Bars 9-12):

Bmaj7#11	Emaj7	Bbm7	Eb7alt	
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A' Section (Bars 13-16):

Abmaj9	Fm11	Dbmaj9 Dbm	Abmaj7/Eb	
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Key Harmonic Features

1. **Wide voicings:** Intervals of 9ths, 10ths, and 11ths
2. **Distant relations:** Bmaj7#11 and Emaj7 in the bridge (tritone away from home)
3. **Modal interchange:** Gbmaj7 borrowed from Ab Dorian
4. **Melancholy turn:** Dbmaj9 → Dbm(maj7) in bar 15

SCALE PALETTE

Chord	Primary Scale	Emotional Quality
Abmaj9	Ab Lydian	Open, spacious
Fm9	F Dorian	Melancholy but not dark
Dbmaj7#11	Db Lydian	Floating, dreamlike
Gbmaj7	Gb Lydian	Distant, introspective
Bmaj7#11	B Lydian	Ethereal, otherworldly
Emaj7	E Lydian	Bright but distant
Eb7alt	Eb Altered	Tension seeking resolution
Dbm(maj7)	Db Melodic Minor	The melancholy turn

The Scofield Ballad Sound

Scofield's ballads feature: - **Wide intervals** that create space - **Sustained notes** with volume swells - **Chromatic voice leading** within slow-moving harmony - **Silence** as an equal partner to sound

TRIAD PAIR VOCABULARY

Chord	Stable	Color	Spread Effect
Abmaj9	Ab Major	Eb Major	5-7-9 upper structure
Fm9	Ab Major	Eb Major	Relative major color
Dbmaj7#11	Db Major	G Diminished	#11 tension
Emaj7	E Major	B Major	Pure Lydian
Eb7alt	Db Major	A Major	Tritone pair

Wide Interval Cells

Over Abmaj9, practice these wide cells:

Eb (5) up to C (3, octave up) = minor 6th
C (3) down to Eb (5, octave down) = major 10th
G (7) up to Bb (9) = minor 3rd, but voiced wide

THE THREE CHORUSES

Chorus 1: Lyrical Atmosphere (Version A)

Concept: Sparse, breathing phrases with maximum sustain

- **Bars 1-4:** Whole notes and half notes, minimal movement
- **Volume swells:** Fade in each phrase, decay naturally
- **Motif:** Descending perfect 5th (Eb → Ab) answered by ascending minor 6th
- **Bridge:** Ascending major 7th leap (G# → G) creates ethereal tension
- **Bars 13-16:** Return to opening material; fade on final Ab pedal

Dynamic Curve:

pp ——— mp — mf ——— mp ——— pp
 Bar 1 Bar 9 Bar 13 Bar 16

Chorus 2: Wide Interval Lines (Version B)

Concept: Scofield-style intervallic playing

- **Major 7ths:** Eb up to D (over Abmaj9)
- **Minor 9ths:** Ab up to A (chromatic tension)
- **Tritones:** G to Db (over Dbmaj7#11)

Bar-by-bar targets: | Bar | Chord | Wide Interval | |:---:|:---:|:---:| | 1 | Abmaj9 | Eb → D (major 7th) | | 3 | Dbmaj7#11 | G → Db (tritone) | | 9 | Bmaj7#11 | D# → D (octave drop) | | 12 | Eb7alt | Gb → F → Eb (chromatic descent) |

Chorus 3: Mirror Counterpoint (Version C)

Concept: Contrary motion—true "mirror" reflection

The Mirror Technique: - When the **top voice ascends**, the **bottom voice descends** - When the **top voice descends**, the **bottom voice ascends** - Voices cross at key moments (Bar 9) - Voices converge on unison, then spread to octave (ending)

Texture Map: | Section | Top Voice | Bottom Voice | |:---:|:---:|:---:| | Bars 1-4 | Sustained whole notes | Contrary quarter notes | | Bar 9 | Descends below bottom | Ascends above top | | Bar 15 | C → Cb (chromatic) | Ab → A (chromatic, contrary) | | Bar 16 | Converge on Eb | Spread to Ab octave |

VOICING REFERENCE

Wide Spread Voicings

Abmaj9: 4-x-5-5-4-3 (open G string rings)
 Fm9: x-8-8-8-9-8 (standard shape)
 Dbmaj7#11: x-4-3-5-6-x (G natural in melody)
 Gbmaj7: 2-x-3-3-2-x (root position)

Bridge Voicings (Distant Keys)

Bmaj7#11: x-2-1-3-4-x (B Lydian voicing)
 Emaj7: x-7-6-8-9-x (wide E Lydian)
 Bbm7: x-1-3-1-2-x (shell)
 Eb7alt: x-6-5-6-7-x (cluster)

Ending Voicing

Abmaj7/Eb: x-6-5-5-4-4 (Ab over Eb pedal)
 0-6-5-5-4-x (with open E as enharmonic Fb!)

TECHNIQUE: VOLUME SWELLS

The Basic Swell

1. Pick the note with volume at **0**
2. Slowly roll volume up to **7-8** (not full)
3. Let the note decay naturally
4. Next note: repeat

Volume Control Options

- **Volume knob:** Most expressive, requires practice
- **Volume pedal:** Easier, less guitar-like
- **Picking dynamics:** Softest possible attack, let amp do the work

Practice Exercise

| Abmaj9 chord (whole note) |
Volume: 0 → 5 → 3 → 0 (over 4 beats)

PRACTICE ROUTINE

Week 1: Breathing

- [] Practice breathing with each phrase (literally breathe)
- [] Master volume swell technique
- [] Learn Version A at even slower tempo (40 BPM)

Week 2: Wide Intervals

- [] Drill major 7th intervals across the neck
- [] Practice tritone intervals
- [] Work on Version B targeting the wide leaps

Week 3: The Mirror

- [] Practice contrary motion scales (one hand up, one down)
- [] Isolate top voice of Version C
- [] Isolate bottom voice of Version C
- [] Combine at 40 BPM

Week 4: Emotional Expression

- [] Play through all three choruses
 - [] Record with reverb and evaluate
 - [] Develop your own rubato feel
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LISTENING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **John Scofield** — *Meant to Be* (his ballad playing)
 2. **Bill Frisell** — *Good Dog, Happy Man* (spacious, ambient)
 3. **Pat Metheny** — *One Quiet Night* (solo ballads)
 4. **Jim Hall** — *Concierto* (the master of ballad guitar)
 5. **Kenny Burrell** — *Midnight Blue* (warm, intimate)
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TONE TIPS

For The Mirror: - **Clean to edge-of-breakup**: Not distorted, but not sterile - **Reverb**: Plate or hall, medium decay - **Delay**: Optional, dotted-eighth for Metheny flavor - **EQ**: Roll off highs slightly, boost mids for warmth

COMMON PITFALLS

1. **Too many notes**: Silence is essential—don't fill every space
2. **Rushing**: At 60 BPM, subdivisions feel eternal—be patient
3. **Ignoring dynamics**: The loudest note should be mp at most
4. **Stiff rhythm**: Play rubato, breathe with the music

5. **Forgetting the mirror:** In Chorus 3, the contrary motion must be audible

THE MIRROR CONCEPT

The title refers to multiple reflections: 1. **Harmonic:** The B section "reflects" the A section from a distant key 2. **Melodic:** Phrases often mirror themselves (up then down) 3. **Contrapuntal:** Chorus 3's contrary motion is a literal mirror 4. **Emotional:** The introspective quality invites self-reflection

When playing this piece, imagine looking into still water—calm, deep, revealing.

SELF-EVALUATION

- ☐ Does every note have purpose?
 - ☐ Can I hear the mirror counterpoint clearly?
 - ☐ Am I using volume swells effectively?
 - ☐ Does the bridge feel "distant" harmonically?
 - ☐ Is there enough silence?
 - ☐ Does the music breathe?
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← **Sao Paulo Rain** | **Next: Bright Size Life 2** →
