

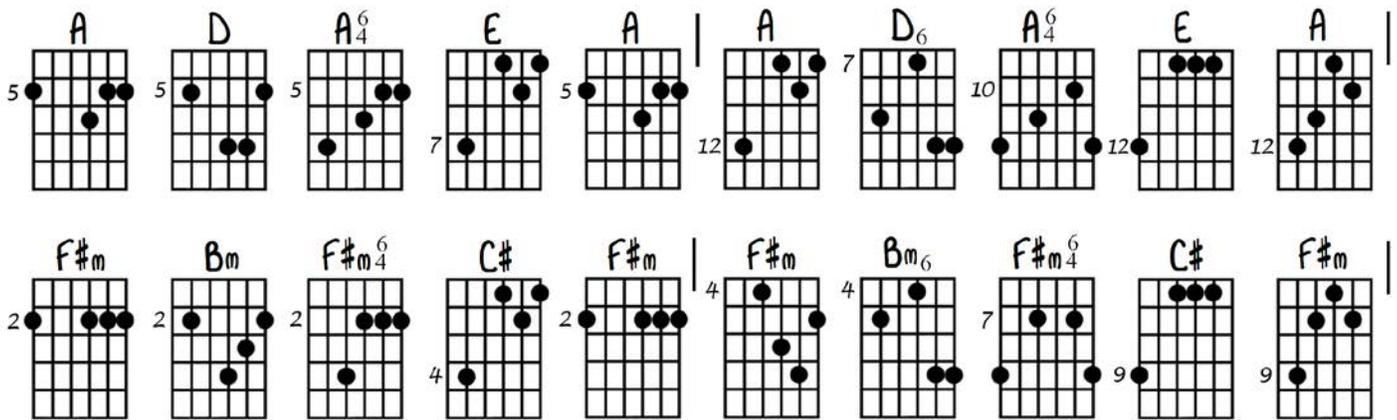
Triads in 2nd Inversion and Figured Bass

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 → 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 C_6 (notice that the 6 is *under* the chord). Similarly, any 2nd inversion is referred to as a 6_4 . Example: C in 2nd inversion is written as C^6_4 . 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:

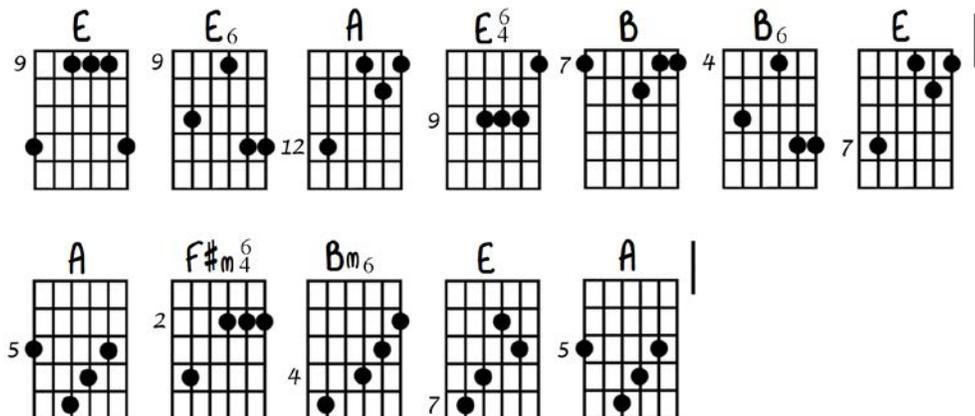
1) The I^6_4 or (i in minor) is used to “announce” cadences, that is, it sets up the V chord in authentic (and 1/2 cadences sometimes).



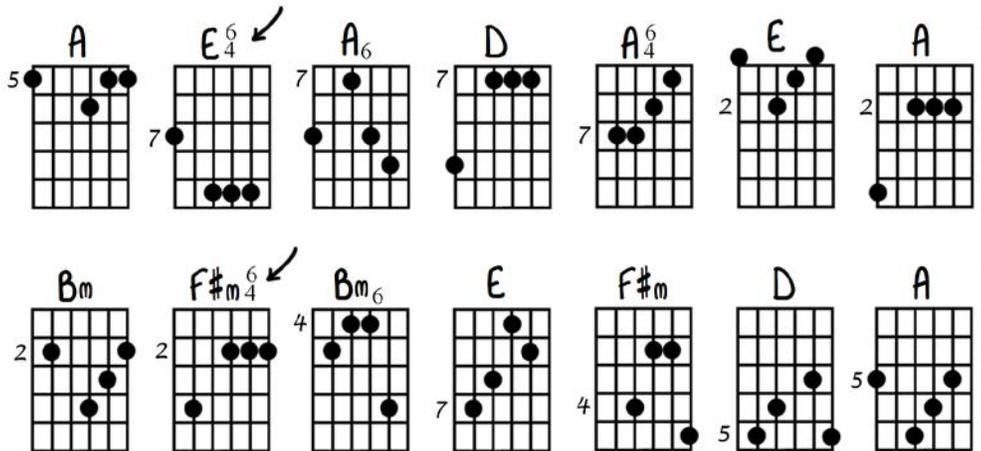
Figured bass symbols can be omitted at the discretion of the individual when labeling chords. They are very useful and effective when one wishes to indicate a precise bass line.

2) Although it is found most often in cadences as above, the 6_4 may be used effectively elsewhere in a phrase also:

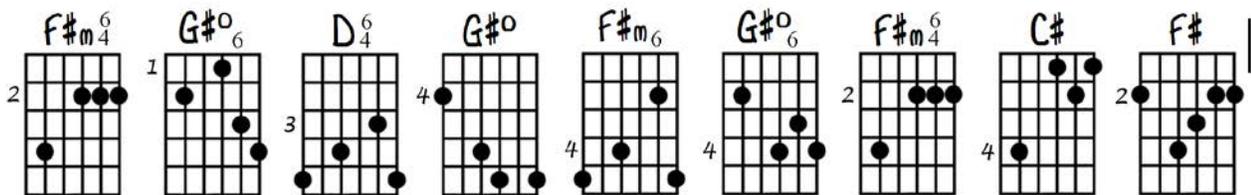
Key of E:



Another common use is that of connecting a chord and its 1st inversion via the 6_4 :

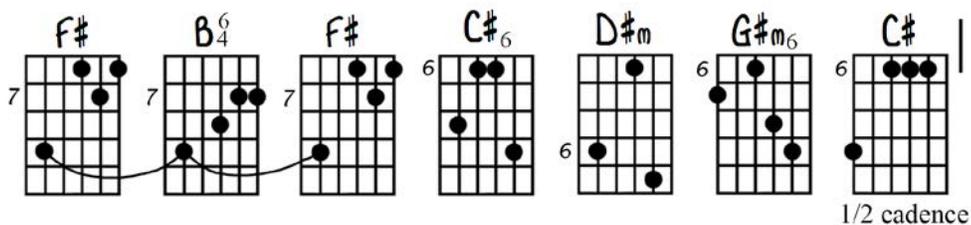


These are called passing 6_4 's. Here is another example in F#m. Ending on a major chord in a minor key is common (this device is called the *Picardy 3rd*.)



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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9-15-73

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 → a 3rd, and a 6th. (Whether or not the 3rd's + 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 $\frac{6}{3}$ or more commonly, just 6. Example: C in 1st inversion is written as $\frac{6}{3}$ (notice that the 6 is under the chord). Similarly, any 2nd inversion is referred to as a $\frac{6}{4}$. Example: C in 2nd inversion is written as $\frac{6}{4}$. This system of notation will prove to be valuable for the serious musician.

A $\frac{6}{4}$ chord is a very potent chord and should be treated with care and skill. Here are some guidelines: ① The I $\frac{6}{4}$ (or i $\frac{6}{4}$ in minor) is used to "announce" cadences, that is, it sets up the V chord in authentic (and $\frac{1}{2}$ 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 $\frac{6}{4}$ may be used effectively elsewhere in a phrase also:

Key of E:

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

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).

Key of F#:

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