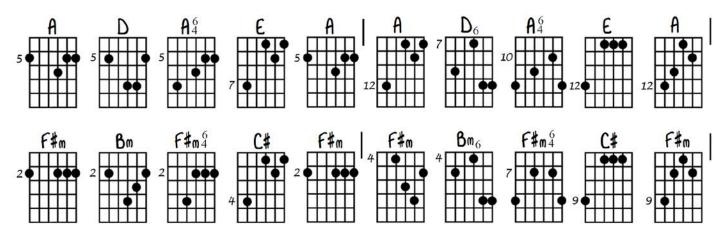
Triads in 2nd Inversion and Figured Bass Ted Greene, 1973-09-15

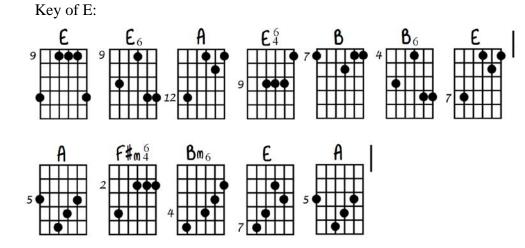
Figured bass is a system of musical shorthand where chords are indicated by the relationship in close voicing of all the notes to the bass note. Example: a closed triad in 1st inversion has (from the bass up) the following intervals \rightarrow a 3rd, and a 6th. (Whether or not the 3rd's and 6th's are major or minor depends on the type of triad.) A 2nd inversion closed triad has the intervals of a 4th, and a 6th (from the bass up). In musical shorthand, any 1st inversion voicing is referred to as a $^{6}_{3}$ or more commonly, just 6. Example: C in 1st inversion is written as C₆ (notice that the 6 is *under* the chord). Similarly, any 2nd inversion is referred to as a ⁶₄. Example: C in 2nd inversion is written as C⁶₄. This system of notation will prove to be valuable for the serious musician.

A ${}^{6}_{4}$ chord is a very potent chord and should be treated with care and skill. Here are some guidelines: 1) The I ⁶₄ or (i in minor) is used to "announce" cadences, that is, it sets up the V chord in authentic (and 1/2 cadences sometimes).

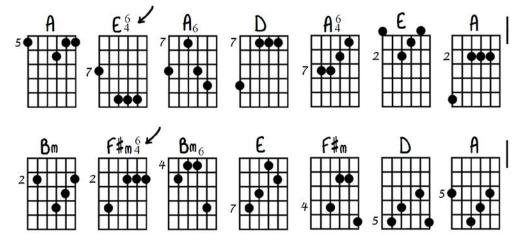


Figured bass symbols can be omitted at the discretion of the individual when labeling chords. They are very useful and effective when one wishes to indicate a precise bass line.

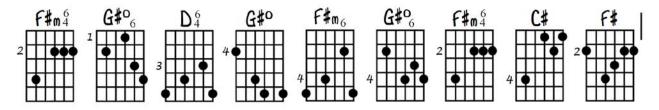
2) Although it is found most often in cadences as above, the ⁶₄ may be used effectively elsewhere in a phrase also:



Another common use is that of connecting a chord and its 1st inversion via the ${}^{6}_{4}$:

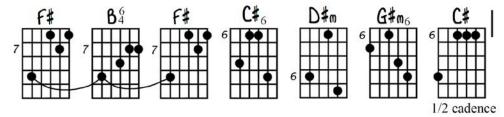


These are called passing ${}^{6}_{4}$'s. Here is another example in F#m. Ending on a major chord in a minor key is common (this device is called the *Picardy* 3rd.)



Another common use of the ${}^{6}_{4}$ is as a stationary bass note embellishment of a chord of which the ${}^{6}_{4}$ is the IV (or iv).

Key of F#:



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