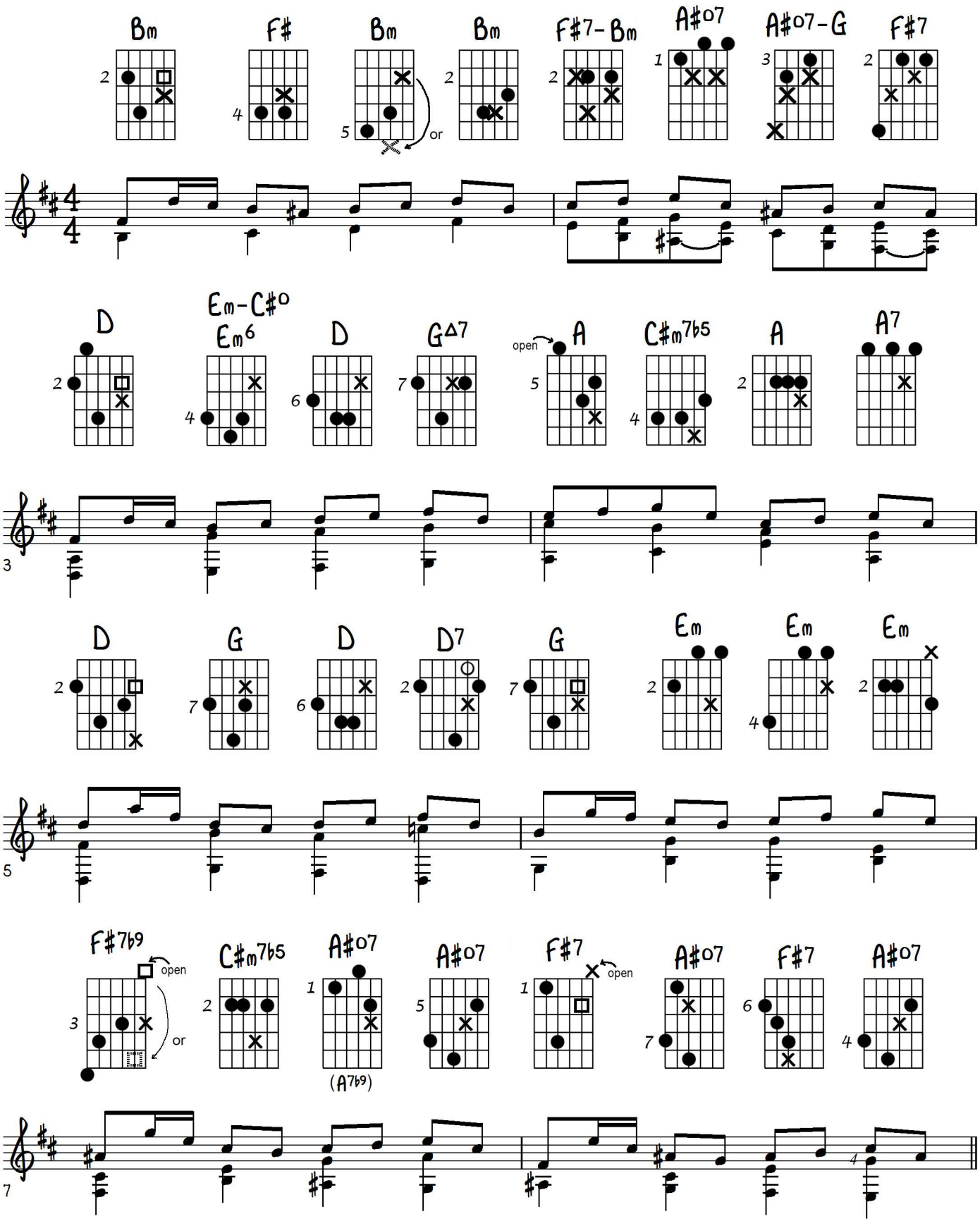
Processional in Bm

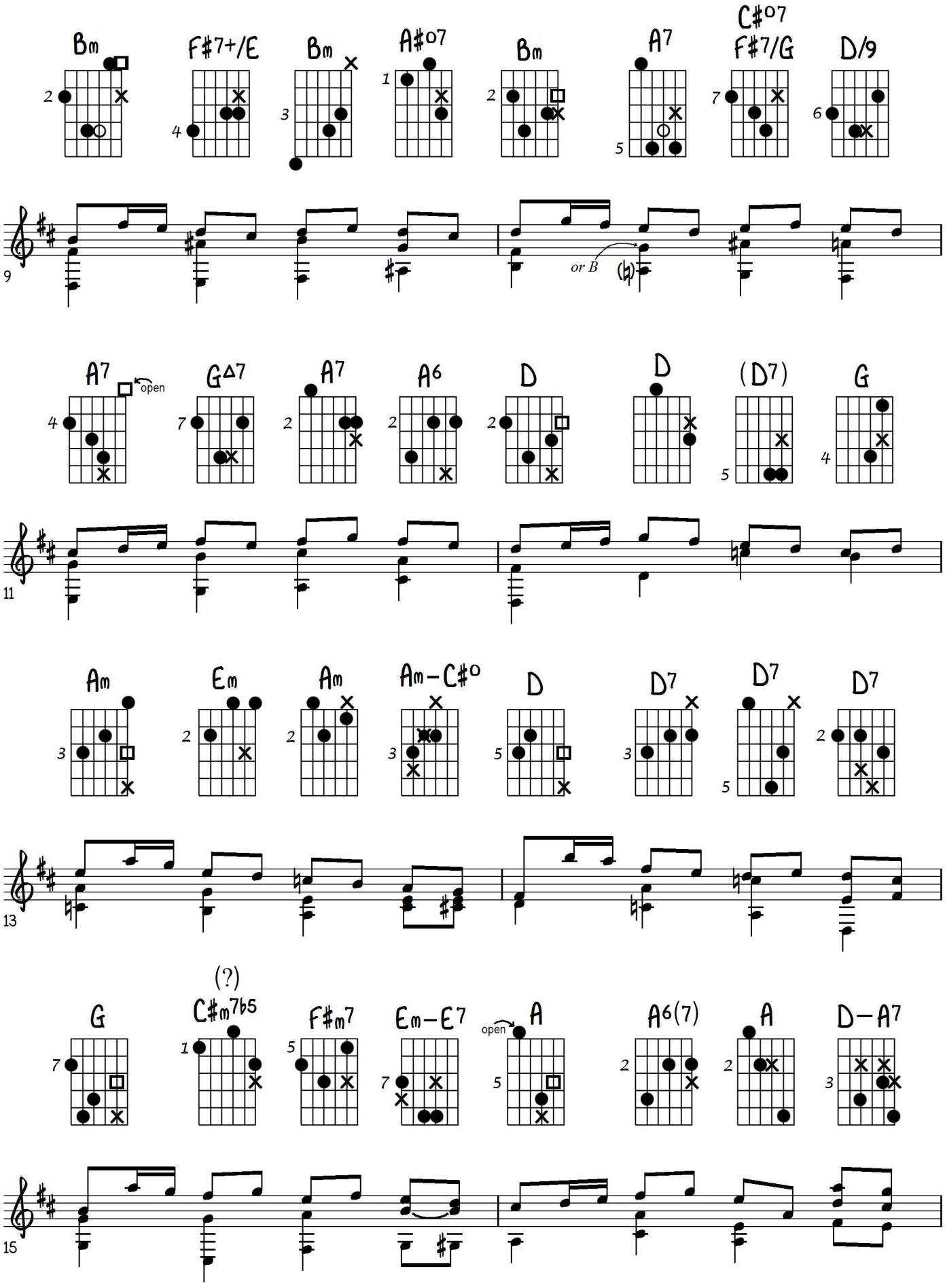
Ted Greene
Spring 1968

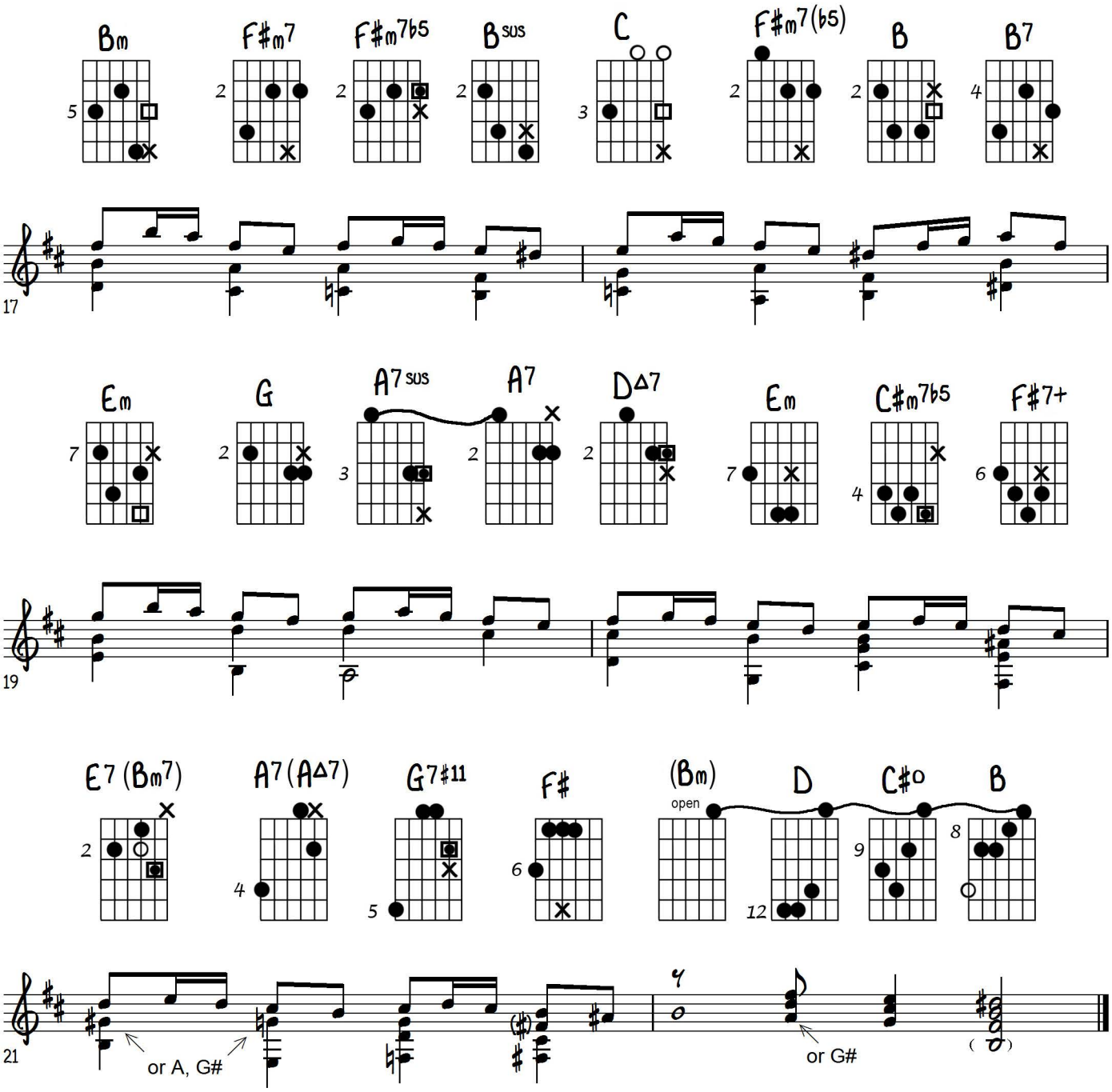
[Tune 6th String to low C.]

[or] Try tuning all strings up at least a whole step, then tune 6th to D from there.

Playing order: ● ✕ □ △
○ = opt.




Bm
F#7+/E
Bm
A#o7
Bm
A7
C#o7
F#7/G
D/9
9
or B
A7
open
G△7
A7
A6
D
D
(D7)
G
11
Am
Em
Am
Am–C#o
D
D7
D7
D7
13
(?)
G
C#m7b5
F#m7
Em–E7
open
A
A6(7)
A
D–A7
15


Bm
F♯m7
F♯m7♭5
Bsus
C
F♯m7(♭5)
B
B7
17
Em
G
A7sus
A7
D△7
Em
C♯m7♭5
F♯7+
19
E7(Bm7)
A7(A△7)
G7♯11
F♯
(Bm)
D
C♯o
B
open
12
21
or A, G#
or G#

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Ted Greene, 1968

Commentary by David Bishop

Paul asked me if I thought that the "Processional in Bm" was a "Ted original" and I responded that I am sure it is (that is, I'm sure it wasn't composed in the Baroque era). Although it shows that Ted possessed a deep understanding of the Baroque-style harmonic language early in his career (1968), there are a number of stylistic idiosyncrasies that point to someone who also possessed an understanding of more modern harmonic use (and who didn't mind relaxing some of the voice leading "rules" from that earlier era). Nevertheless, it's a charming piece and a joy to play.

Although the piece is in Bm, it does touch on a number of closely related keys, just as you would expect any good Baroque composer to do. These are D (mm. 3–6), back to Bm (mm. 7–10), back to D (mm. 11–12), G (mm. 12–15), another hint of D (m. 16), Em (mm. 17–19), setting up the return to Bm (mm. 19–22). The actual return to the tonic Bm doesn't occur until m. 22, but is expected in m. 21, only to be delayed by the unexpected arrival of the E7 on the downbeat of m. 21 (which is why I personally prefer the G# over the alternate G-natural).

Although there are a number of interesting harmonic details that I could discuss in this piece, one stands out, and I think it shows the breadth of Ted's knowledge of the Baroque literature. It appears during the wonderful chromatic lead-up to the cadence on Bm in m. 22 (this build-up of tension right before the cadence is typical in this style). In m. 21, beat 3, we hear what is best described as a G7#11/F (the missing—and defining—note is a B, which is still floating in the ear from the previous chord). From a modern viewpoint, this is a substitute dominant of F# (the V chord), albeit in an unusual inversion. But it is this unusual inversion that makes this chord so interesting from a Baroque viewpoint.

In classical harmony this is an "augmented sixth" chord, which was more often used in the classical era and beyond as an approach chord to the dominant. It does appear in Baroque works but to a lesser extent. This chord would normally be voiced so that it approaches the V from a half-step above (if this were the case here, G would be in the bass, with the F-natural [spelled as E#) placed somewhere above), rather than a half-step below, as here. I know of only one Baroque piece—a very famous one—that does contain this chord in such an unusual inversion, as an approach to the V from a half-step below: Bach's Mass in B minor. (For those with access to the score, it appears as the last chord in m. 51 [the third bar from the end].) It is even itself approached by a half-step below, just as in Ted's piece.

If there were ever any doubt that Ted knew his Baroque literature well, I think this confirms that he did. Otherwise, we'd have to accept that Ted simply "thought as Bach would" at this point…which, when considering Ted's immense talent, may not be such a stretch at all!

~David

TRY TUNING ALL STRINGS UP AT LEAST A WHOLE STEP, THEN TUNE 6th to D FROM THERE.

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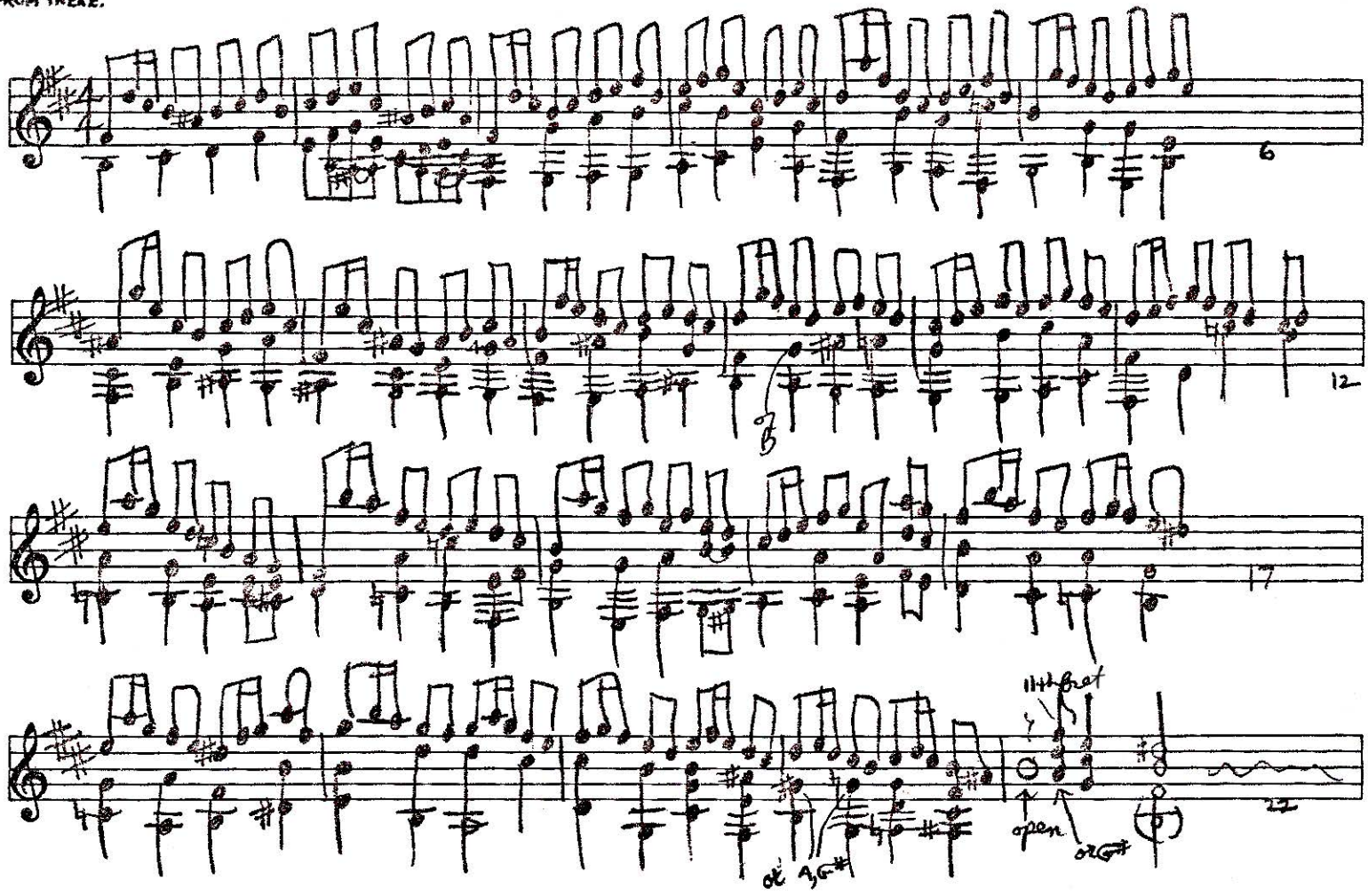
SPRING '68