

CHAPTER 11: CRYSTAL SILENCE

Style: ECM Ballad | **Key:** A Major | **Tempo:** 80 BPM | **Time:** 4/4

OVERVIEW

"Open string voicings high up the neck."

Crystal Silence captures the spacious, reverberant aesthetic of the ECM record label. The key of A allows rich open-string voicings, and the "campanella" technique creates a harp-like, ringing texture where notes sustain into each other.

Playing Tip: Let strings ring into each other (campanella). Less is more.

THE FORM

16-bar ballad form:

Amaj9	F#m11	Dmaj9	E/A	
Amaj9	C#m7	Bm9	Esus4 E7	
Fmaj7	Gmaj7	Amaj9	Dmaj7	
Bm11	E7sus4	Amaj9	Amaj9	

Key Harmonic Features

1. **Open strings:** A, E, B, D, G all used as pedals
2. **11th chords:** F#m11, Bm11 create suspension

3. **Modal interchange:** Fmaj7 (borrowed from A minor)

4. **Campanella:** Notes ring together like bells

SCALE PALETTE

Chord	Primary Scale	ECM Color
Amaj9	A Lydian	Open, floating
F#m11	F# Aeolian	Suspended, melancholy
Dmaj9	D Lydian	Bright neighbor
Bm9	B Dorian	Natural 6 (G#)
Fmaj7	F Lydian	Borrowed from minor
Gmaj7	G Lydian	Chromatic approach to A

The ECM Sound

ECM (Edition of Contemporary Music) recordings feature: - **Space and reverb** as compositional elements - **Quiet dynamics** (the loudest is mezzo-forte) - **Open voicings** with wide intervals - **Melodic simplicity** over harmonic sophistication

CAMPANELLA TECHNIQUE

What Is Campanella?

"Campanella" (Italian for "little bell") is a technique where **notes ring into each other**, creating overlapping sustain.

Normal playing:

Note 1: |=====
Note 2: |=====|
Note 3: |=====|

Campanella:

Note 1: |=====|
Note 2: |=====|
Note 3: |=====|

How to Achieve It

1. **Don't dampen strings** after picking
2. **Use different strings** for adjacent notes
3. **Let open strings ring** whenever possible
4. **Use the "harp" fingering** (no repeated strings)

Example (A major scale, campanella):

e	-----0--2--
B	-----2-----
G	---2-----
D	2-----
A	0-----
E	-----

Each note is on a different string, so they all ring together.

TRIAD PAIR VOCABULARY

Chord	Stable	Color	ECM Sound
Amaj9	A Major	B Major	Lydian, open
F#m11	F# Minor	A Major	Suspended
Dmaj9	D Major	E Major	Lydian
Bm9	D Major	E Major	Relative major

Open-String Triad Pairs

Over Amaj9, use triads with open strings:

A Major: A(open)-C#(string 2)-E(open)
 E Major: E(open)-G#(string 1)-B(open)

THE THREE CHORUSES

Chorus 1: Lyrical Sustain (Version A)

Concept: Long, breathing phrases with maximum sustain

- Whole notes and half notes predominantly
- Target notes should ring for their full value
- Use open strings as much as possible
- Dynamics: pp to mp maximum

Phrase Shape:

Bars 1-4: Ascending arch (building)
Bars 5-8: Descending release
Bars 9-12: Distant excursion (Fmaj7, Gmaj7)
Bars 13-16: Return and fade

Chorus 2: Campanella Arpeggios (Version B)

Concept: Arpeggiated lines using different strings for each note

- No repeated strings within a phrase
- Notes overlap and sustain
- Creates "harp" or "piano" effect
- Speed: moderate—focus on sustain, not velocity

Example Pattern (Amaj9):

e	-----	-0-----
B	-----	2-----
G	---	2-----
D	--	2-----
A	0-----	
E	-----	

Chorus 3: High Position + Open Strings (Version C)

Concept: Melody in high positions with open string drones

Texture: - **Drone:** Open A or E string sustained throughout - **Melody:** Frets 9-14 on strings 1-2

This creates a "sitar" effect—high melody over low drone.

VOICING REFERENCE

Open String Voicings

Amaj9: x-0-6-6-0-0 (open E, A ring)
F#m11: x-0-4-6-0-0 (A pedal)
Dmaj9: x-5-4-6-5-0 (high E rings)
E/A: x-0-2-1-0-0 (E over A bass)
Bm11: x-2-4-2-0-0 (open E)

High Position Voicings

Amaj9: x-12-11-13-12-0 (open high E)
Dmaj7: x-x-11-11-10-0 (high position with open E)

Campanella Chord Shapes

Amaj7: x-0-x-6-5-4 (notes on different strings)
Fmaj7: x-x-3-5-5-0 (open high E adds 7th)

PRACTICE ROUTINE

Week 1: Sustain

- [] Practice not dampening strings
- [] Work on smooth, slow right-hand technique
- [] Focus on clean, ringing tone

Week 2: Campanella

- [] Learn the A major scale in campanella fingering
- [] Practice arpeggios using different strings

- [] Work on Version B

Week 3: High Position

- [] Explore melody in positions 9-14
- [] Add open string drones
- [] Develop Version C

Week 4: Integration

- [] Play all three choruses
 - [] Record with reverb and evaluate
 - [] Focus on dynamics (never louder than mp)
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LISTENING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Ralph Towner** — *Solstice* (ECM guitar)
 2. **Bill Frisell** — *Good Dog, Happy Man* (open voicings)
 3. **Egberto Gismonti** — *Sol Do Meio Dia* (Brazilian ECM)
 4. **Pat Metheny** — *One Quiet Night* (spacious solo guitar)
 5. **Keith Jarrett** — *The Köln Concert* (piano, but essential ECM)
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TONE TIPS

For the ECM sound:

- **Guitar:** Nylon or steel-string acoustic (or clean electric)
- **Reverb:** Long, lush hall reverb (essential)
- **EQ:** Warm, not bright—roll off highs
- **Dynamics:** Play softly; let the reverb do the work
- **Room:** If acoustic, play in a resonant space

COMMON PITFALLS

1. **Dampening strings:** Let them ring—this is the whole point
 2. **Playing too loud:** ECM is about quiet, intimate sound
 3. **Too many notes:** Space and sustain are the music
 4. **Ignoring open strings:** They're your best friends here
 5. **Rushing:** At 80 BPM, slow down even more internally
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THE "CRYSTAL SILENCE" CONCEPT

The title evokes: - **Crystal:** Clarity, purity, transparent sound - **Silence:** The reverb tail, the space between notes - **ECM aesthetic:** Music as atmosphere, not entertainment

Imagine you're in a stone cathedral, alone, at twilight. The sound decays slowly into the space. Each note is an event.

SELF-EVALUATION

- [] Are my strings ringing into each other?
 - [] Am I using open strings effectively?
 - [] Are my dynamics soft enough?
 - [] Does the high-position melody sing over the drone?
 - [] Is there enough space and reverb?
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← **Hexagon** | **Next: Angular Motion** →

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