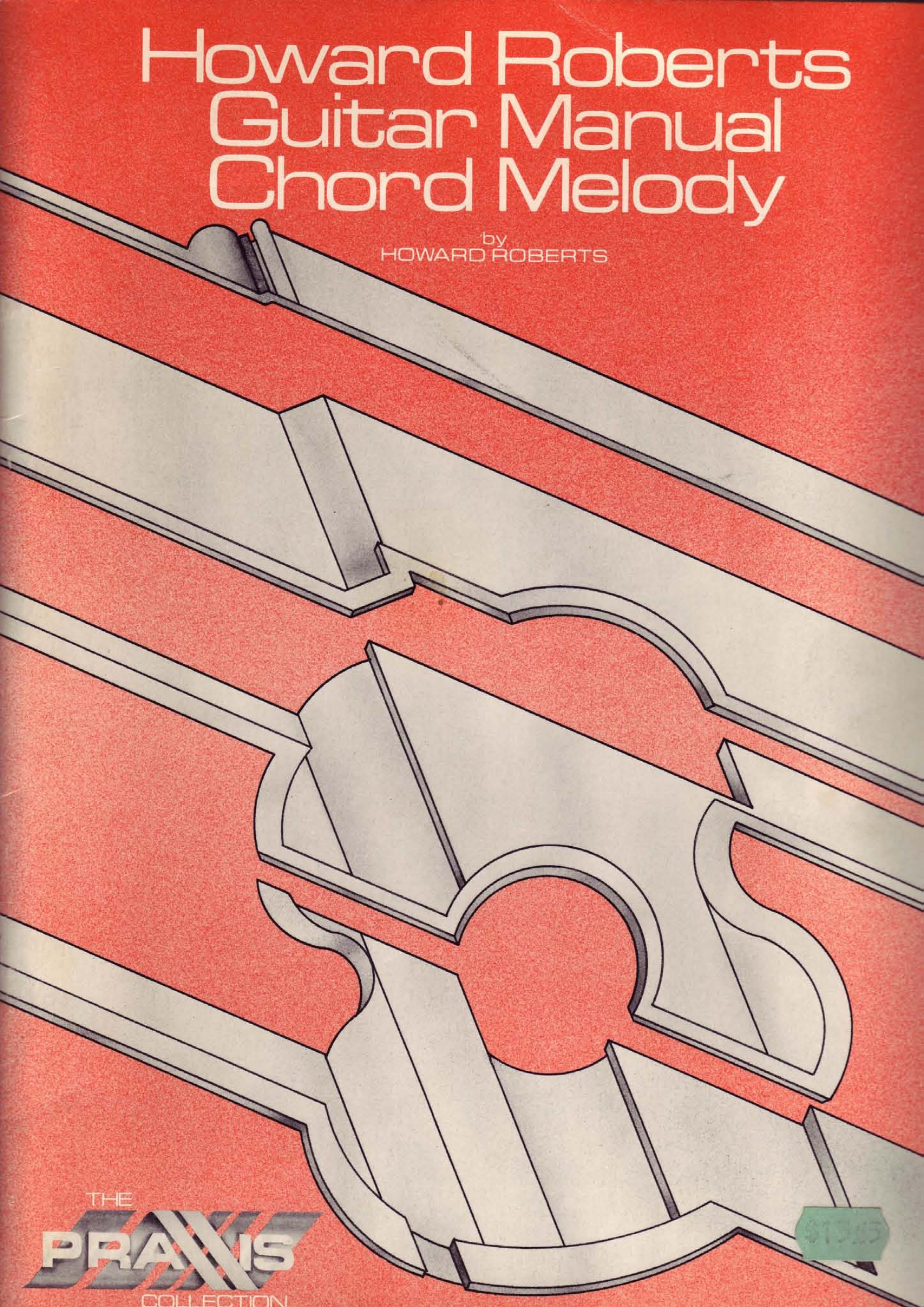
Howard Roberts Guitar Manual Chord Melody

by
HOWARD ROBERTS



THE PRAXIS COLLECTION

FOREWORD

My objective in writing this collection of studies is to outline some chordal techniques that have practical application in contemporary styles of guitar playing, value in fingerboard exploration and the development of a sense of musical coherence.

I have chosen to do this through example rather than a discussion of harmonic theory with a view that a lot is to be learned simply by producing the sounds under our fingers and in our ears.

Many guitarists accumulate a large repertoire of "guitar chords" which, in themselves, are pleasant sounding and, perhaps, well suited to rhythm playing and various accompaniments. But a repertoire of "isolated" chords may remain in the players mind as disconnected chunks of harmony, not easily applied to chord melody playing. The main academic point of this book is the resolution of this problem.

One improves his musical and instrumental techniques by accepting the challenge of more and more difficult material. Therefore, the examples in this book have been developed, not for their simplicity, but for their direct usefulness in contemporary music thereby representing some of the facets of advanced guitar playing. In view of this, I believe the reader is embarking on an adventure both musically and personally rewarding.

My thanks to Mike Anthony for his contribution of Example 38.

CONTENTS

FINGERINGS 4

CHORD MELODY DEVICES 5

Example

1 . . . . Close Block Voicings 5
2 . . . . Open Voicings 6
3 . . . . Parallel Motion 6
4 . . . . Contrary Motion 7
5 . . . . Counter Lines 7
6 . . . . Common Tones 8
7 . . . . Block Chords 8
8 . . . . Sustained Chord Background . 9
9 . . . . Short Chord Punctuations . . 10

CHORD MELODY STUDIES 11

Example

10, 11, 12 11
13, 14 12
15, 16 13
17 14
18, 19 15
20, 21 16
22 17
23 18
24 19
25, 26 20
27, 28 21
29, 30 22
31 23
32 25
33 27
34 29
35, 36, 37 31
38 32

PROJECT STUDIES 36

Example

39, 40, 41. . Instruction 37
42, 43, 44. . Projects 38
45. 39
46. . . . . Solution 39
47, 48, 49. . Projects 40
50, 51 . . . Solutions 41
52, 53, 54. . Projects 42
55, 56, 57, 58
59, 60, 61, . Solutions 46
62, 63, 64 65

CHORD MELODY SOLO 52

FINGERINGS

While it is true that the same chord voicings can often be played on two or three different sets of strings, it is seldom possible to do so without some change of the fingering. In evaluating the feasibility of a change, first consider musical quality and mechanical efficiency:

a. As a rule, the musical quality can be enhanced by choosing a fingering or a set of strings in which the greater string length is maintained, thus permitting the strings to "sing" and sustain longer.

b. Mechanical efficiency is primarily a matter of avoiding unnecessary or awkward hand or finger movements. However, in developing a sense of mechanical efficiency, do not also develop a fear of radical jumps or large intervals on the fingerboard, for these techniques are frequently required. For example, radical interval jumps may supply a nice contrast to smooth scale-wise line movement.

String numbers indicate the lower note of the chord and are in circles under the staff. Fingering numbers are placed to the left of the notes. The thumb is frequently used throughout the studies and is indicated (T).

CHORD MELODY DEVICES

Examples 1 through 9 demonstrate some structural devices basic to contemporary styles of chord melody playing. As you become acquainted with these devices you will observe their practical application through the studies forming the main body of this book. Take plenty of time working through these studies as the techniques are highly concentrated. In order to better retain what you learn here, you should make a direct effort to put these 'devices' to practical use on a daily basis.

HARMONY: VERTICAL-HORIZONTAL

Basically there are two concepts of harmony:

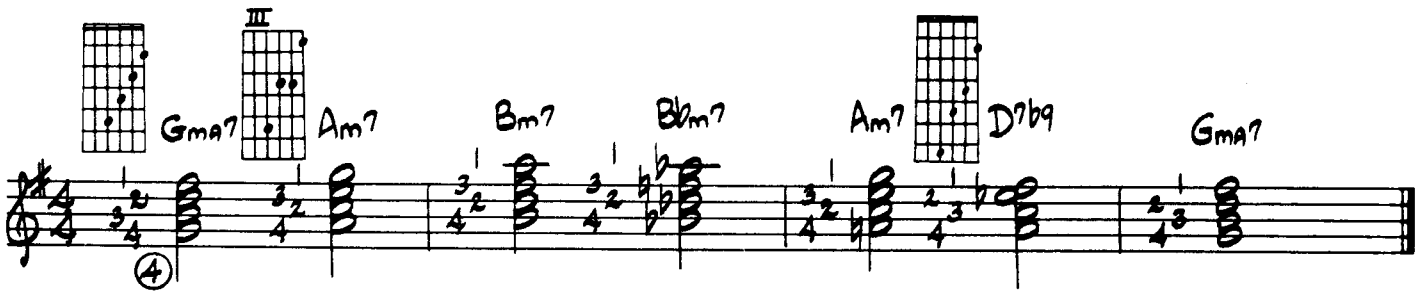
(1) Its **vertical structure** which is nothing more than the stacking of notes into chords. Naturally, these are played simultaneously.

(2) Its **horizontal movement** which involves the way one chord progresses to another.

VERTICAL structures are usually expressed in one of two basic voicings:

Example 1. Close Block Voicings in which the notes are packed closely together.

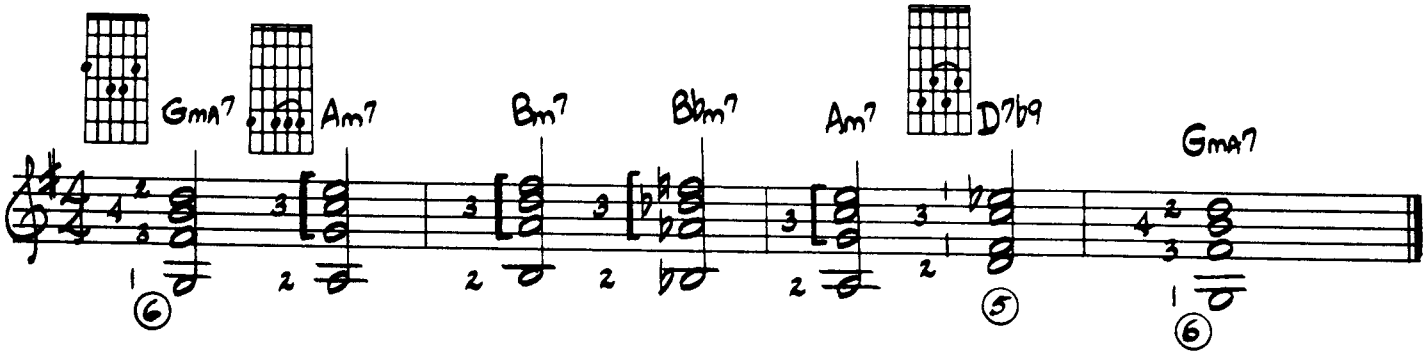
Ex. 1



These voicings can also be played on the inside strings (5th, 4th, 3rd and second strings).

Example 2. Open Voicings in which the notes are spread apart.

Ex. 2

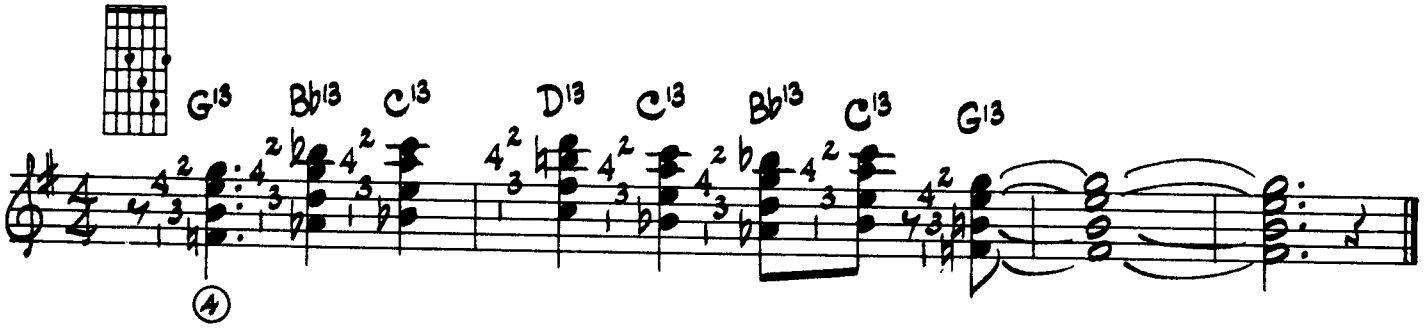


Closed voiced chords can be opened up as far as your reach will permit, simply by moving one or more chordal tones up or down an octave.

HORIZONTAL movement. The melody lines formed by each of the chordal tones is the most important single factor linking one chord to another. In four part harmony, for example, one is really dealing with four separate melody lines. It naturally follows that there would be as many linkage possibilities as melodies: a study of this question in its entire scope comes under the headings of voice leading, harmony and linear counterpoint (see *Shaping Forces of Music,* Ernest Toch). The following example demonstrates some of the primary melodic aspects of chord connections.

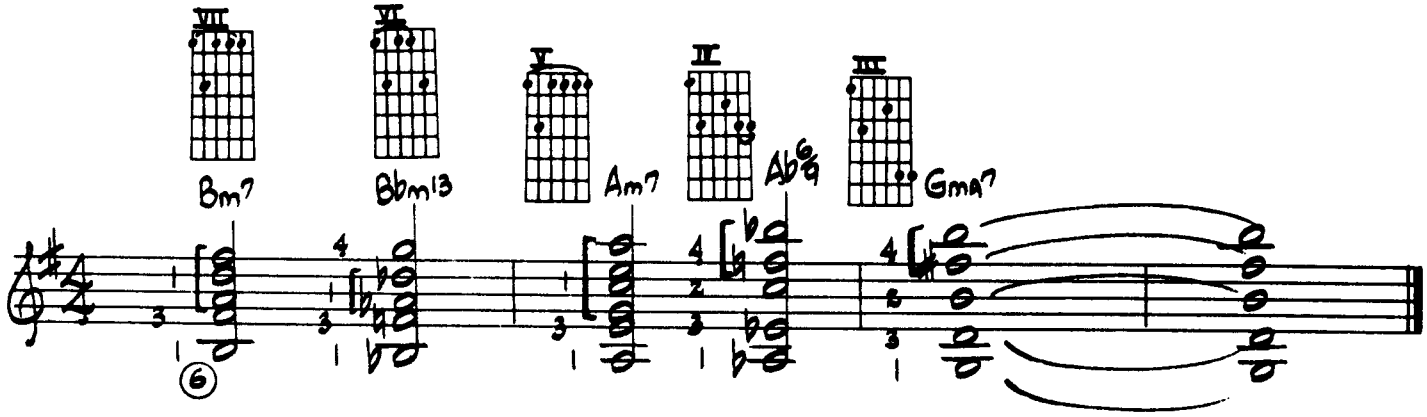
Example 3. PARALLEL MOTION, a chord progression in which each tone is moving the same number of scale steps and in the same direction.

Ex. 3



Example 4. CONTRARY MOTION is, as the word implies, a situation in which the chordal tones are moving in opposite directions. Example 4 shows the upper and lower lines in contrary motion.

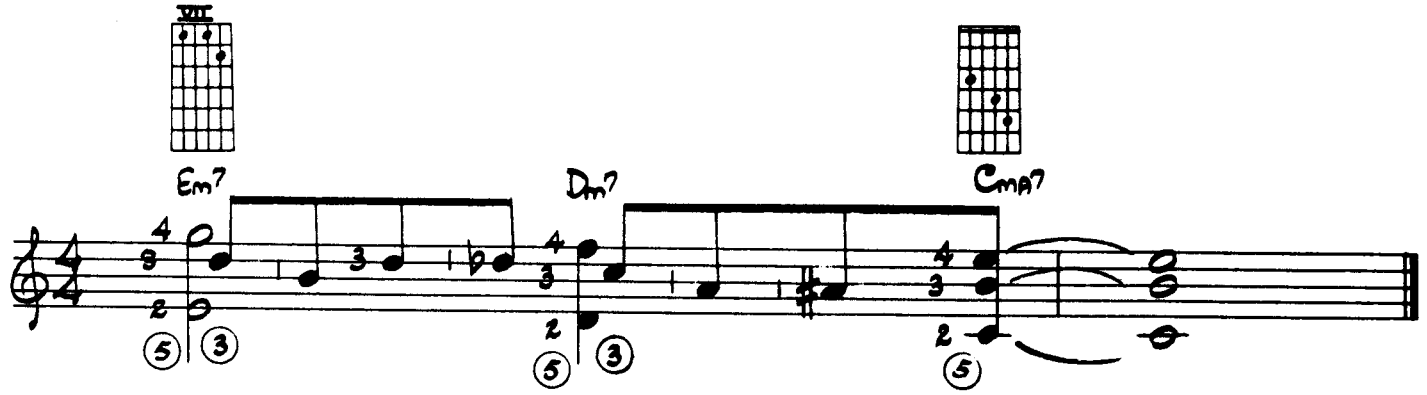
Ex. 4



Through experimentation with parallel and contrary motion one can invent some passages of considerable interest to both player and listener. Such passages are often quite useful as fingering exercises and for arriving at a better understanding of the fingerboard in general.

Example 5. COUNTER LINES are usually treated as a melodic accompaniment to the main body of a tune. They are also used as connecting lines from one chord to another and, on guitar, are frequently found in the second voice from the top. When the main melody has little motion, the counter line can be more active. Example 5 shows the counter line (with stems up) on the 3rd string.

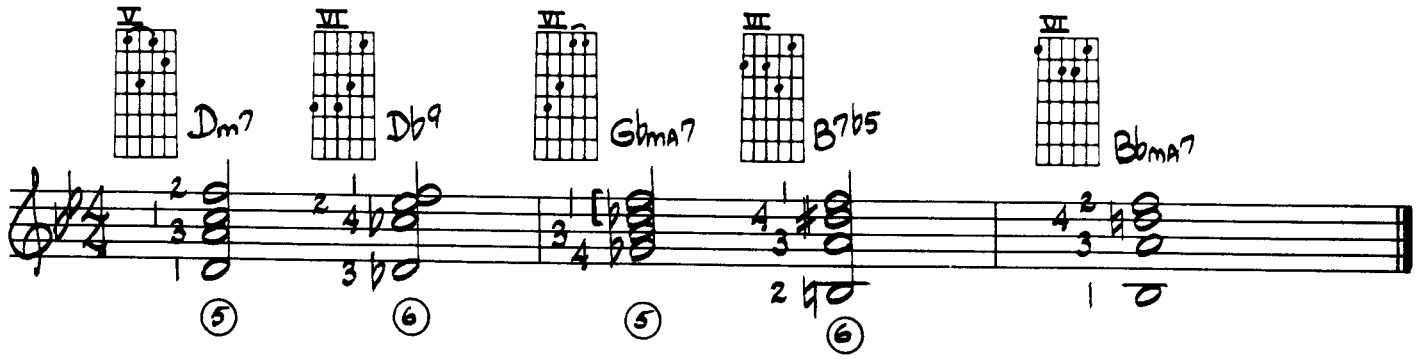
Ex. 5



A counter line may be higher or lower in pitch than the main melody, or placed somewhere inside the chord as in Example 5, or the bass line itself may sometimes be treated as a counter line. Further, any choice of melodic intervals can be used to develop a counter line.

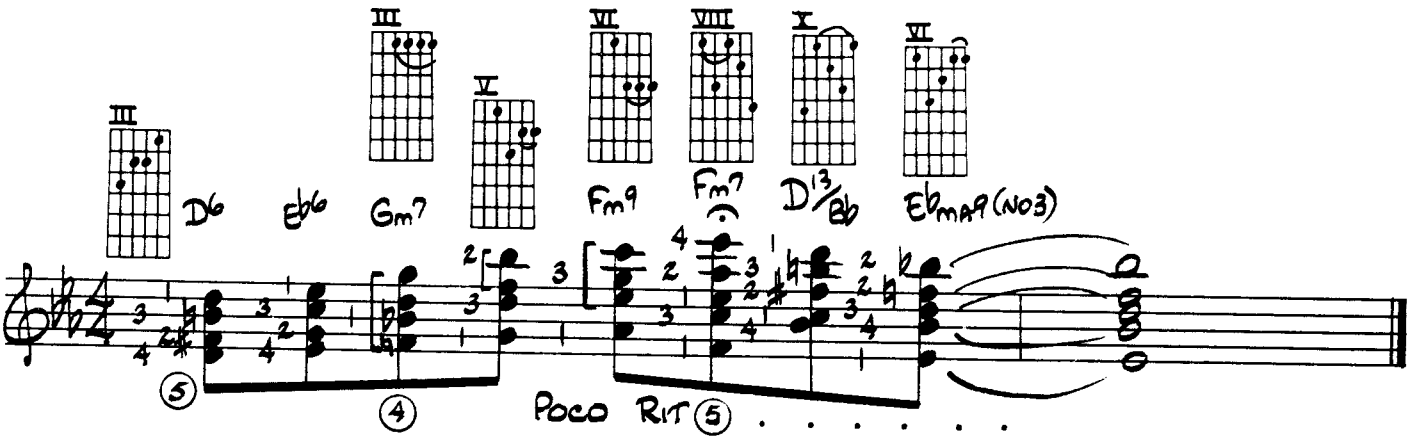
Example 6. A COMMON TONE is a note that is related to, and sustained through, a sequence of chords played in succession. Example 6 shows the common tone on top.

Ex. 6



Example 7. BLOCK CHORDS. Here is a rudimentary, yet effective way of producing melody and harmony simultaneously. This is done by placing a full chord underneath each melody note. The chords can be either close or open voicings. You might experiment with picking techniques here: For example, all down strokes, or alternate down and up strokes, or plucking all strings simultaneously with fingers. Note: The Gm7 in bar 3 is being used as a substitute for Eb maj 9.

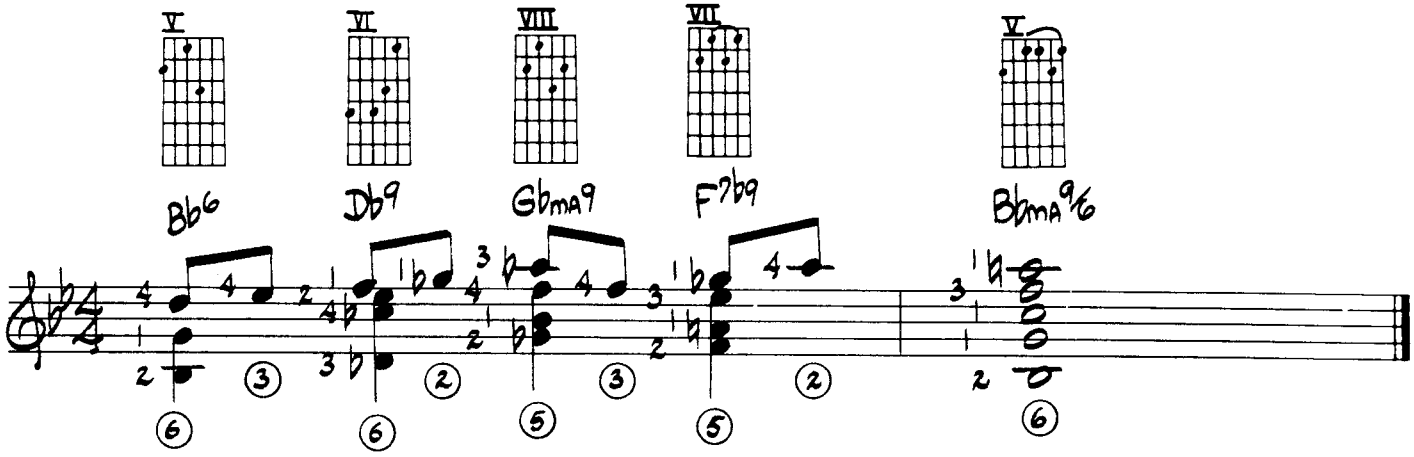
Ex. 7



The block chord effect is best achieved when the chordal tones are made to move when the melody moves, and preferably in the same direction as the melody. Often the melody can be fingered easily without having to change the chord form, but this tends to destroy the block chord effect; therefore it is more desirable to change the voicing or inversion with each new melody note, in order to create the effect of all lines moving at once.

Example 8. SUSTAINED CHORD BACKGROUND is a modification of the block chord style, in that one chord is sustained through two or more melody notes.

Ex. 8

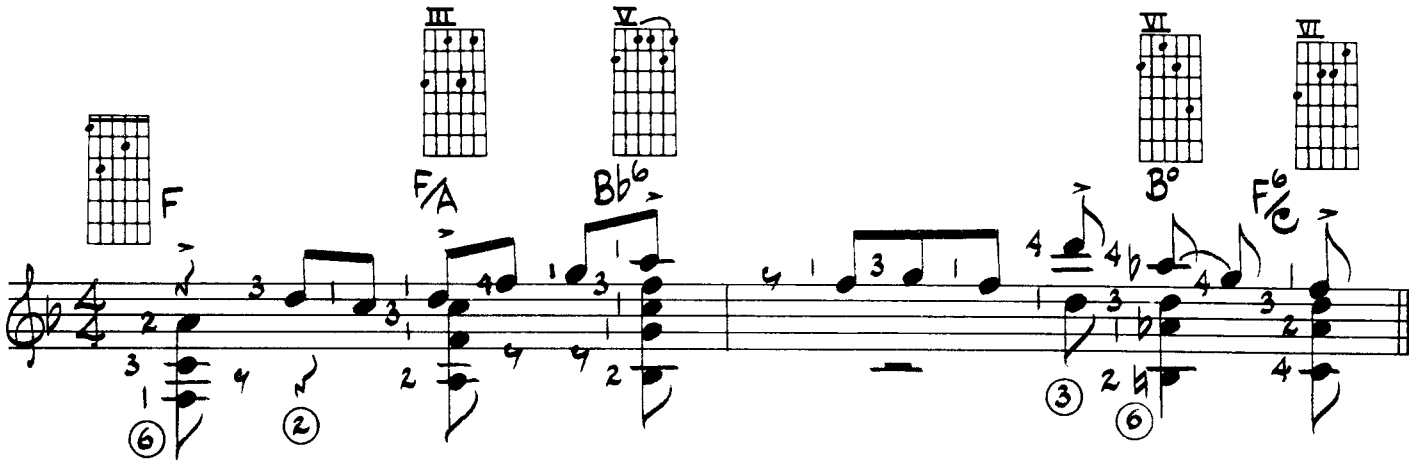


NOTE

When a chord is sustained throughout a long sequence of melody notes, fingering requirements frequently make it necessary to drop one or more of the chordal tones in order to manipulate the melody. This is especially true in improvising with the aforementioned common guitar voicings when the voice leading has not been fully worked out. However, if each chordal tone is sustained for as long as possible, the listener will usually remember those notes that have been dropped.

Example 9. SHORT CHORD PUNCTUATIONS. Because of the listener's ability to remember the sound of harmony, it is possible to outline the flow of harmony by short chord punctuations. These can be used without sacrificing harmonic continuity, when they are played with authority and appropriately placed within the bar. This continuity can be further reinforced by choosing melodies which emphasize chordal tones.

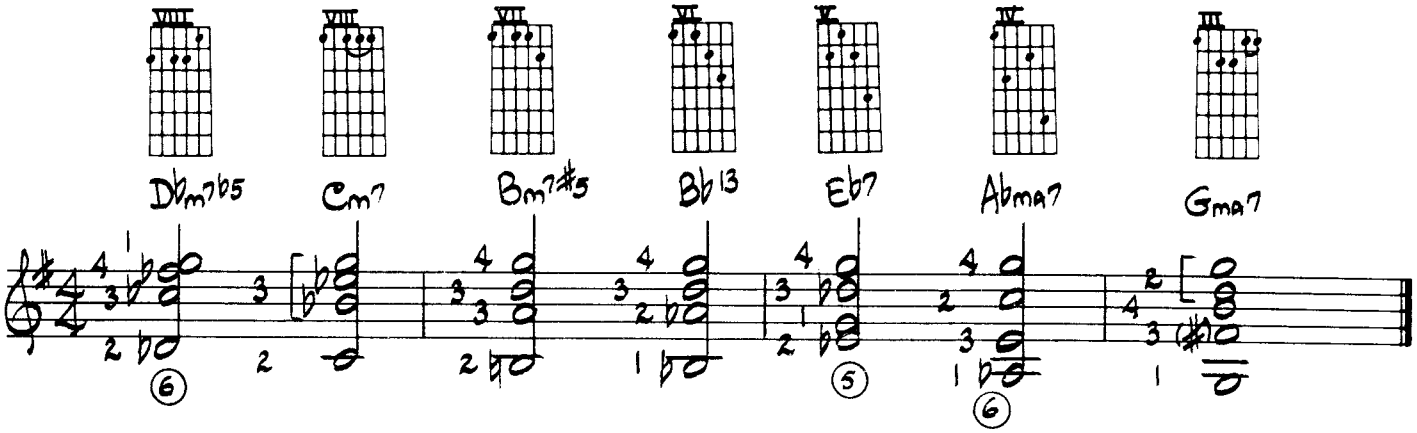
Ex. 9



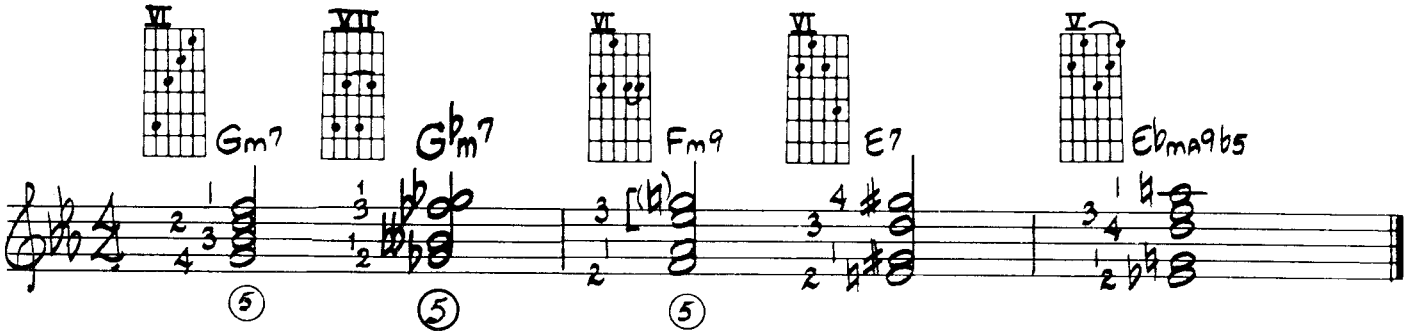
CHORD MELODY STUDIES

Examples 10 through 12 deal with various applications of the devices outlined in Examples 1 through 9. The following studies are not to be considered as unaccompanied solos, but rather as examples of the way one might perform in a combo. For example, the bass lines are often incomplete in that most combos have bass players filling this function, freeing the guitar player to work with melodies, and to develop the harmonic color resident in the upper extensions of the chords. Examples 10 through 12 present a few of the many ways to treat the root progression (II, V or II, V, I) common to so many standard tunes.

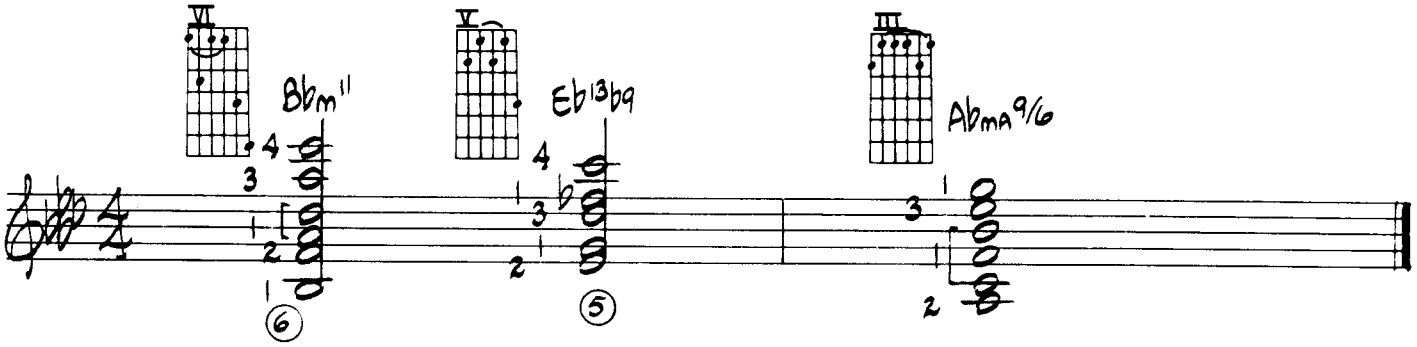
Ex. 10



Ex. 11

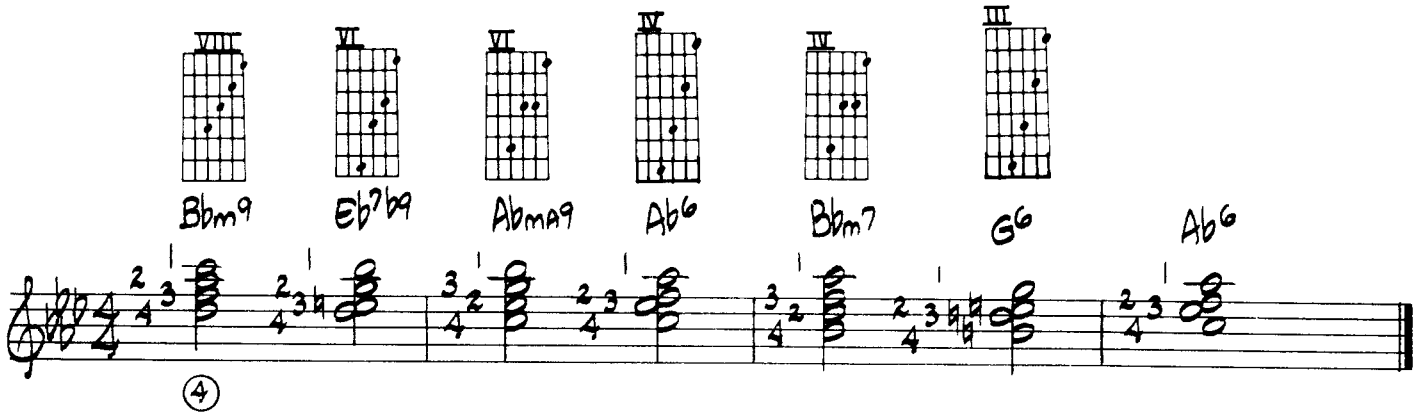


Ex. 12



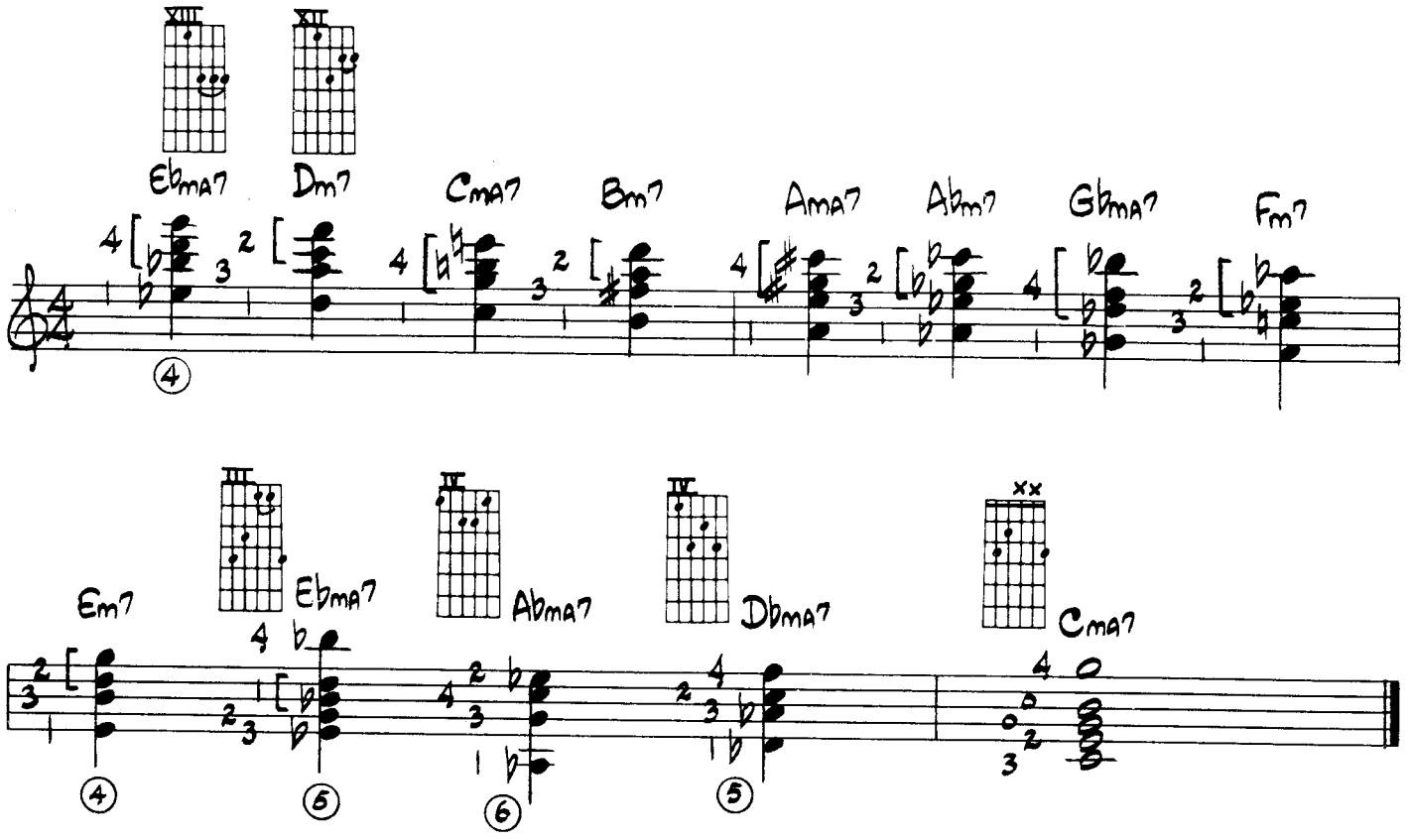
Example 13 illustrates close voicings, very effective but not too often used, on the guitar. These can be used as texture contrast to the big sound of open voicings. Note: The G6 in bar 3 is functioning as a dominant chord (Eb + 7b9).

Ex. 13



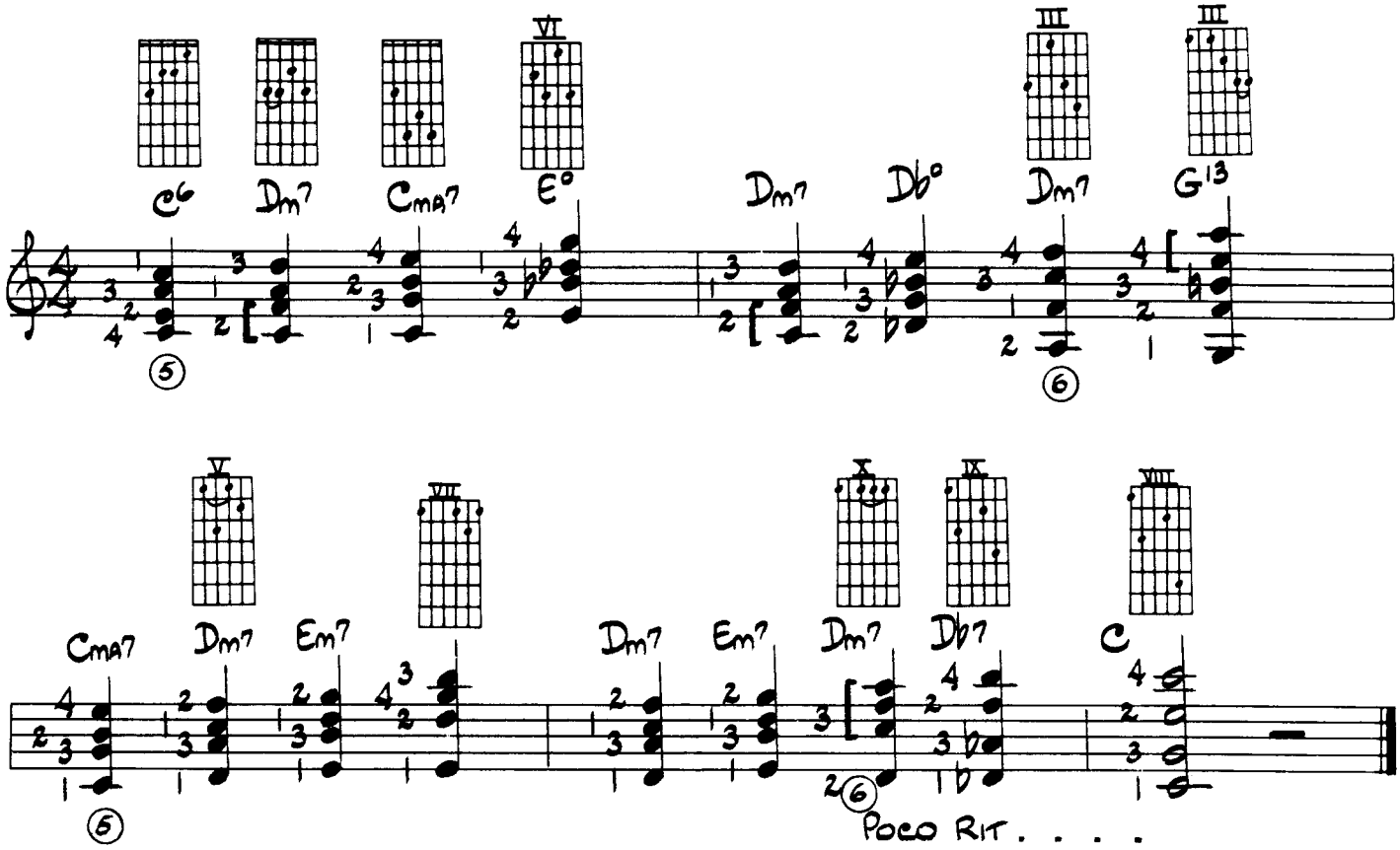
In Example 14, each line is decending in consecutive whole-step, half-step sequences (symmetrical diminished scales). One line moving whole-step, half-step, while another line is moving half-step, whole-step, producing the chord changes as the symbols indicate.

Ex. 14



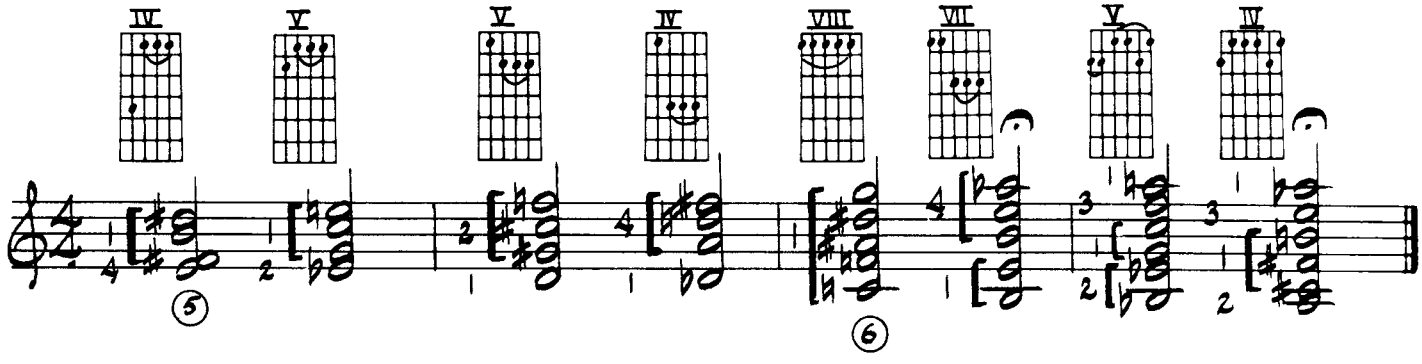
Example 15. This is a simple harmonization of the C (diatonic) scale with some isolated chromaticism. The E^{o} and D^{bo} chords are both functioning as A7b9, and are being used to provide some chromatic relief from the monotony of diatonic lines. It is good ear training to improvise this sort of thing in all keys, with various diatonic melodies.

Ex. 15



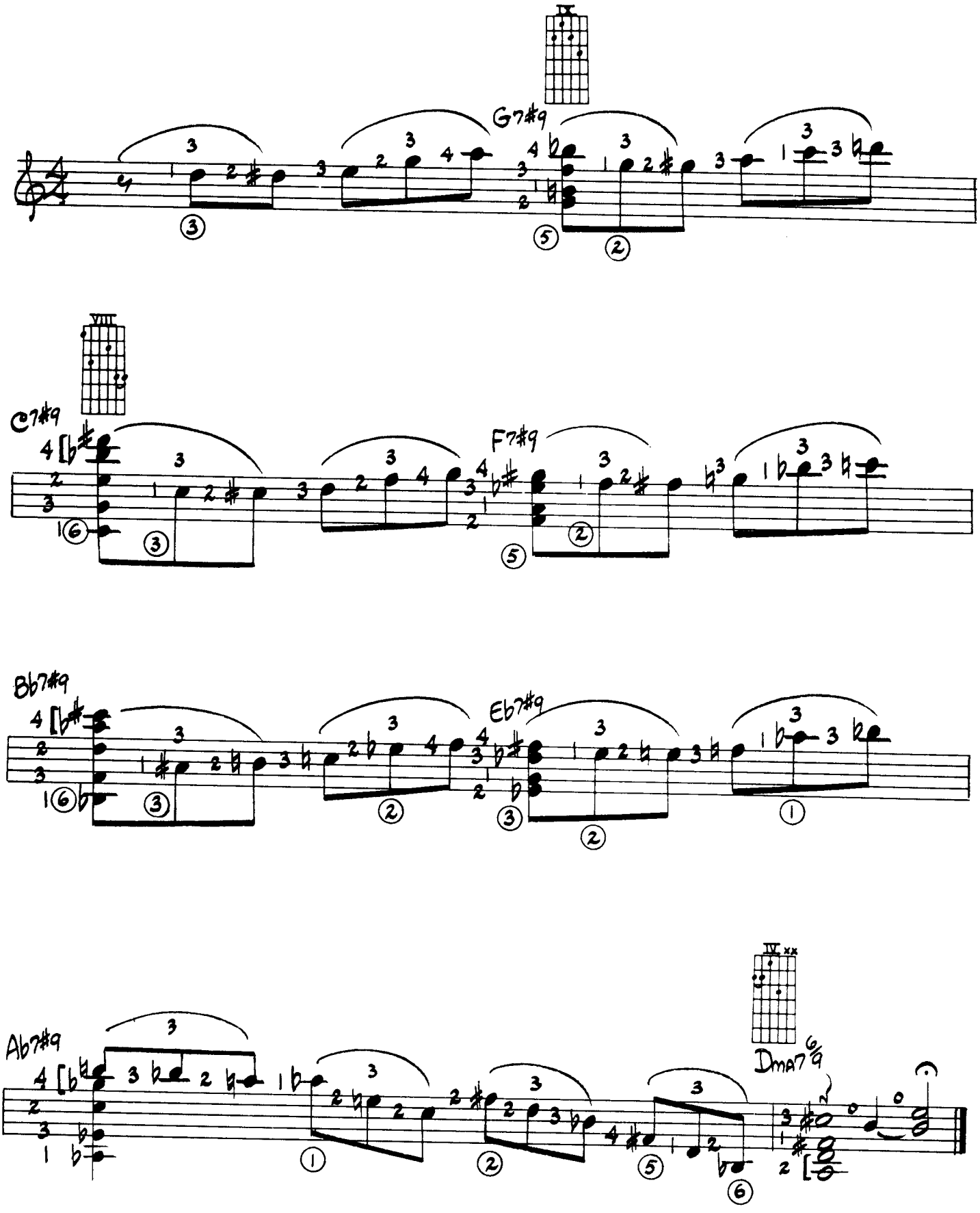
Example 16 illustrates (1) exaggerated chromaticism and (2) the gradual addition of notes (in contrary motion) to expand the voicings without opening them. Note: the spelling of the chord symbols in Example 16 is less important than the voice leading which creates them. Accordingly, symbol identification of these chords (more properly "sounds") is awkward and unnecessary. Their functional or Roman Numeral identification (i.e. II7, V7, etc.) depends upon analysis of the entire phrase in which the chords occur.

Ex. 16



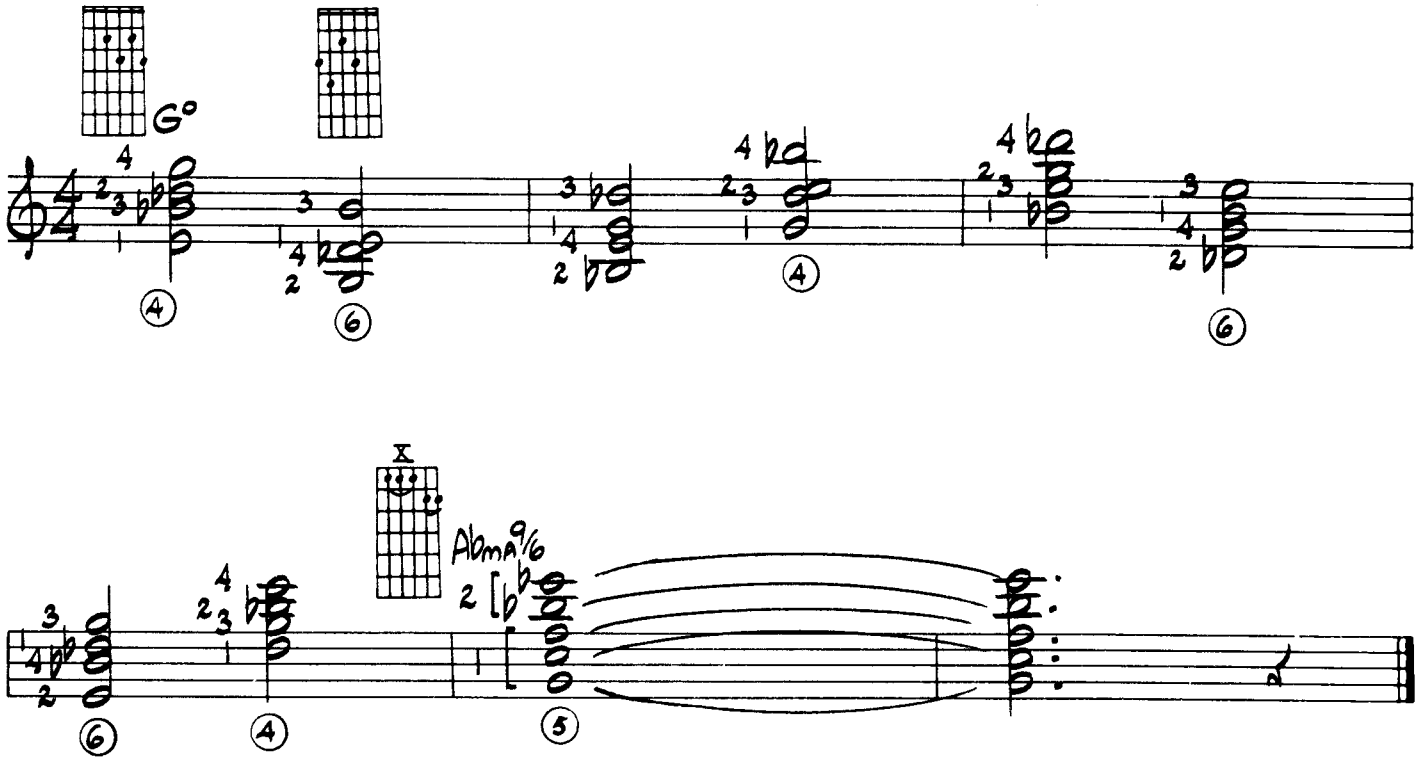
Example 17. A fingering exercise in short chord punctuations using a Cycle of 5ths with #9 chords.

Ex. 17



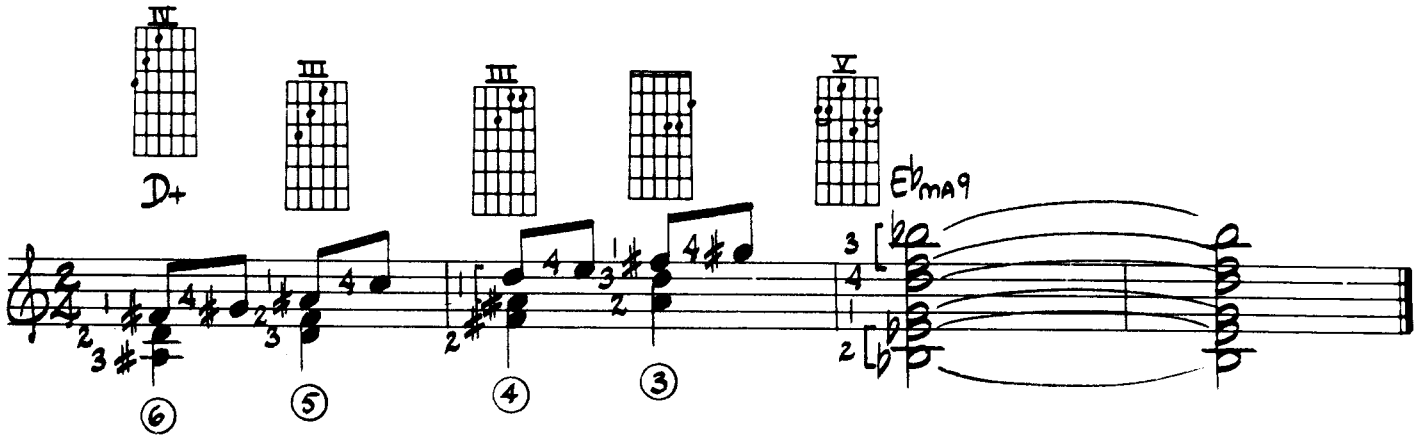
Example 18. A fingering exercise for running diminished chords across the strings. Make a special effort to sustain each chord for its full time value.

Ex. 18



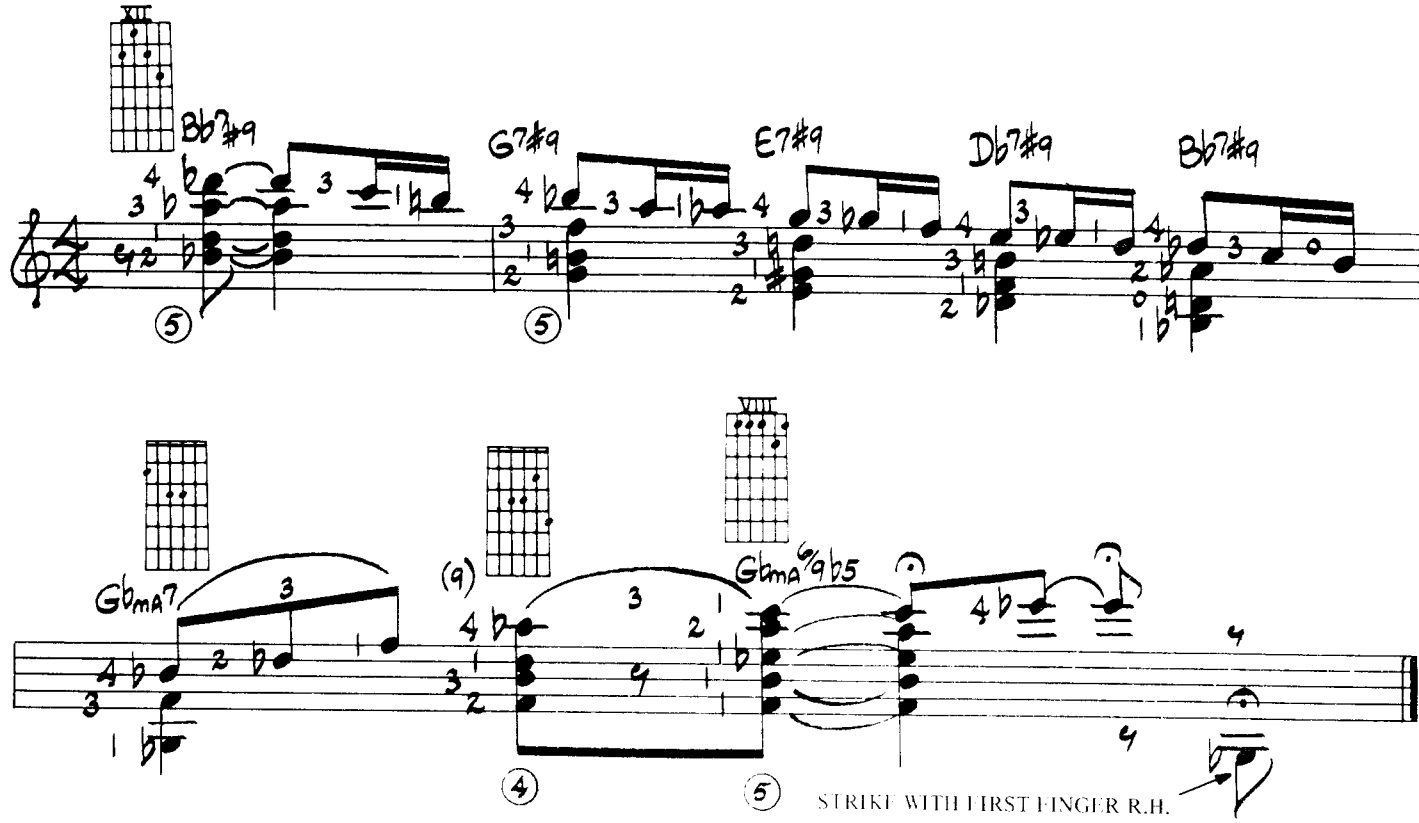
Example 19 is a fingering exercise for running augmented triads across the strings. Play this in a variety of keys up and down the fingerboard. Sustain each chordal tone for as long as possible. In general, this means to keep your fingers in place until it's absolutely necessary to move them. This will contribute measurably to the continuity of your chord melody style.

Ex. 19



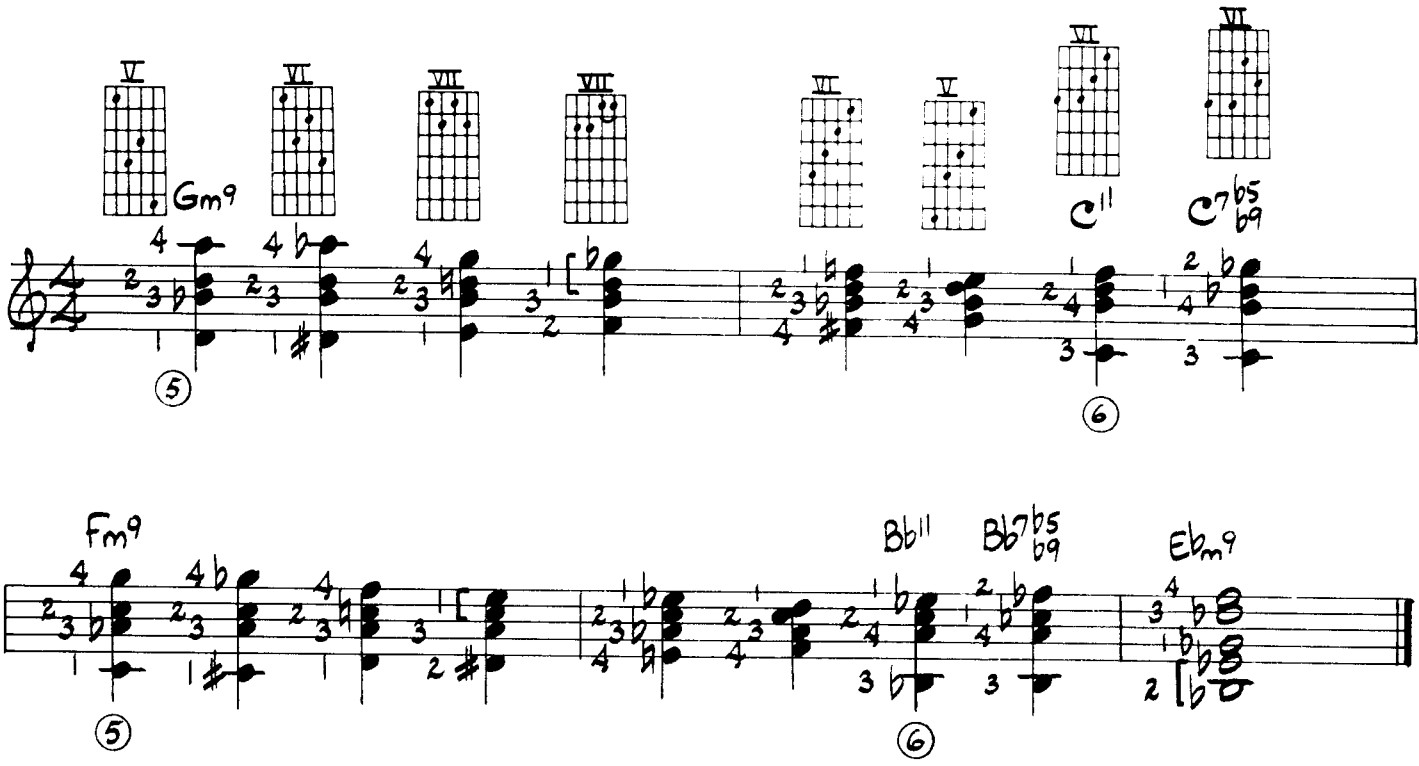
Example 20. Short Chord punctuations with chords descending parallel in minor thirds. This type of passage can be very effective when played fast. Note the use of the right hand in adding the bass note at the end.

Ex. 20



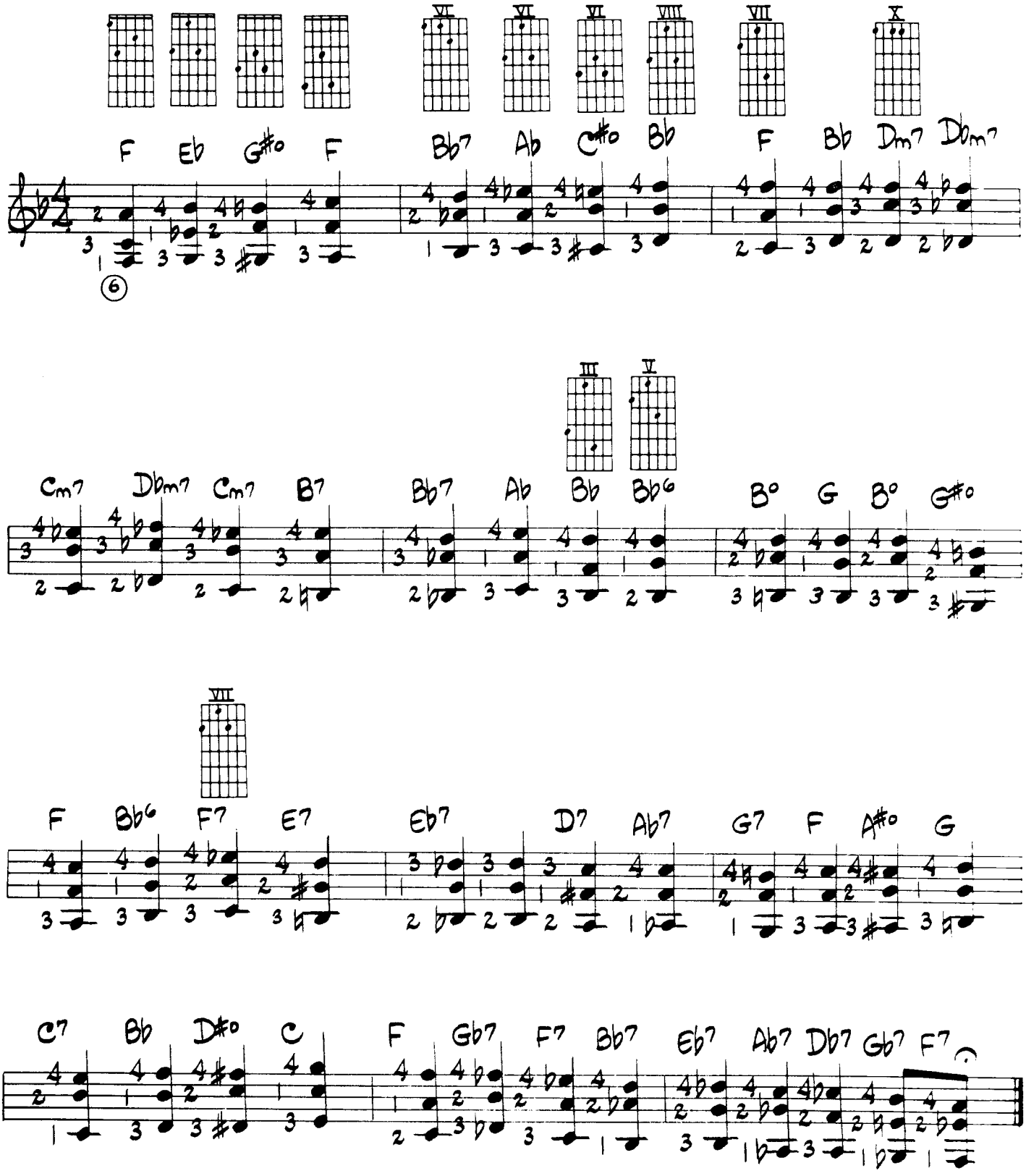
Example 21. A stretching exercise with static interior voices and outer voices in contrary motion.

Ex. 21



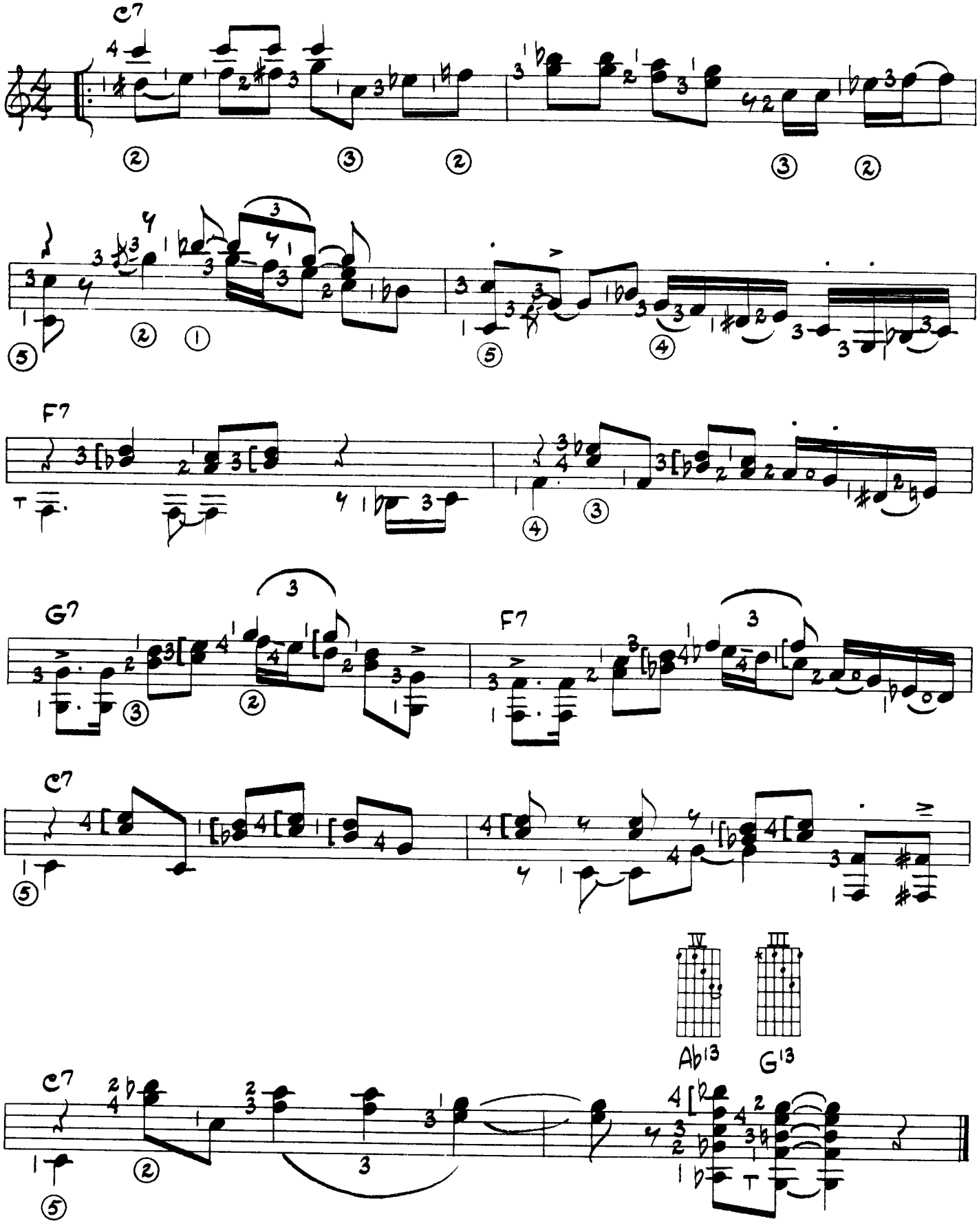
Example 22. A type of three note voicing common to certain styles of rhythm playing. This study is based on 12 bar blues.

Ex. 22



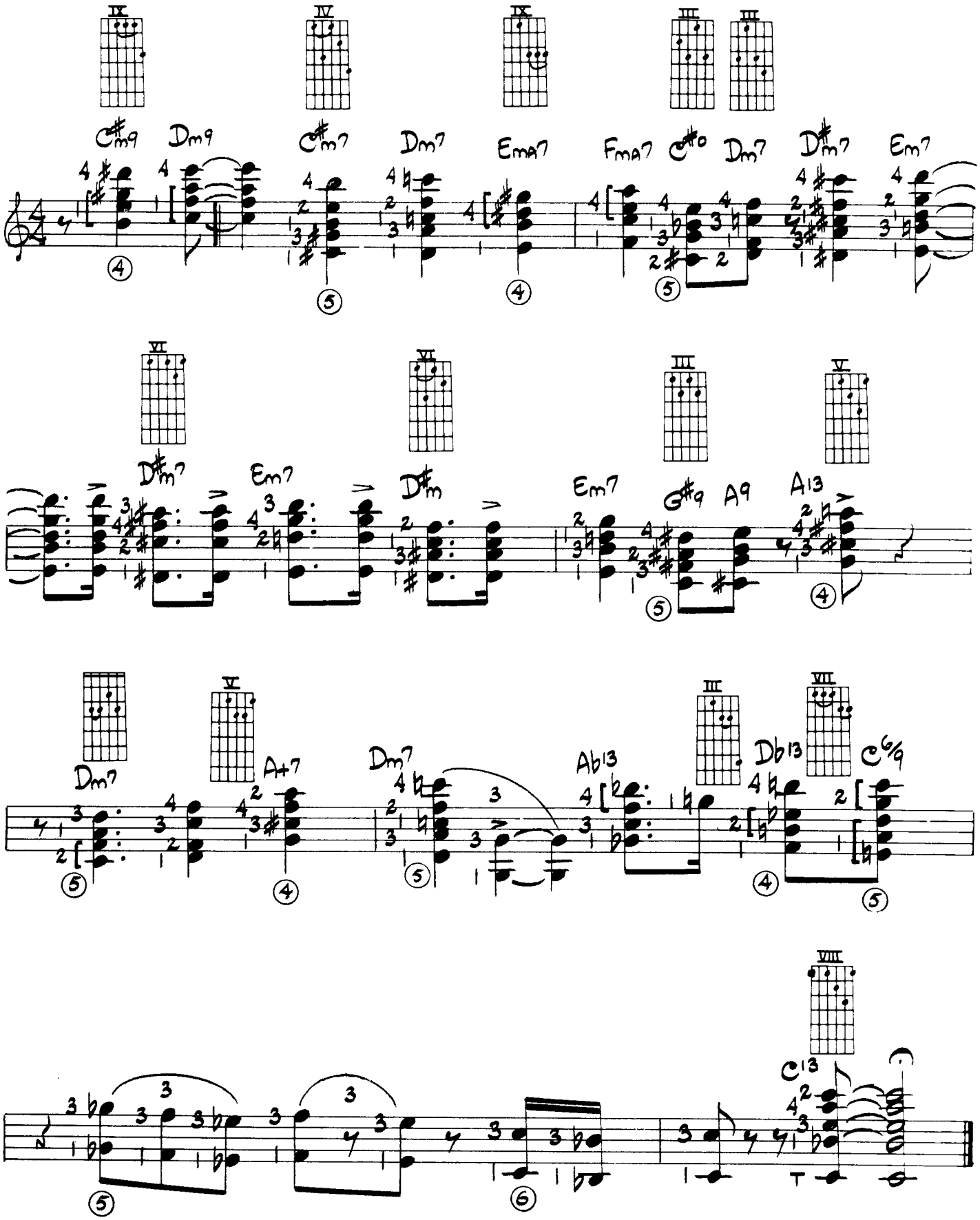
Example 23. The use of two notes to create the overall effect of harmony has been relatively unexplored in guitar playing, particularly in improvisation, and could, with practice, make a valuable contribution to the versatility of one's style. Example 23 utilizes this device in the basic 12 bar blues.

Ex. 23



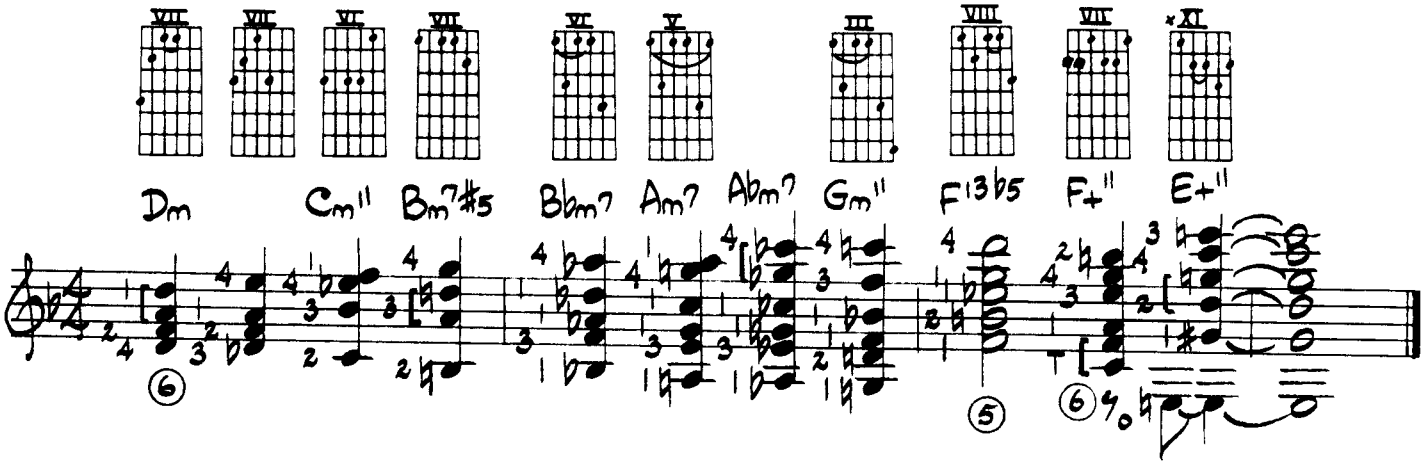
Example 24. "Full" block voicings in a big band style, as might be applied to an ending.

Ex. 24



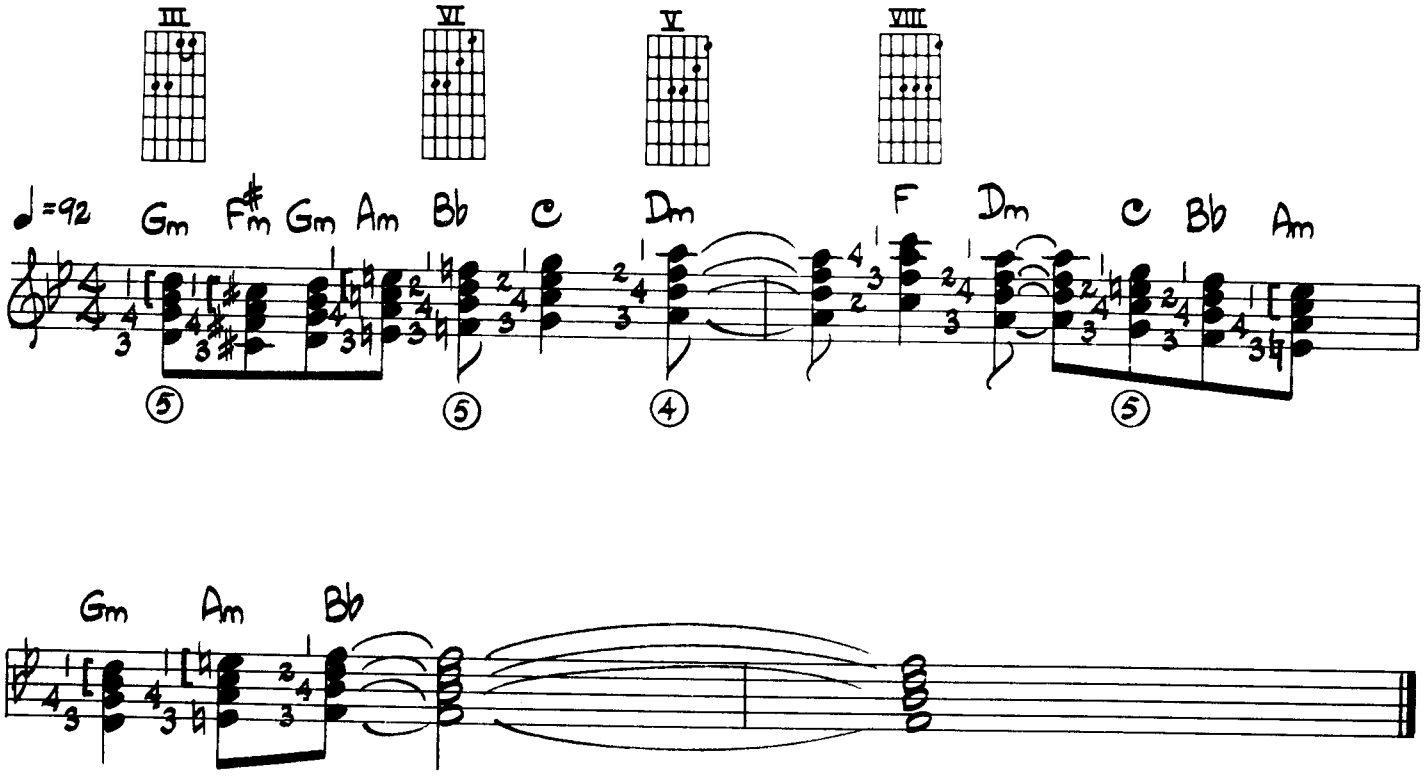
Example 25 offers exercises in three areas: Contrary motion, parallel motion and expanded voicings.

Ex. 25



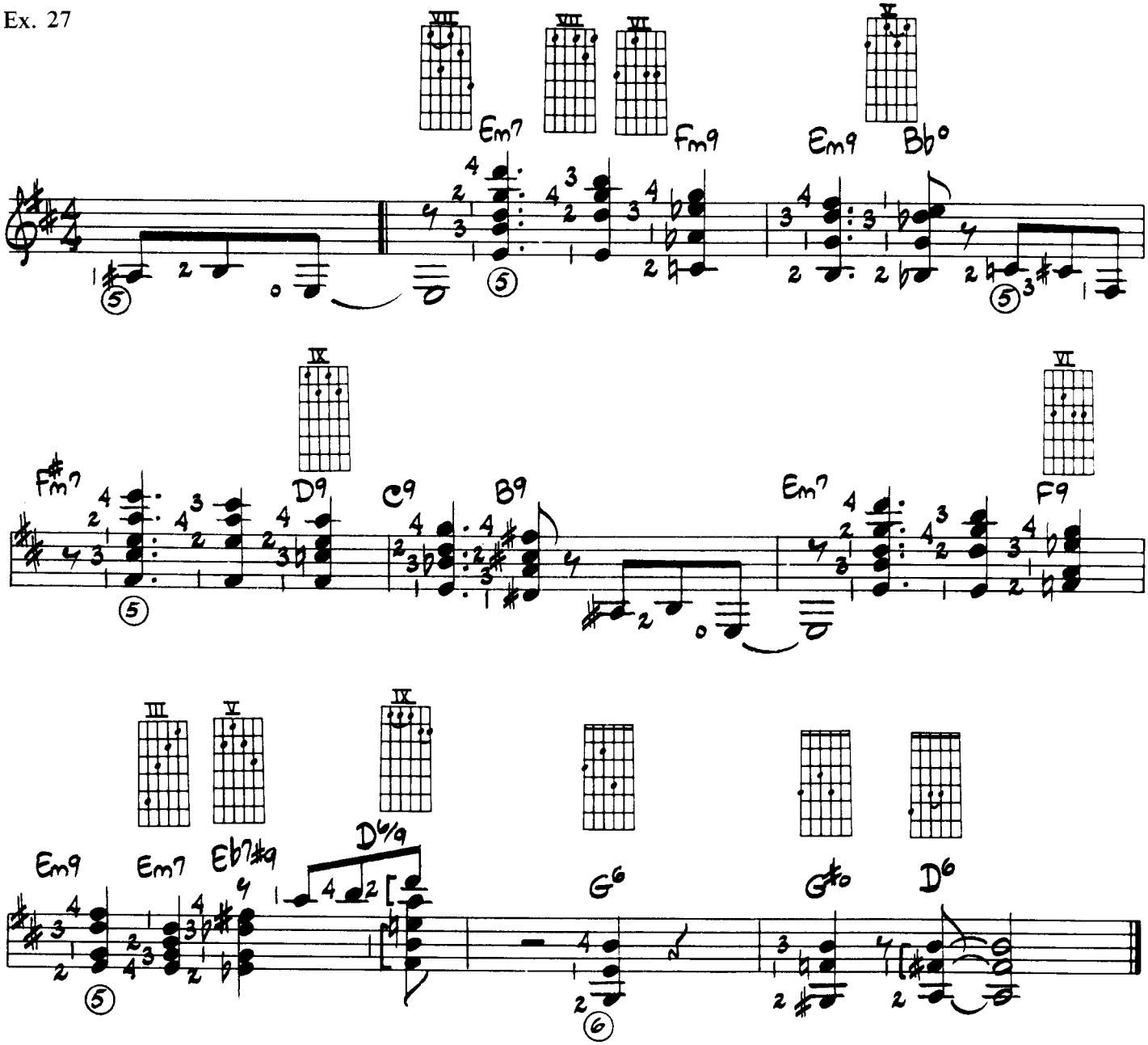
Example 26 is a study in parallel motion with the melody doubled on the bottom. This entire phrase could also be played over a G minor chord.

Ex. 26



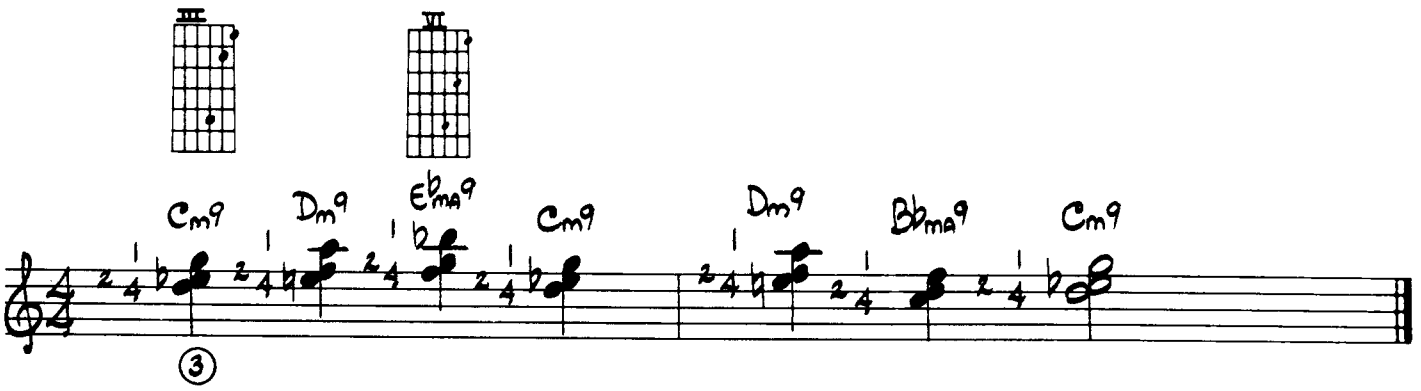
Example 27. Another version of the band type block chord style.

Ex. 27



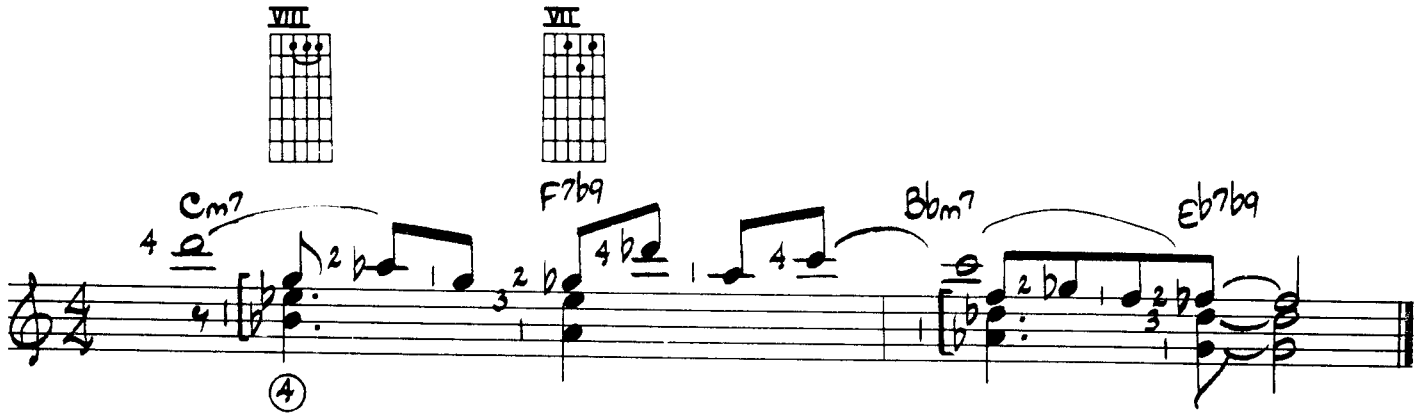
Example 28. Very close (tight) voicings in parallel motion. Note: the 9th of the chord voiced on the bottom next to the 3rd. This voicing can also be played nicely on the inside strings.

Ex. 28



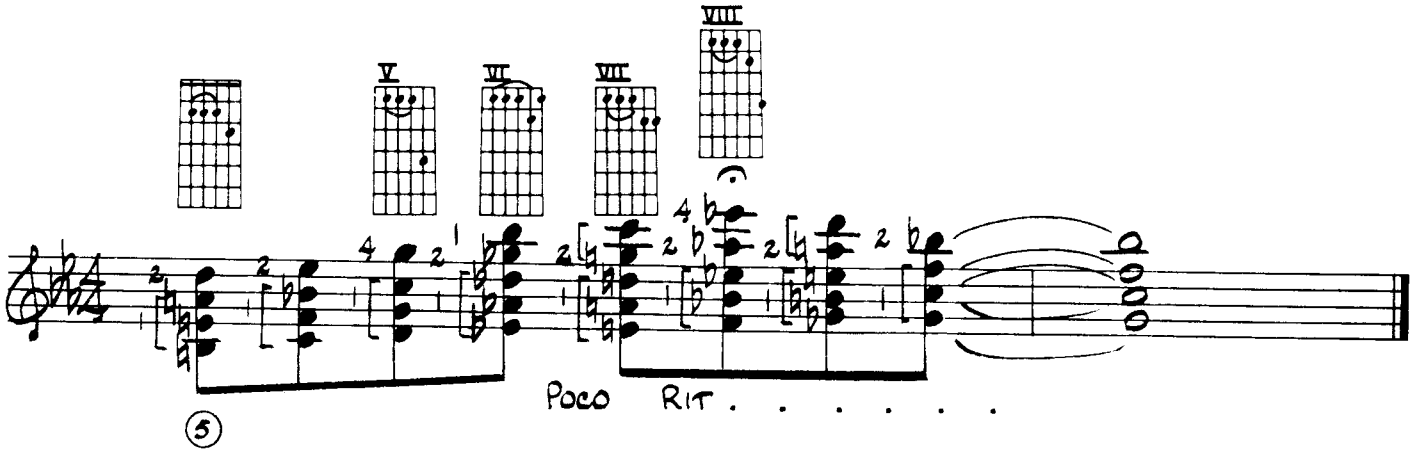
Example 29. Counter line accompaniment. The chords occur after the initial melody note. Sustain the first note of each bar as long as possible.

Ex. 29



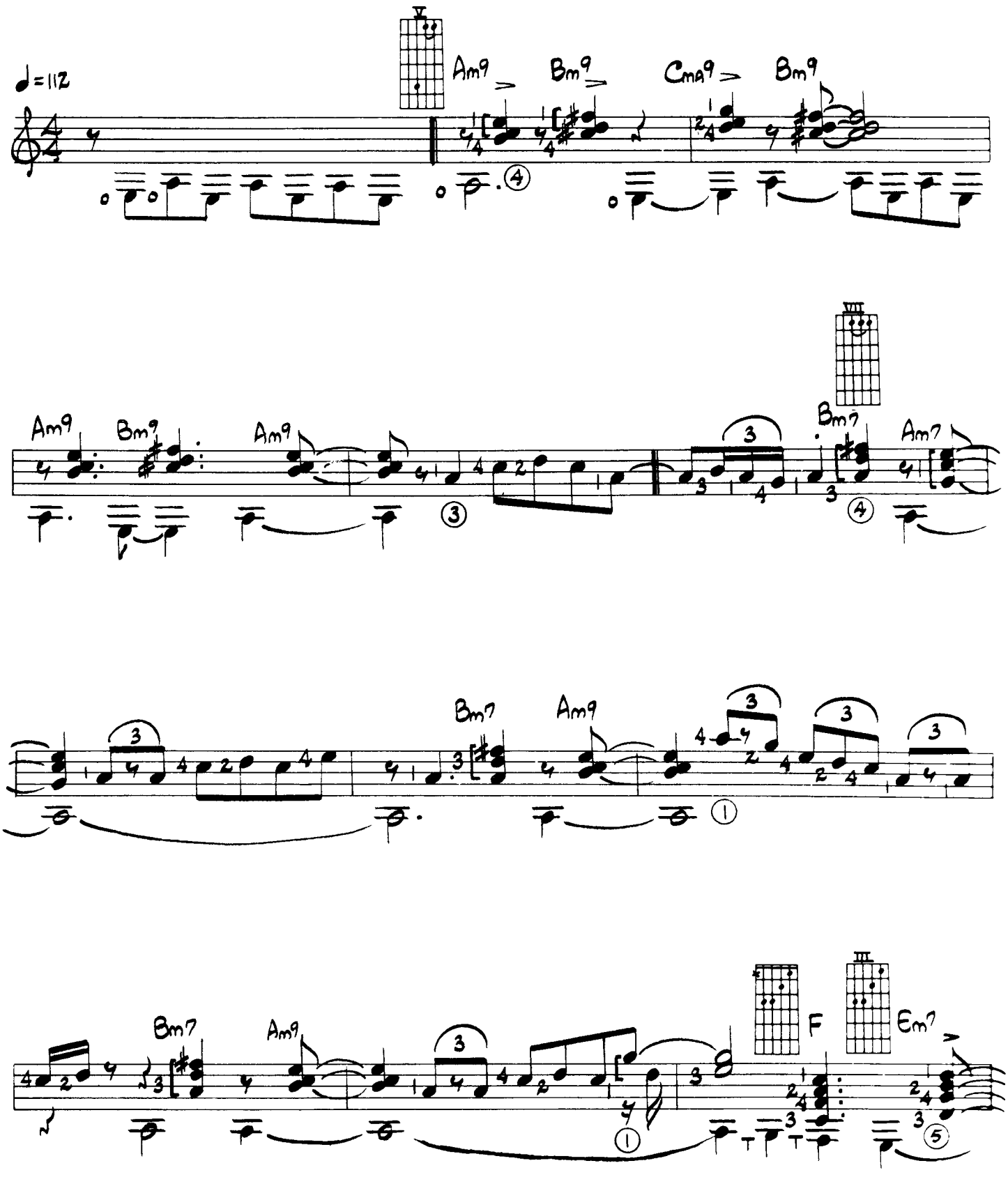
Example 30 has the same melody as Example 7 and demonstrates another way to approach the final chord via chords voiced in Fourths ascending chromatically.

Ex. 30

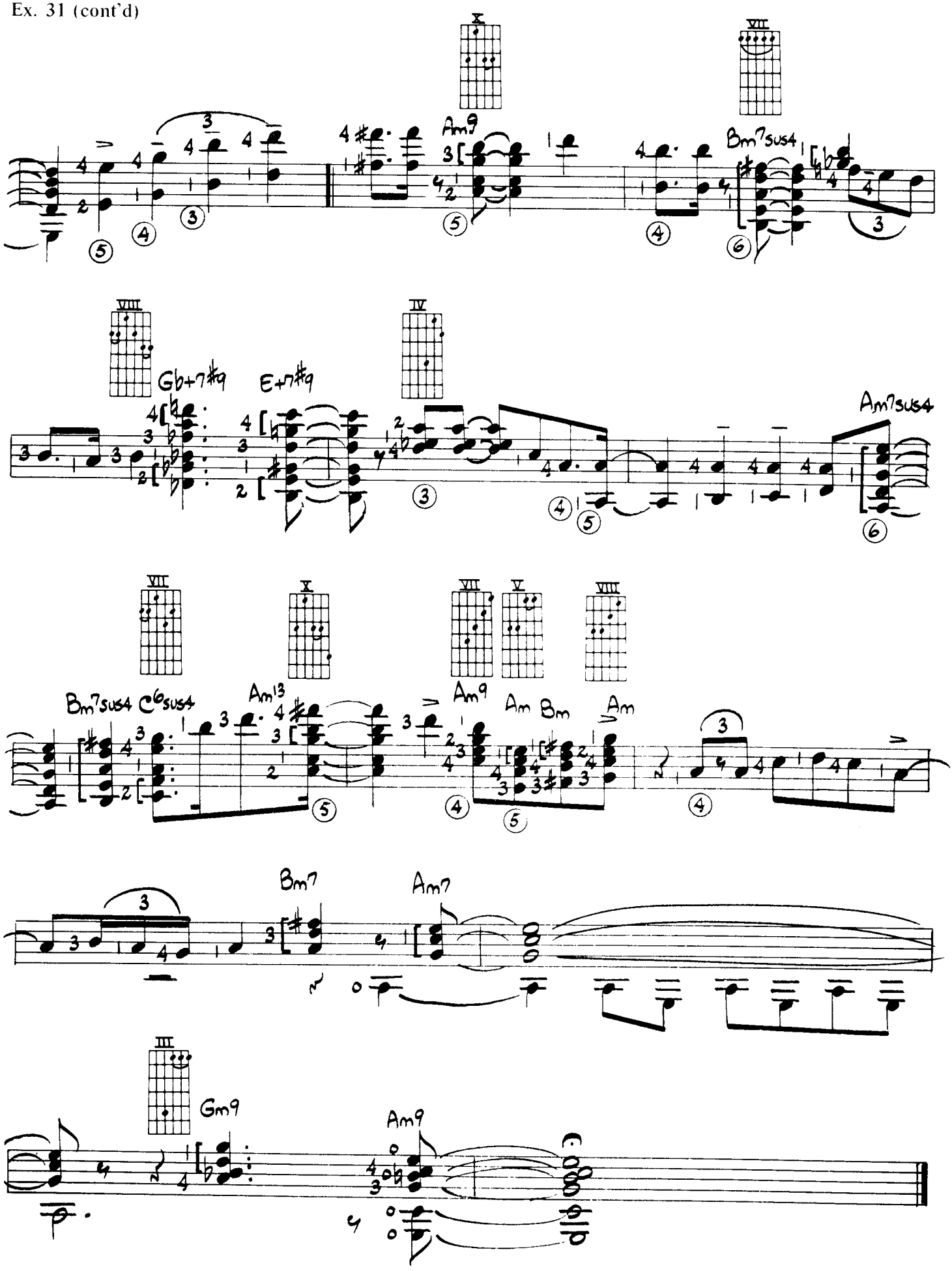


The following three pieces, Examples 31, 32 and 33, are structurally and harmonically fairly simple but demonstrate some ways to generate color and variety without destroying the basic simplicity of the tune. Look for short chord punctuations, open and closed voicings.

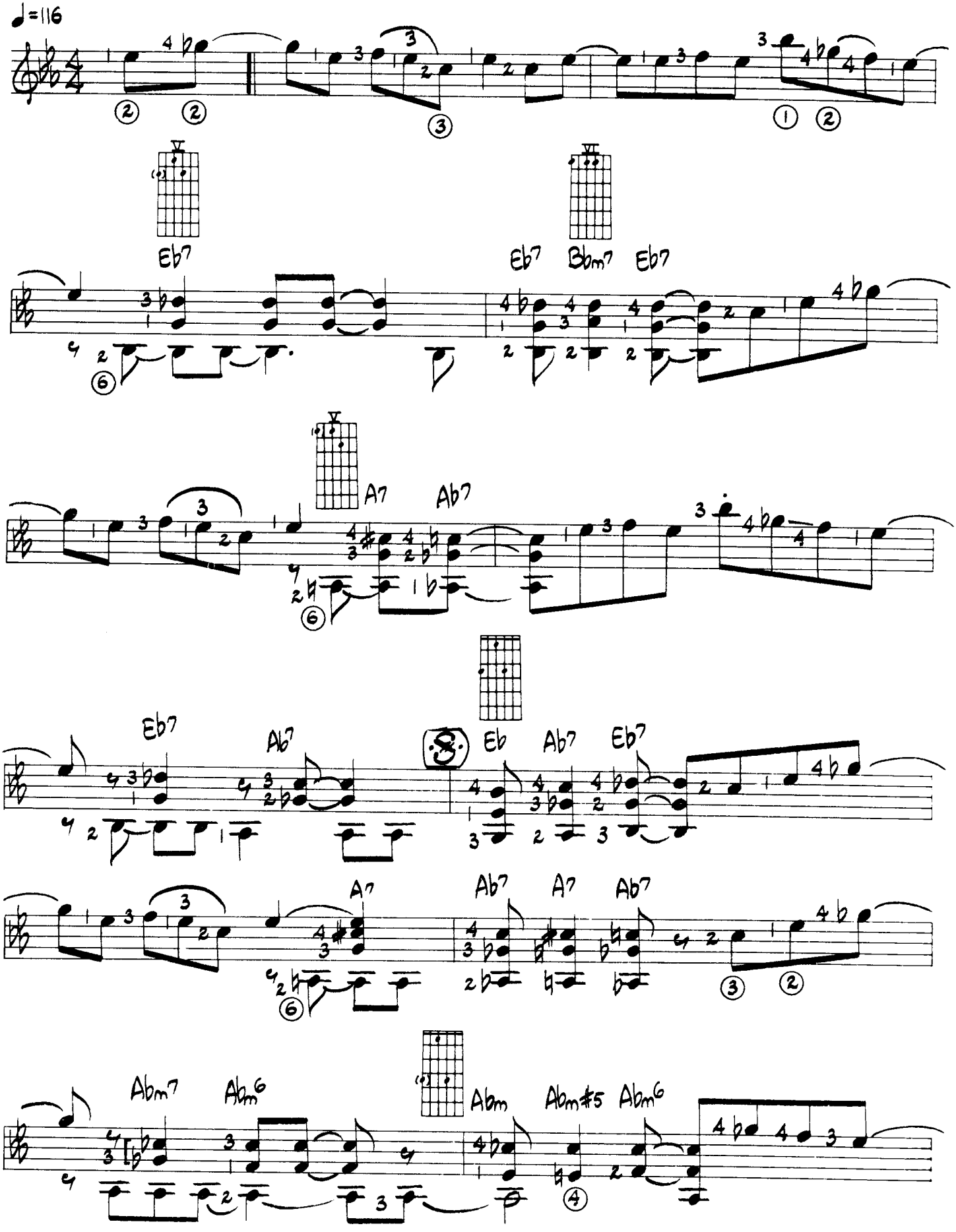
Ex. 31



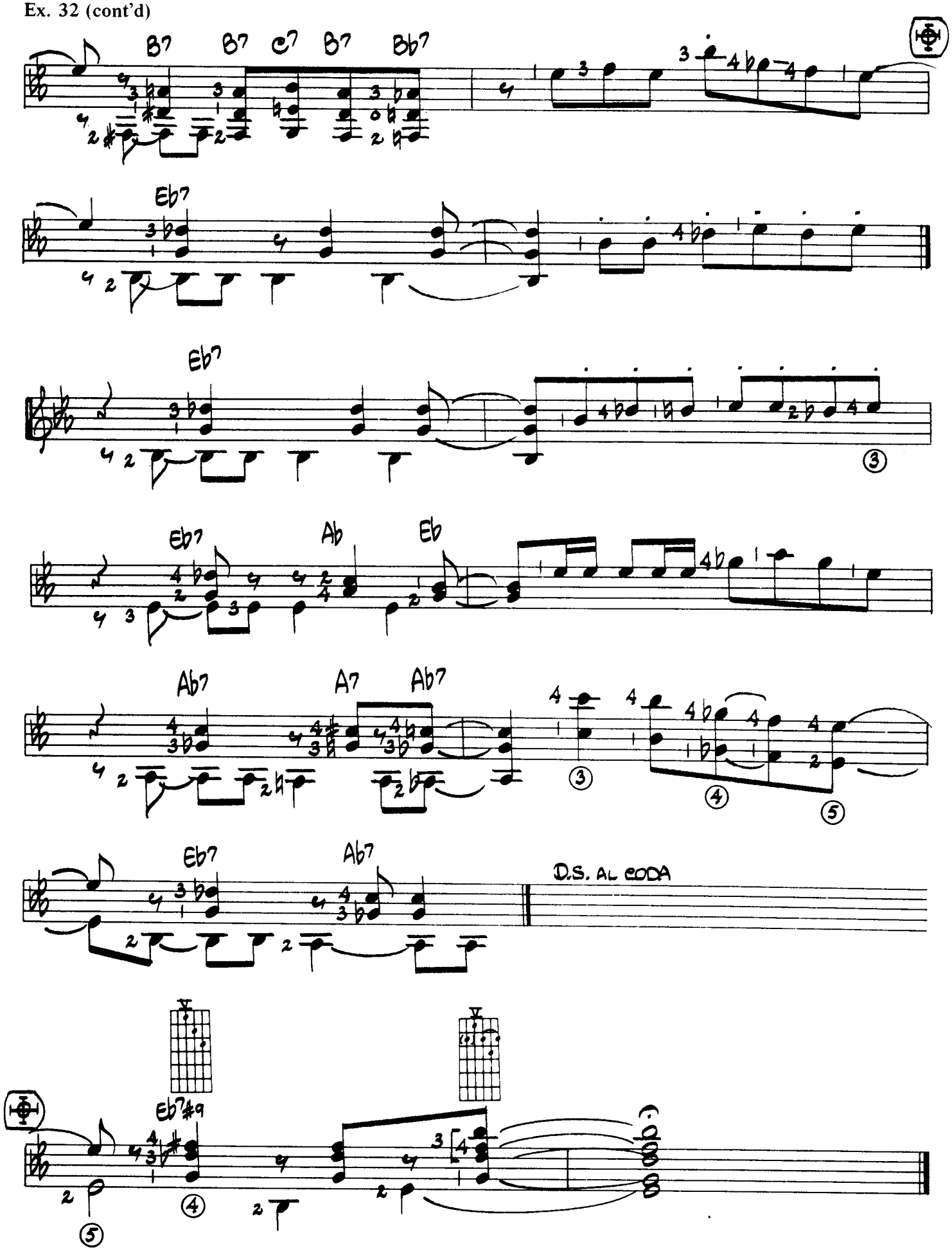
Ex. 31 (cont'd)


Am9
Bm7sus4
Gb+7#9
E+7#9
Am7sus4
Bm7sus4
C6sus4
Am13
Am9
Am Bm
Am
Bm7
Am7
Gm9
Am9

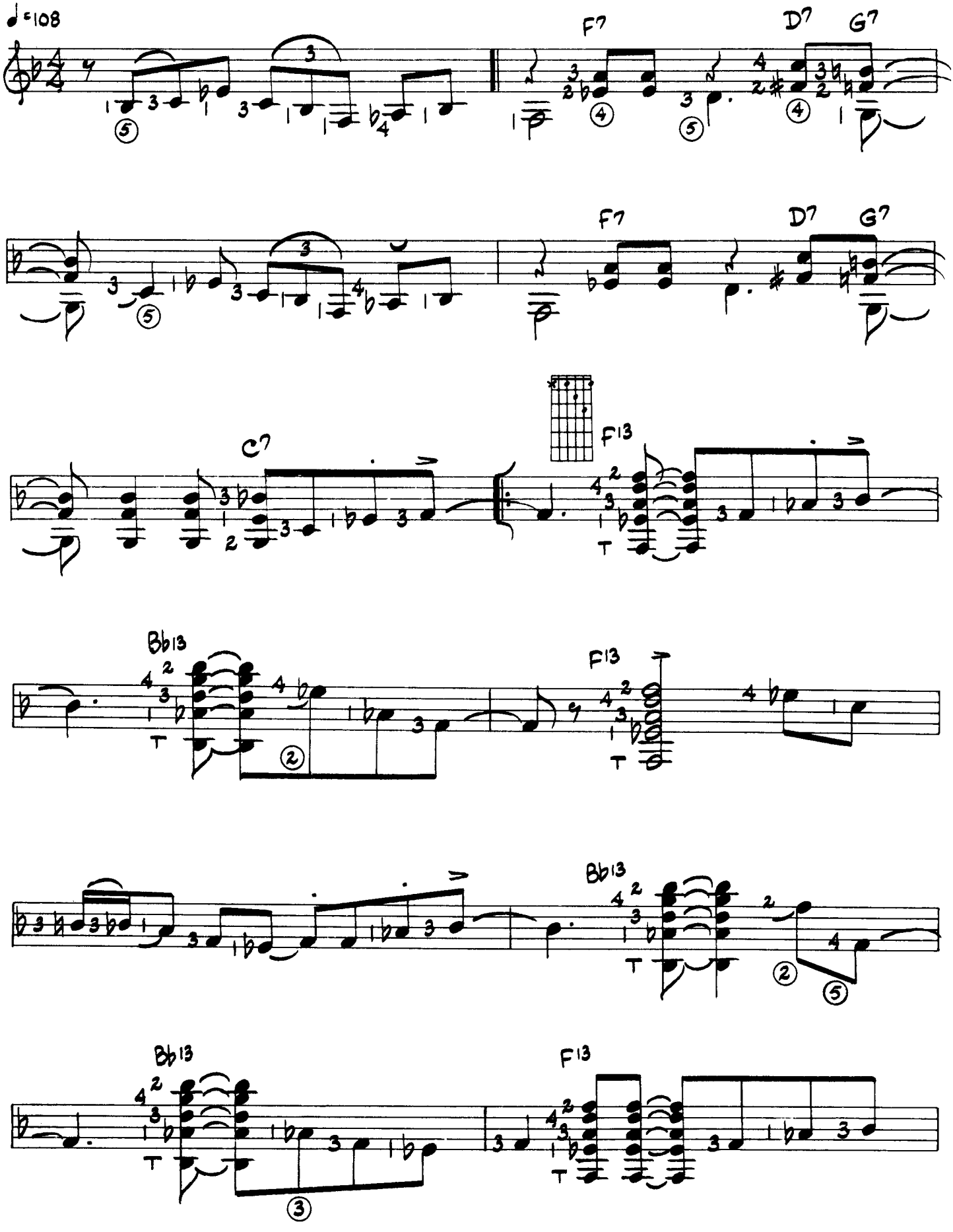
Ex. 32


♩=116
Eb7
Eb7 Bbm7 Eb7
A7 Ab7
Eb7 Ab7
Eb Ab7 Eb7
A7 Ab7 A7 Ab7
Abm7 Abm6
Abm Abm#5 Abm6

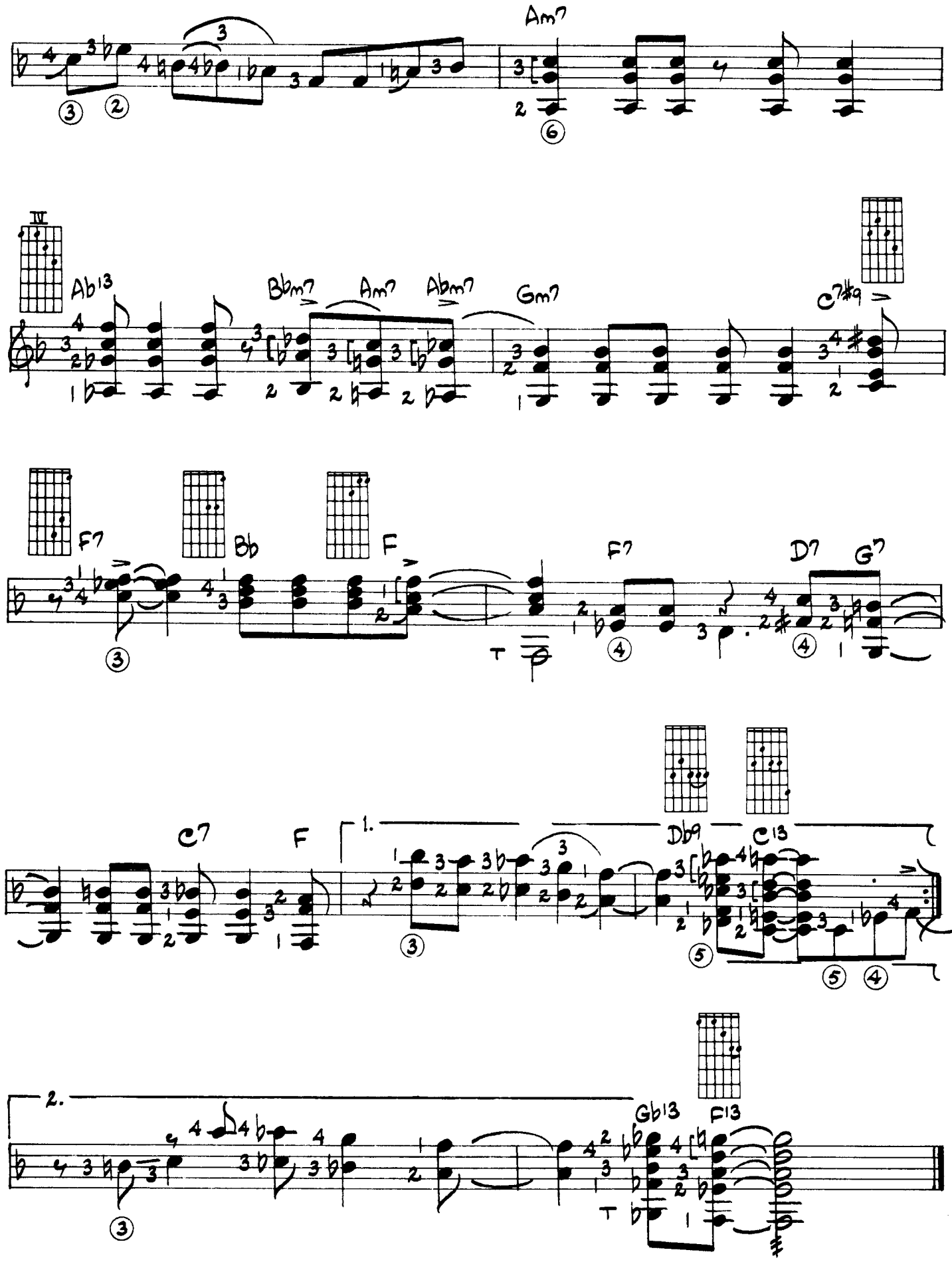
Ex. 32 (cont'd)


B7
B7
C7
B7
Bb7
Eb7
Eb7
Eb7
Ab
Eb
Ab7
A7
Ab7
Eb7
Ab7
D.S. AL CODA
Eb7#9

Ex. 33

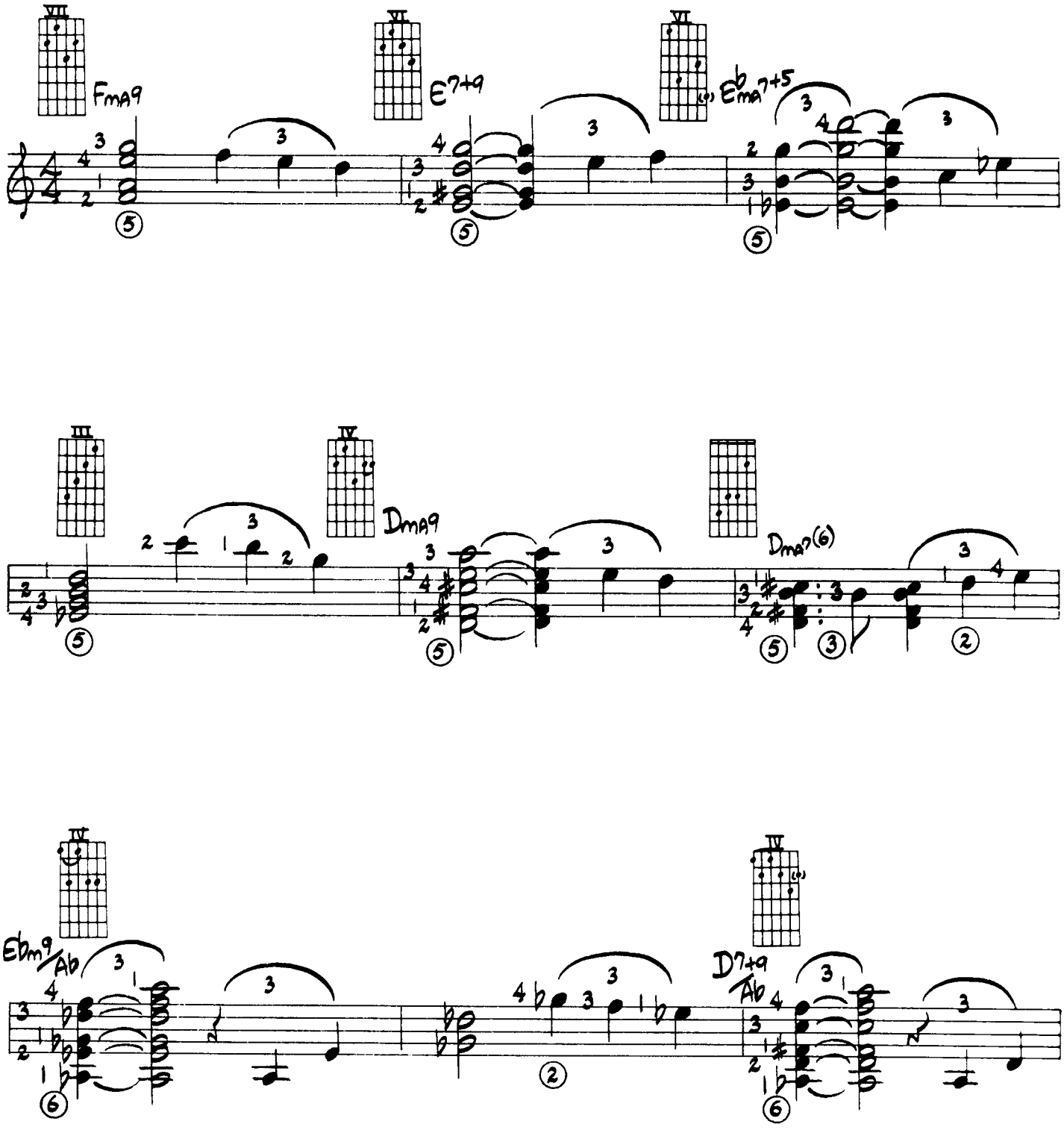


Ex. 33 (cont'd)

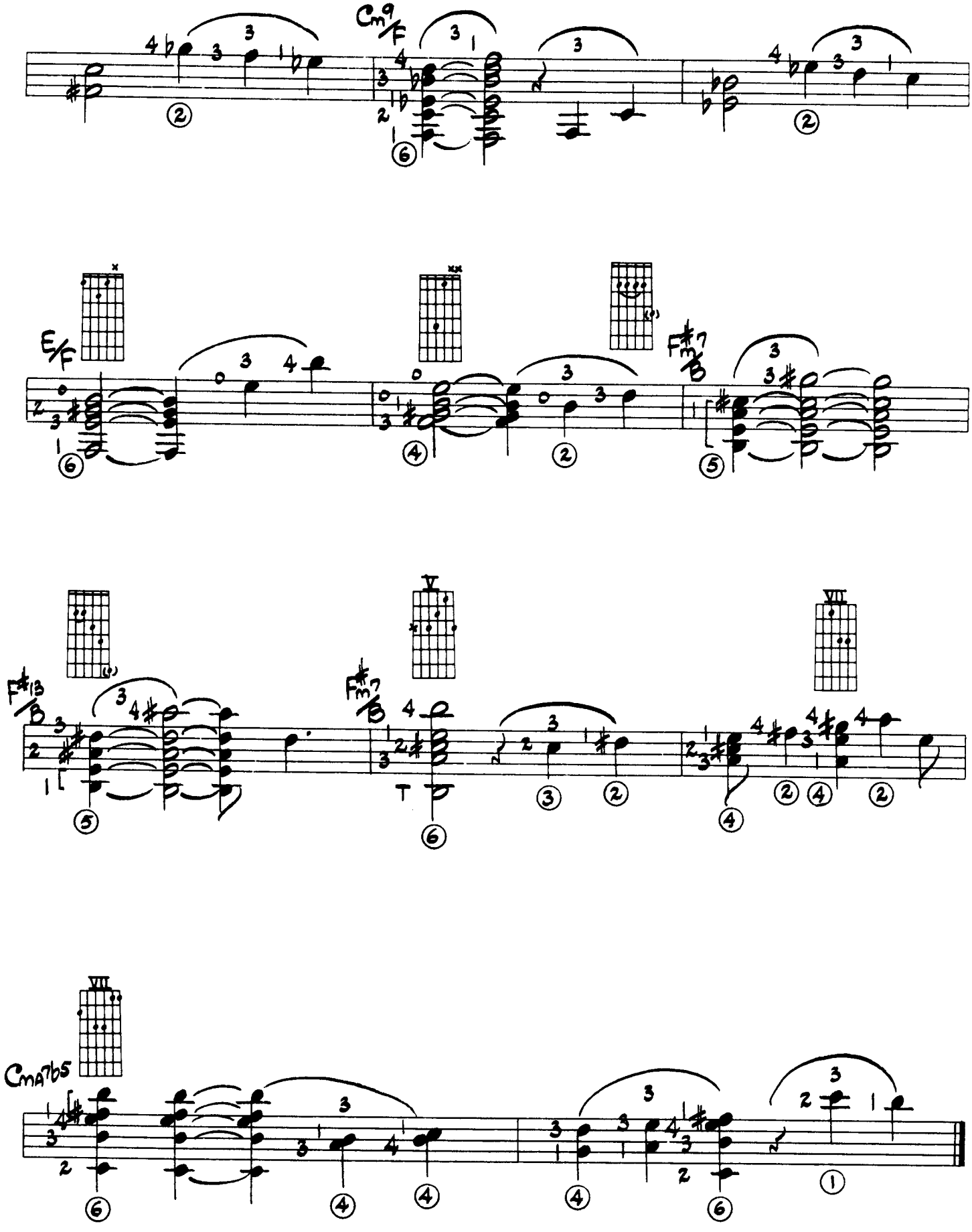

Am7
IV
Ab13
Bbm7
Am7
Abm7
Gm7
C7#9
F7
Bb
F
F7
D7
G7
C7
F
1.
Db9
C13
2.
Gb13
F13

Examples 34 and 35 have, in contrast to Examples 31, 32 and 33, relatively rich harmonies. This is due to the addition of extensions, i.e. +5, +9, etc. You will also observe that notes other than the root are frequently used to form the bass line. These help to produce harmonic textures present in some of the more recent jazz forms. In this example, make a special effort to sustain as many of the chordal tones as possible.

Ex. 34

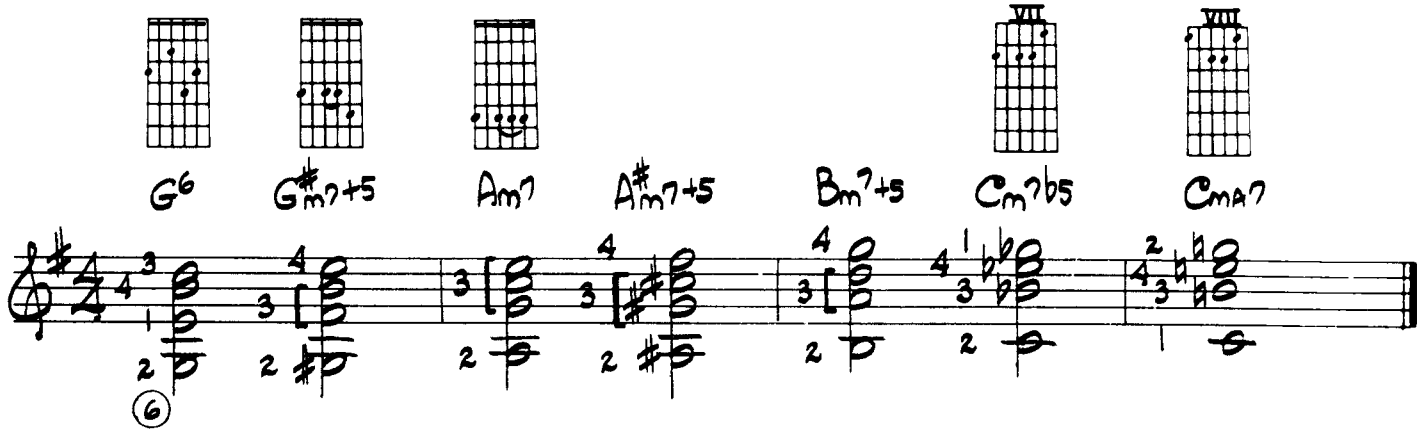


Ex. 34 (cont'd)



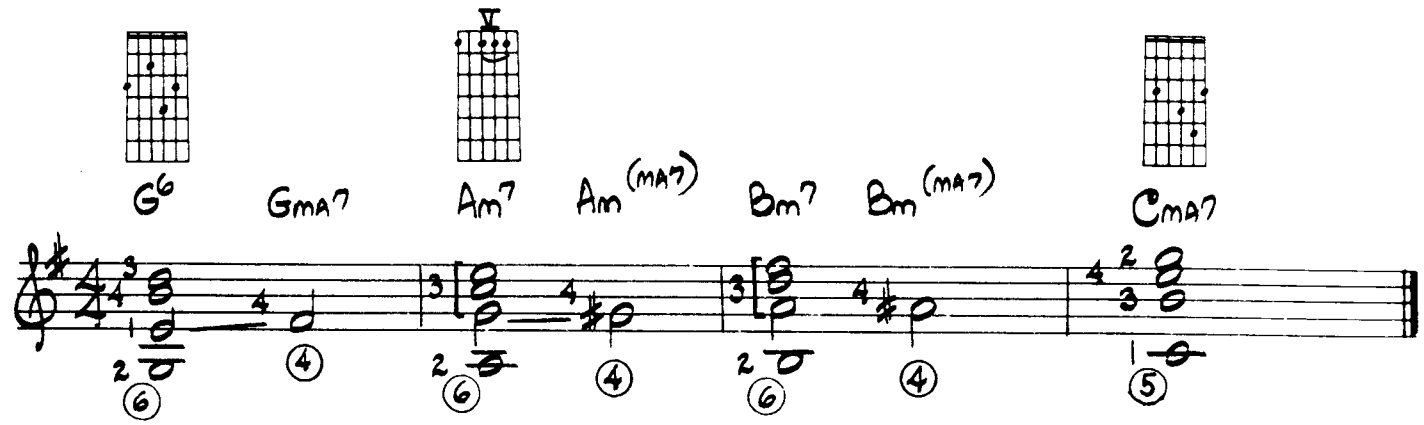
Example 35 shows the primary progression consisting of G6, Am7, Bm7, Cmaj 7 (one chord per bar) being connected by the passing chords G#m7+5, Am7+5, etc.

Ex. 35



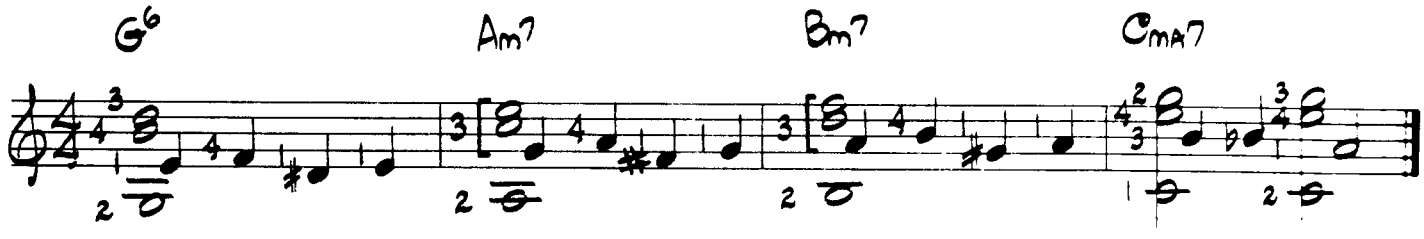
Example 36 is the same chord progression being connected by passing tones (forming a half tone counter line) and altering the chord symbols as indicated Gmaj7, Am$^{(maj\ 7)}$, etc.

Ex. 36



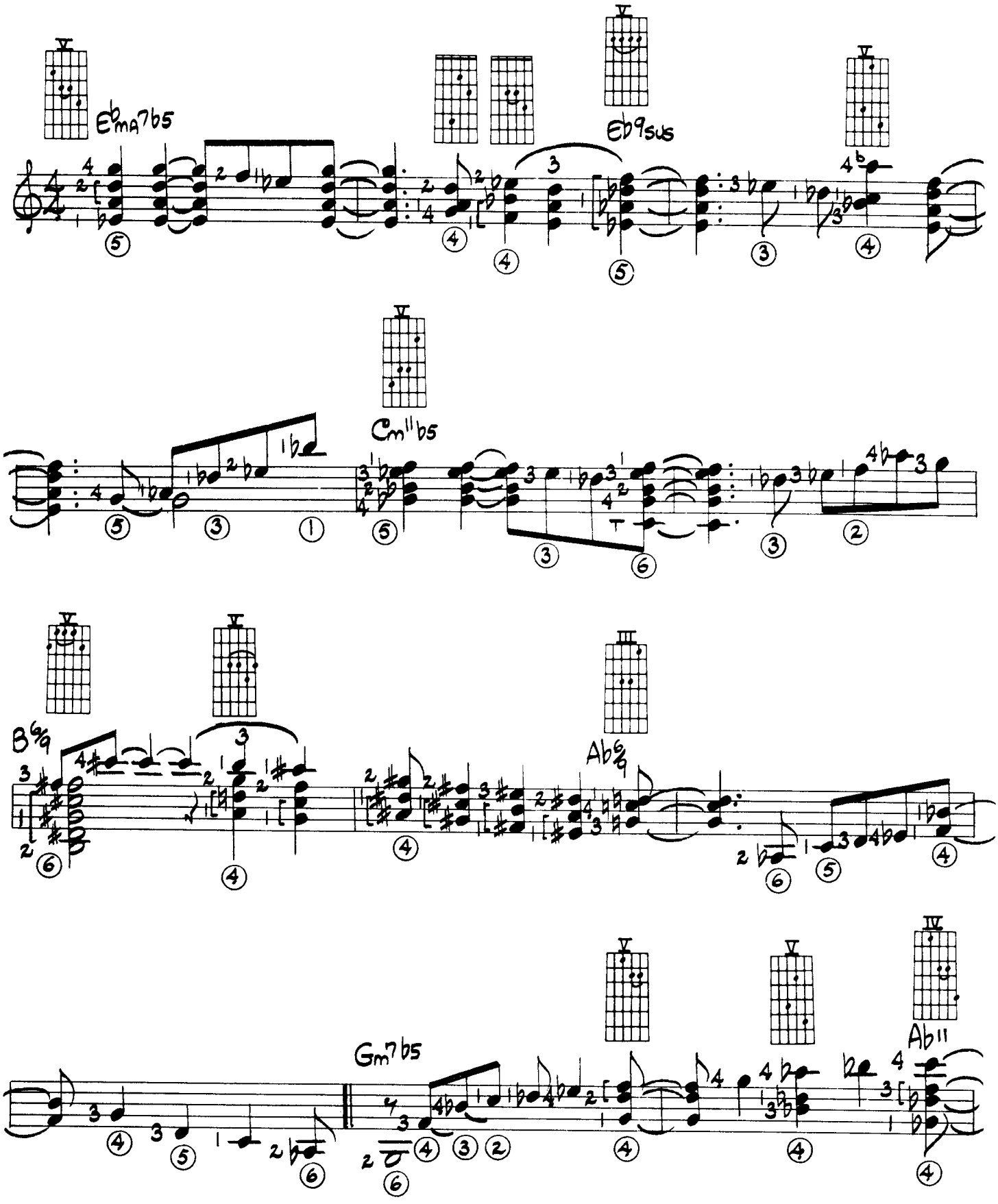
Example 37 shows further development of a counter line resulting from the extension of the passing tones into a more melodic pattern.

Ex. 37

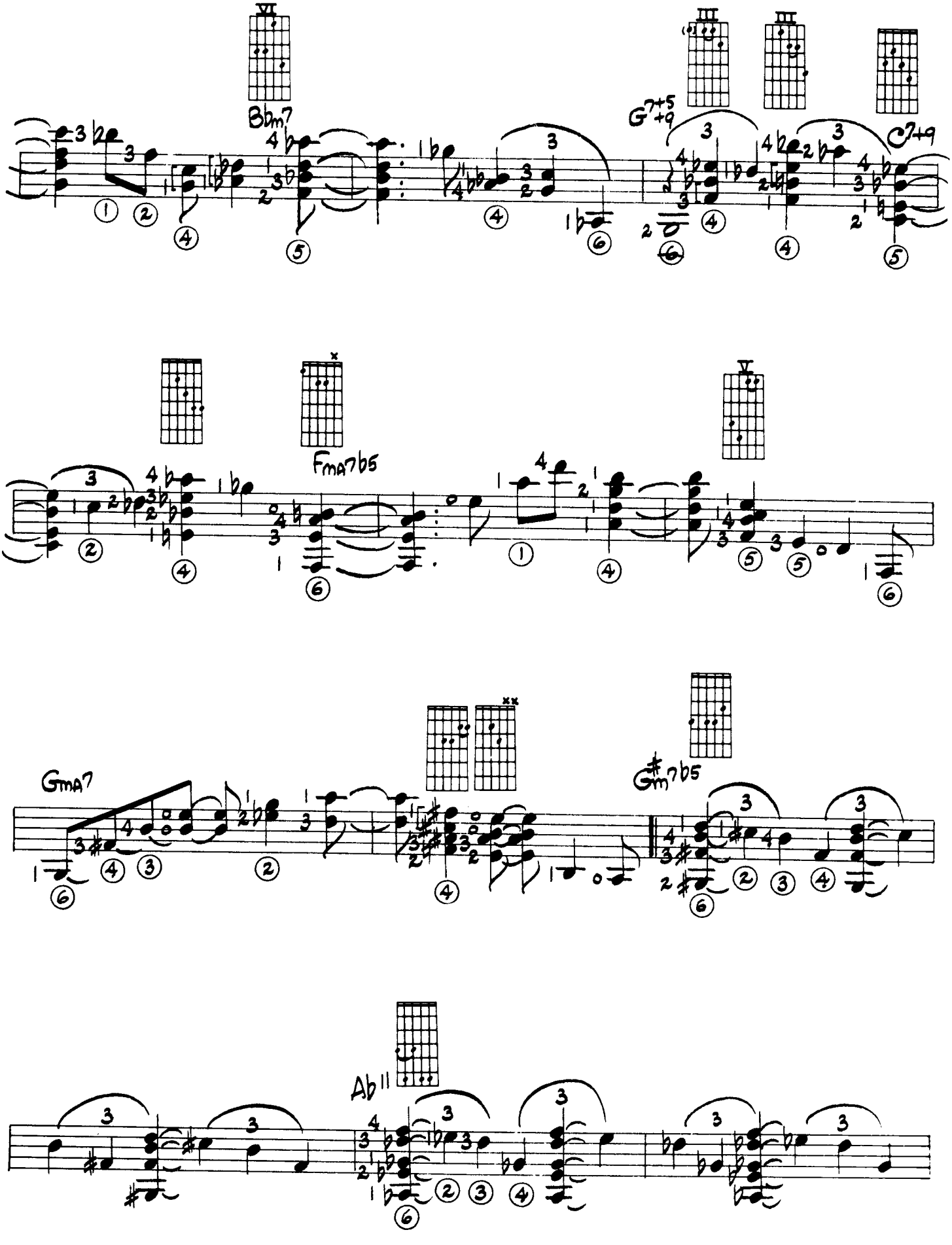


Example 38 is a chord melody solo embodying the structural devices outlined up to this point. Look for vertical textures, contrary motion, parallel motion, counter lines, block chords, sustained chord backgrounds and short chord punctuations.

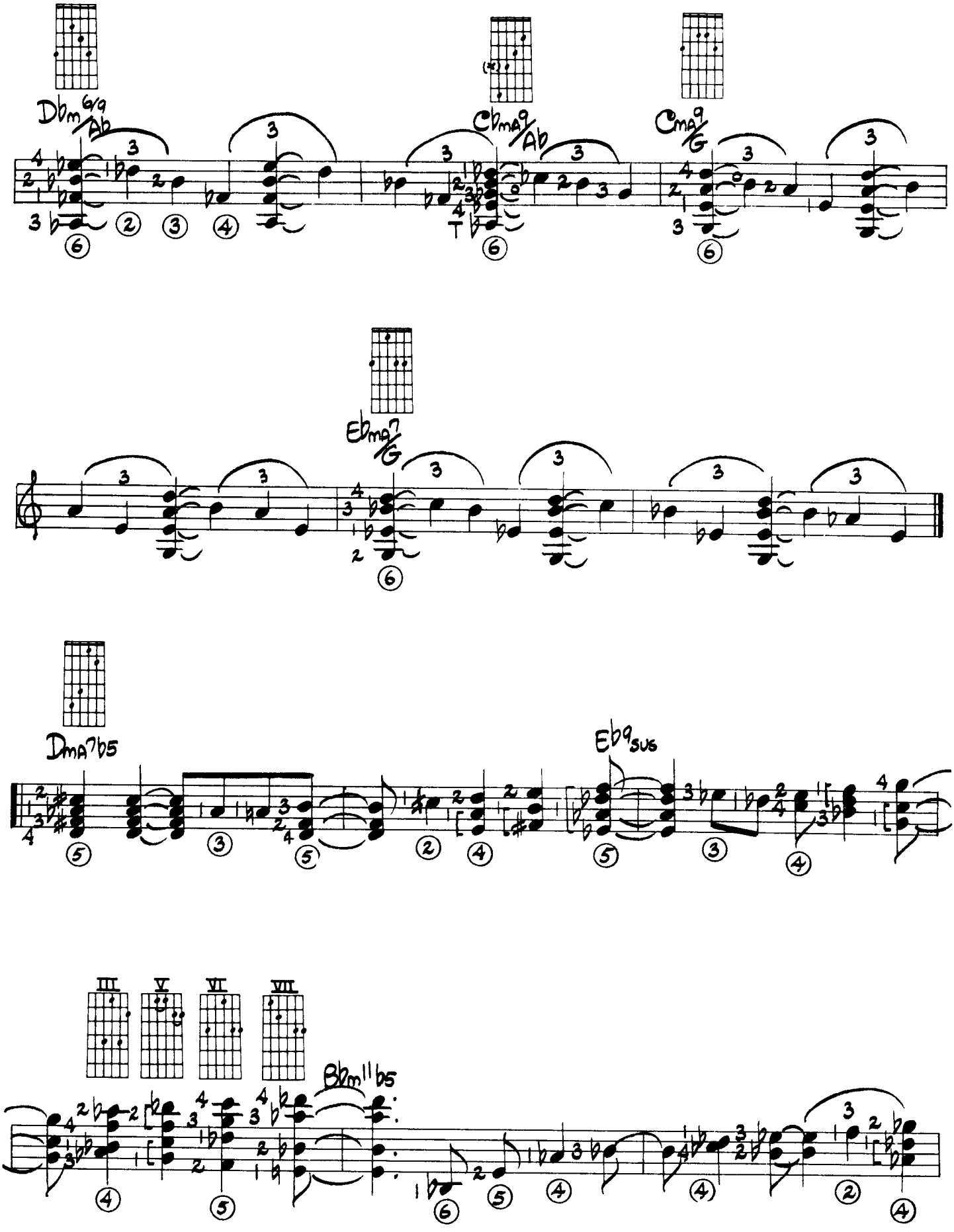
Ex. 38



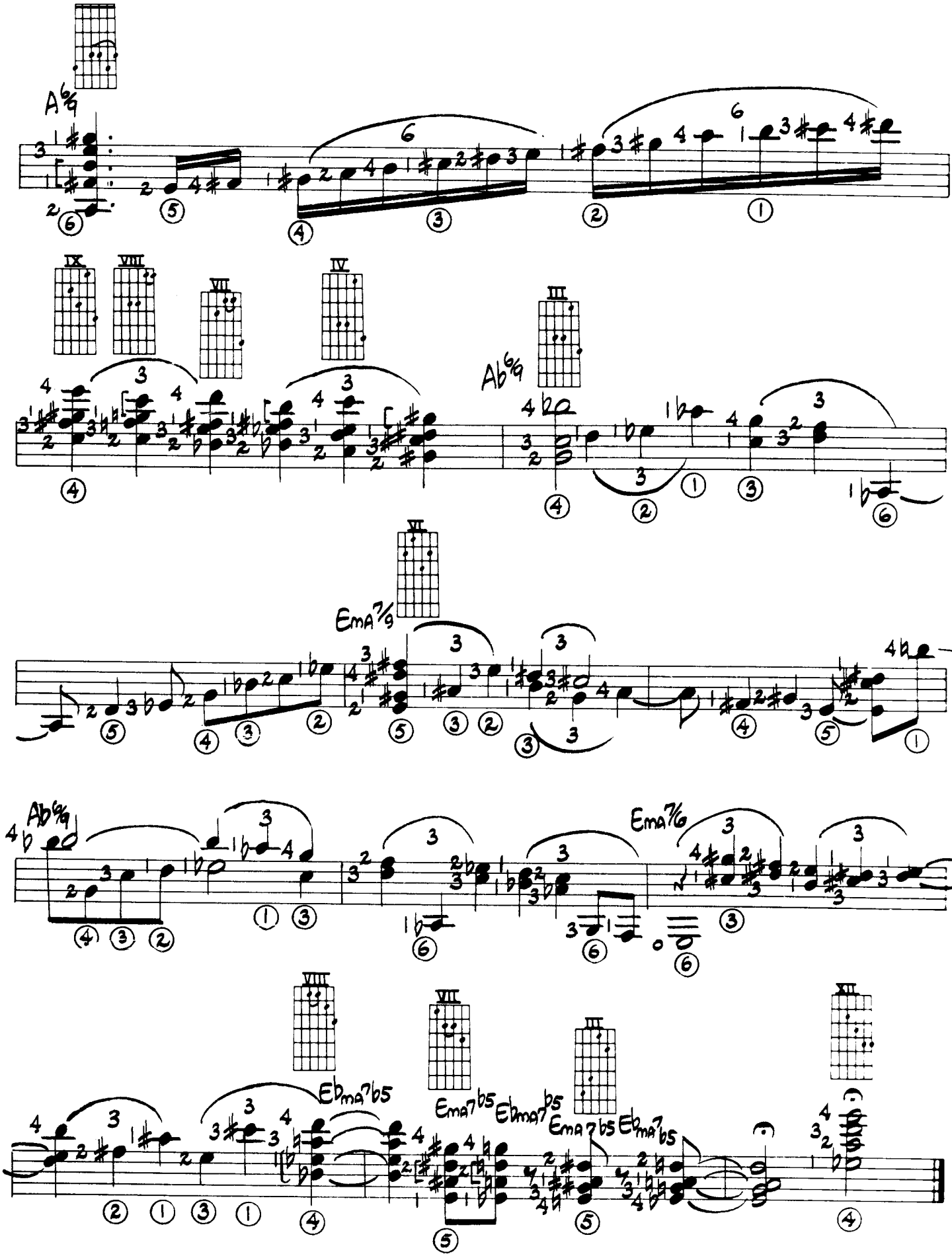
Ex. 38 (cont'd)



Ex. 38 (cont'd)


Dbm6/9
Ab
Cbmaj9
Ab
Cmaj9
G
Ebmaj7
G
DmA7b5
Eb9sus
III
V
VI
VII
Bbm11b5

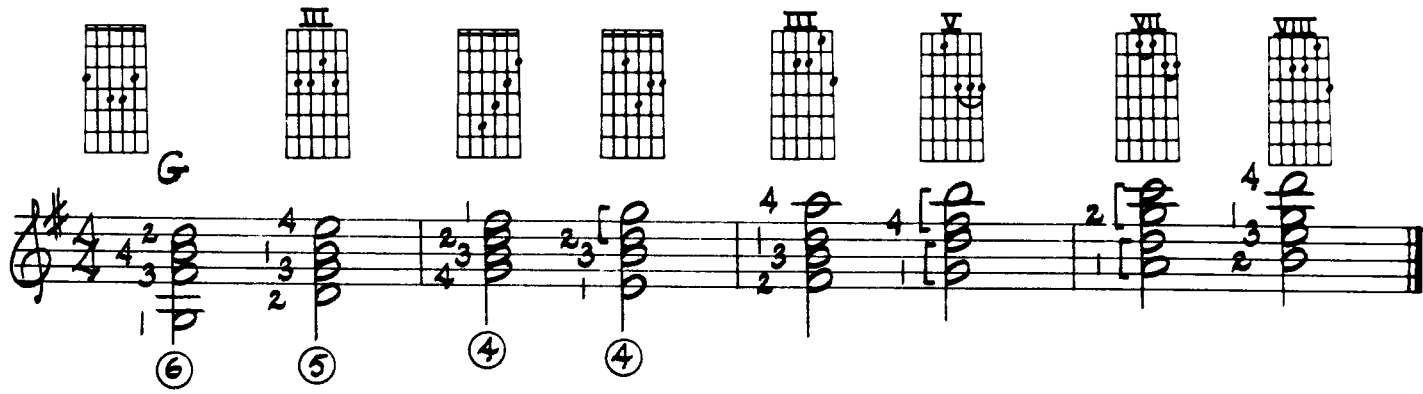
Ex. 38 (cont'd)


A6/9
Ab6/9
Ema7/9
Ab6/9
Ema7/6
Ebma7b5
Ema7b5
Ebma7b5
Ema7b5
Ebma7b5

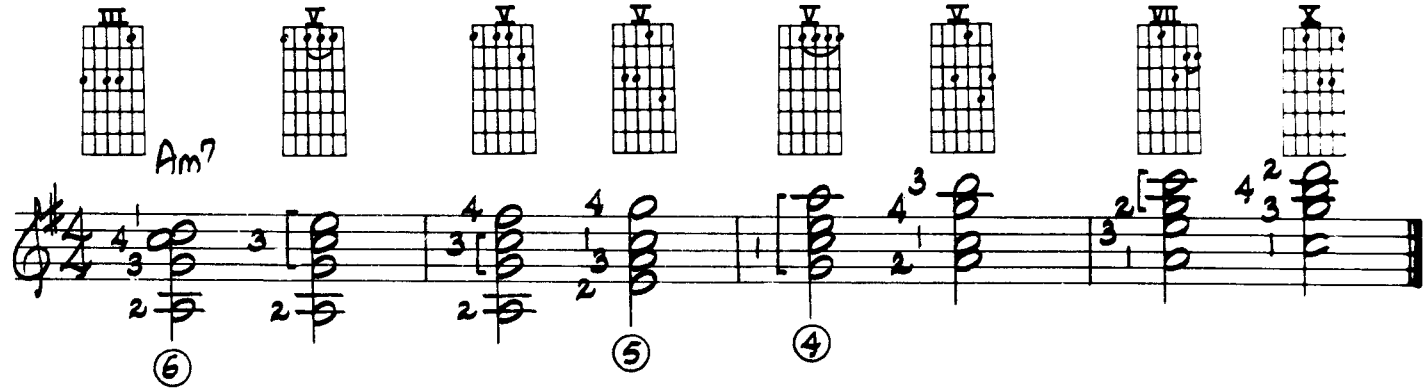
With few exceptions, it is possible to find a common, garden variety chord voicing for the guitar (of the type found in many chord encyclopedias) that can be fingered to include all possible notes that may appear in the melody. It is obvious that if the melody note is placed too low on the staff, you will not have enough strings left to form a satisfactory chord beneath it. Therefore, you will often find it both helpful and necessary to transpose the melody up an octave (this is called "jumping octaves") several times throughout the course of a solo. With experience and finesse, this can be done without losing melodic continuity. It is possible however to play a low register scale or melody (as low as the 4th string but no lower) with some fragment of the chord beneath.

Examples 39, 40 and 41 show a melody line written high enough to play full chord voicings beneath, and briefly explore the problem of finding chord fingerings that will accommodate various melodic possibilities. These examples show a 'G' diatonic scale harmonized with the II, V and I chords, the three basic chord types found in diatonic harmony. Note: the addition of the extensions Maj. 7th, 6th, 9th, etc., only affect the color and texture of the chord and do not change its scale function or its role in the progression.

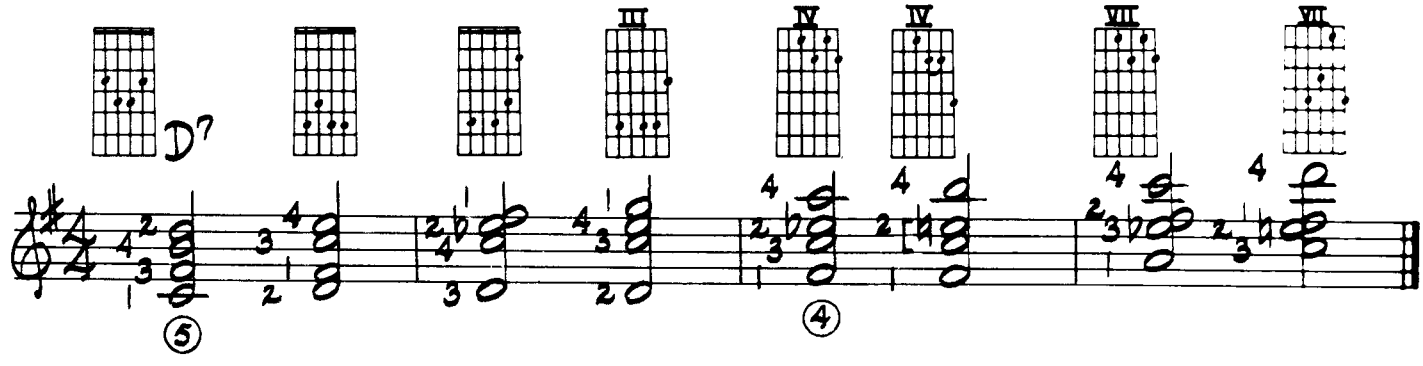
Ex. 39



Ex. 40

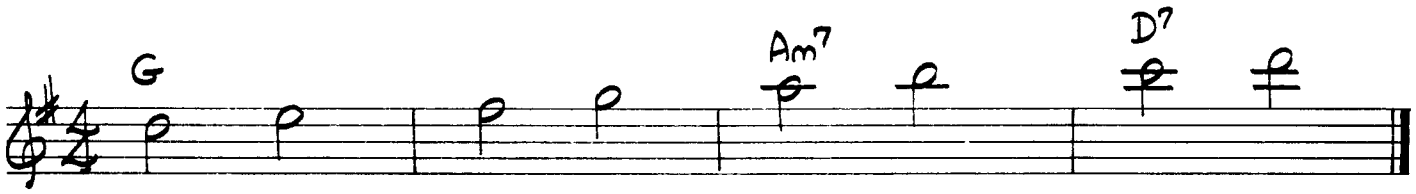


Ex. 41



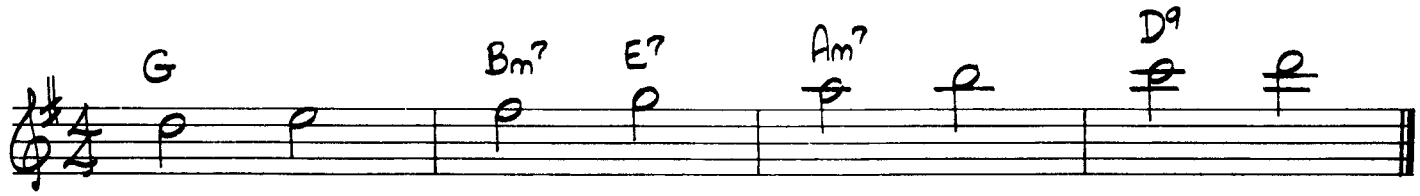
Example 42. Using the indicated chord, find a suitable fingering with which to harmonize the melody. Refer to Examples 39, 40 and 41.

Ex. 42



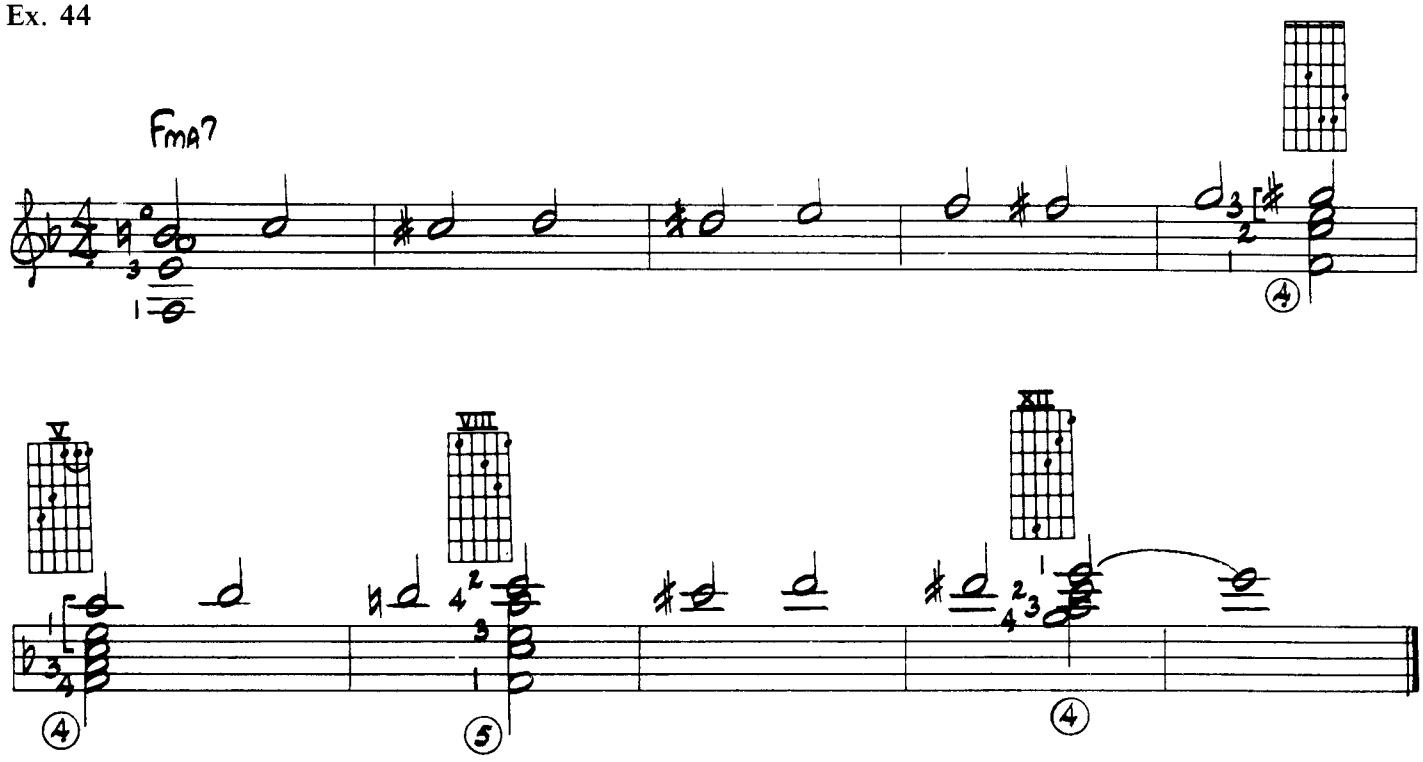
Example 43. Now, as in Example 42 above, harmonize the melody to fit the chord symbols indicated, making the necessary transposition to the key of 'A' in bar 2, but do not change the melody.

Ex. 43



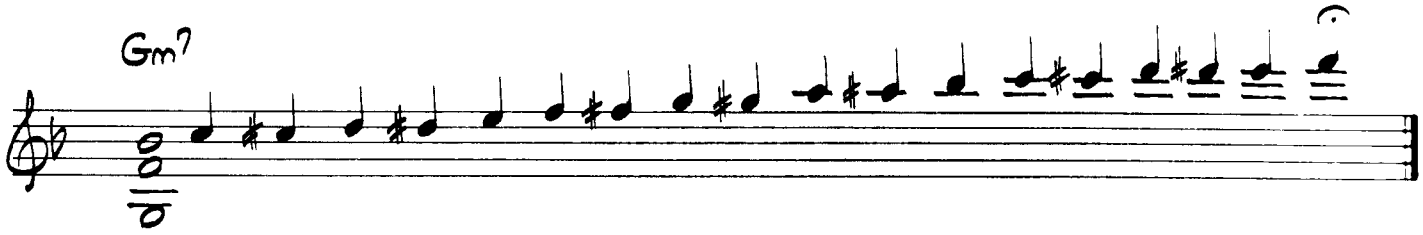
Example 44. Any chromatic note within finger range can always be harmonized with a given chord form, although it may occasionally be dissonant.

Ex. 44



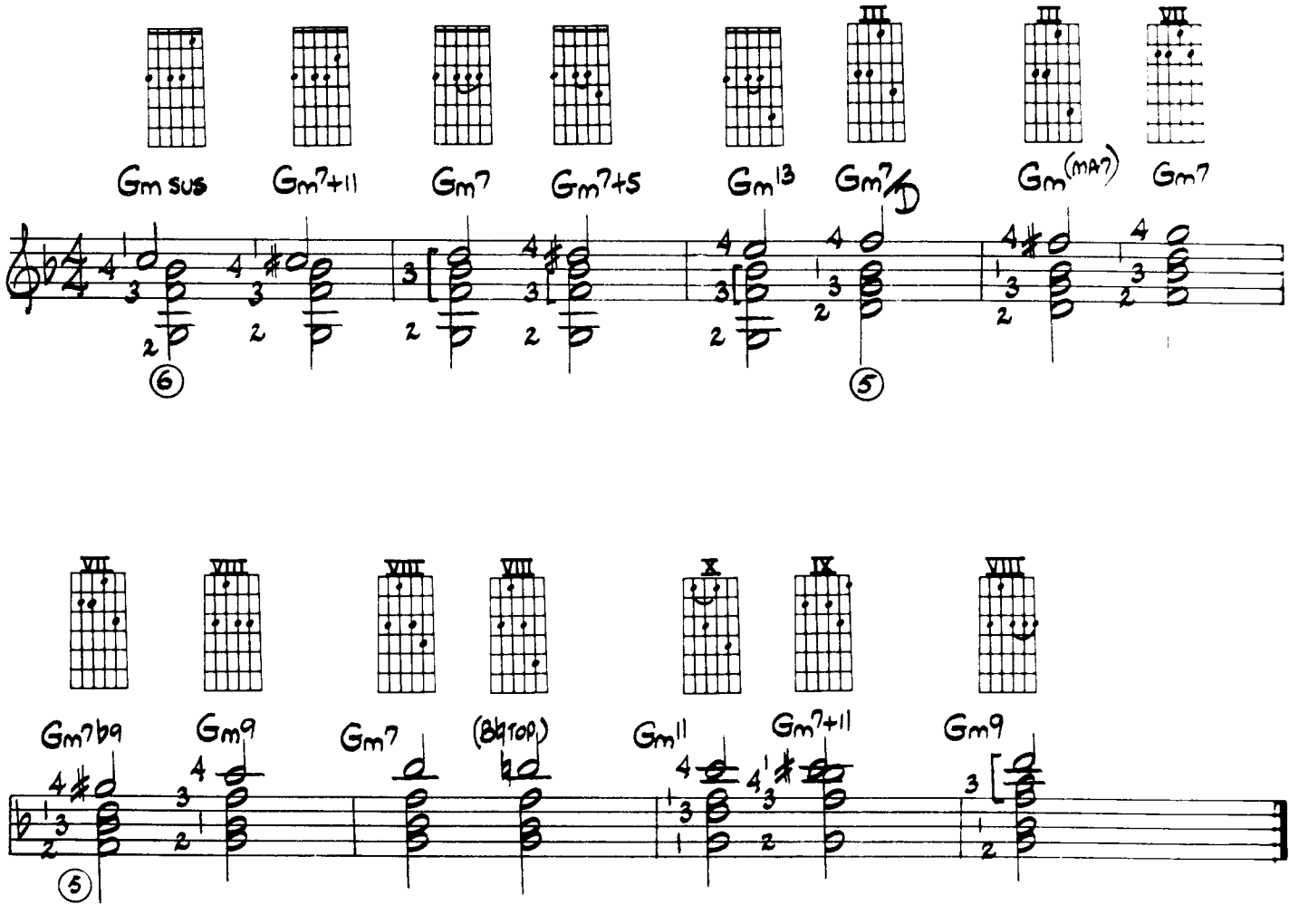
Example 45. Experiment finding chord voicings of Gm7 that can be played beneath each of the chromatic tones.

Ex. 45



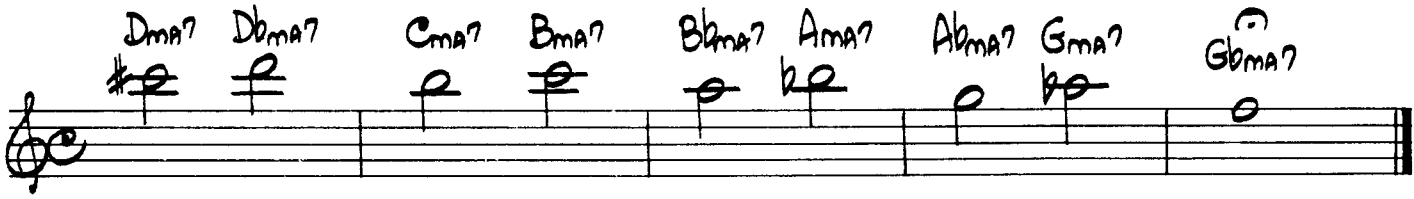
Example 46 offers one possible solution to Example 45.

Ex. 46

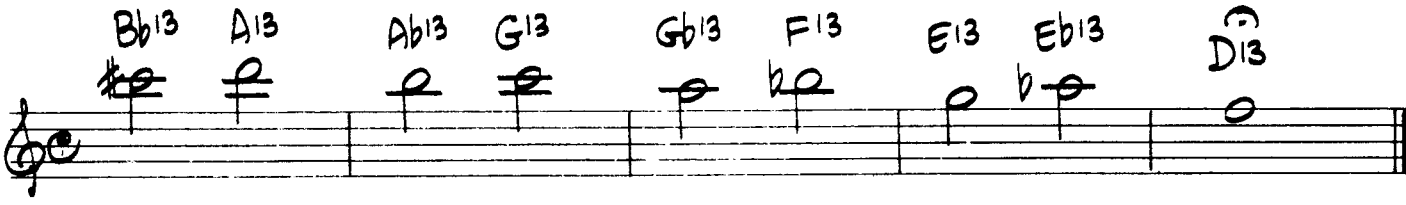


Examples 47, 48 and 49 consist of the same melody with major, dominant and minor chords descending chromatically. In each case the melody and the harmony have their own force and are independent of each other. Note the interesting extensions that occur as a result of this independence. See A maj. 7 in bar 3, etc

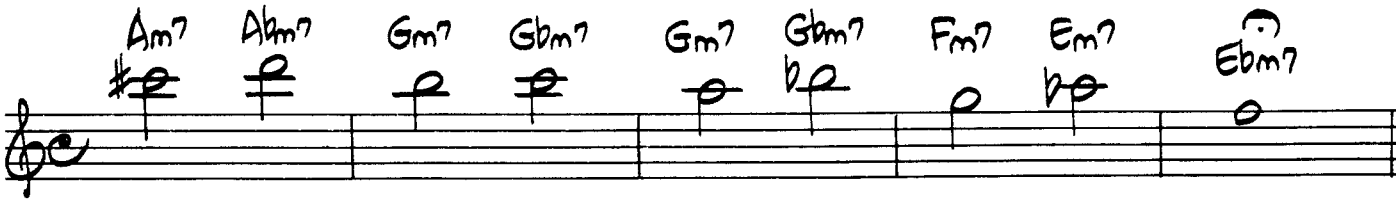
Ex. 47



Ex. 48

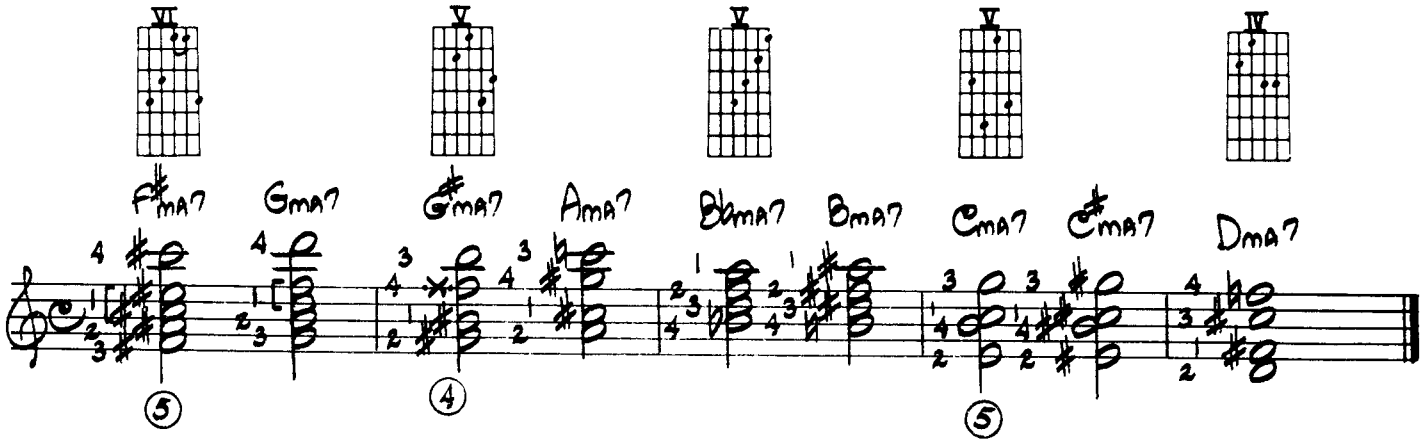


Ex. 49



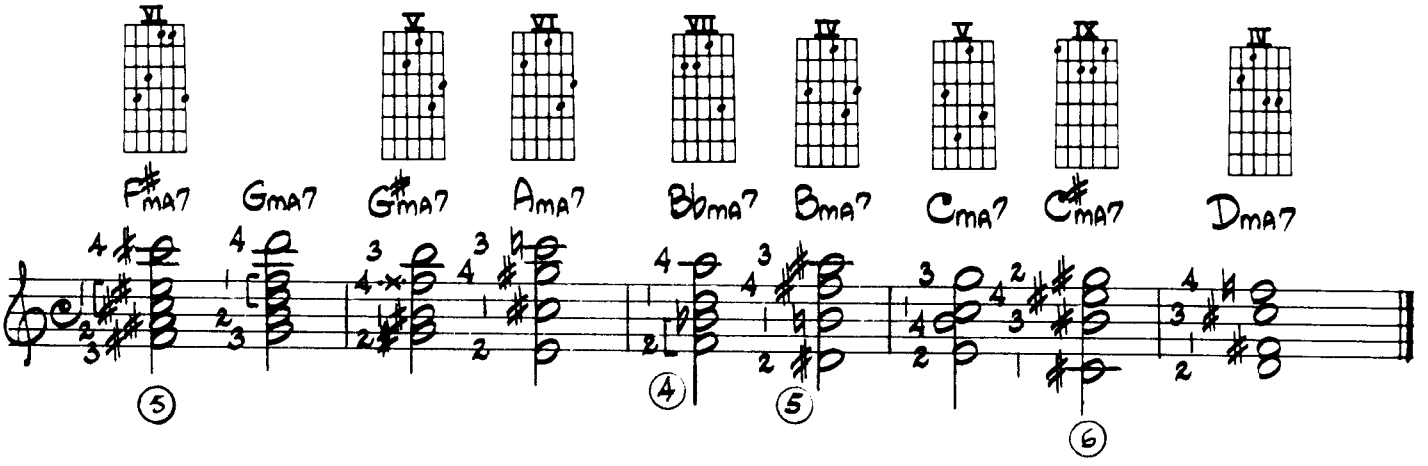
Example 50 consists of the same melody as in Examples 47, 48 and 49 and demonstrates one set of voicings of major 7 chords ascending chormatically.

Ex. 50



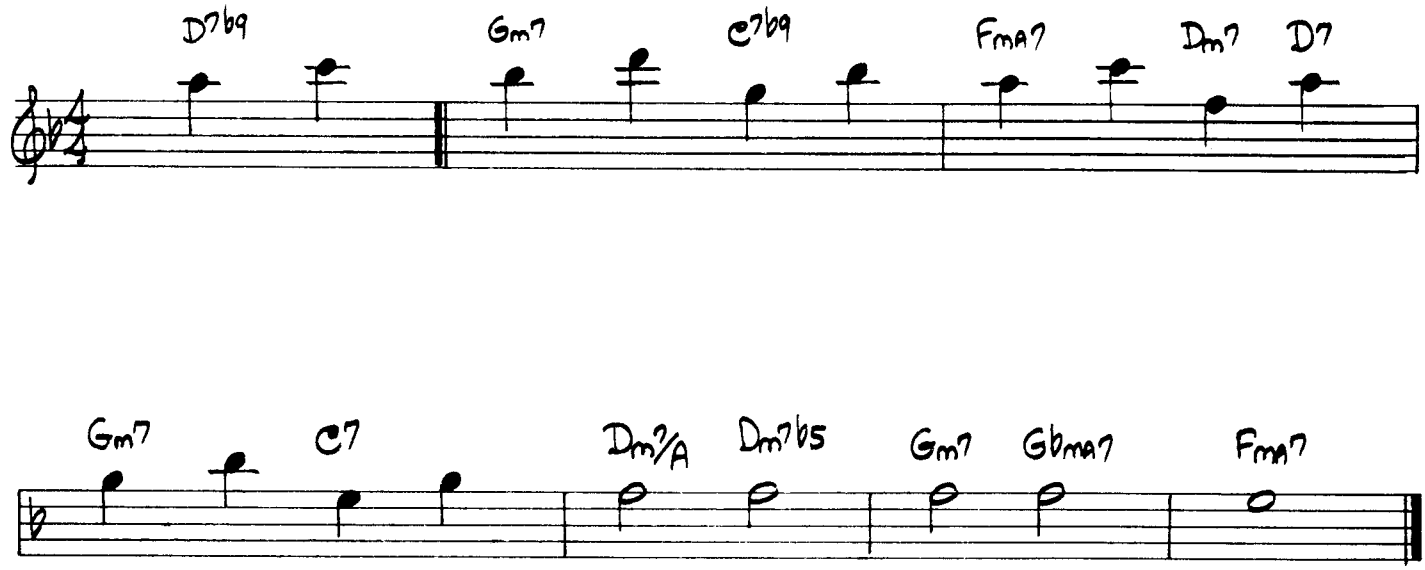
Example 51 shows alternative voicings and consists of the same melody as Example 50 above.

Ex. 51

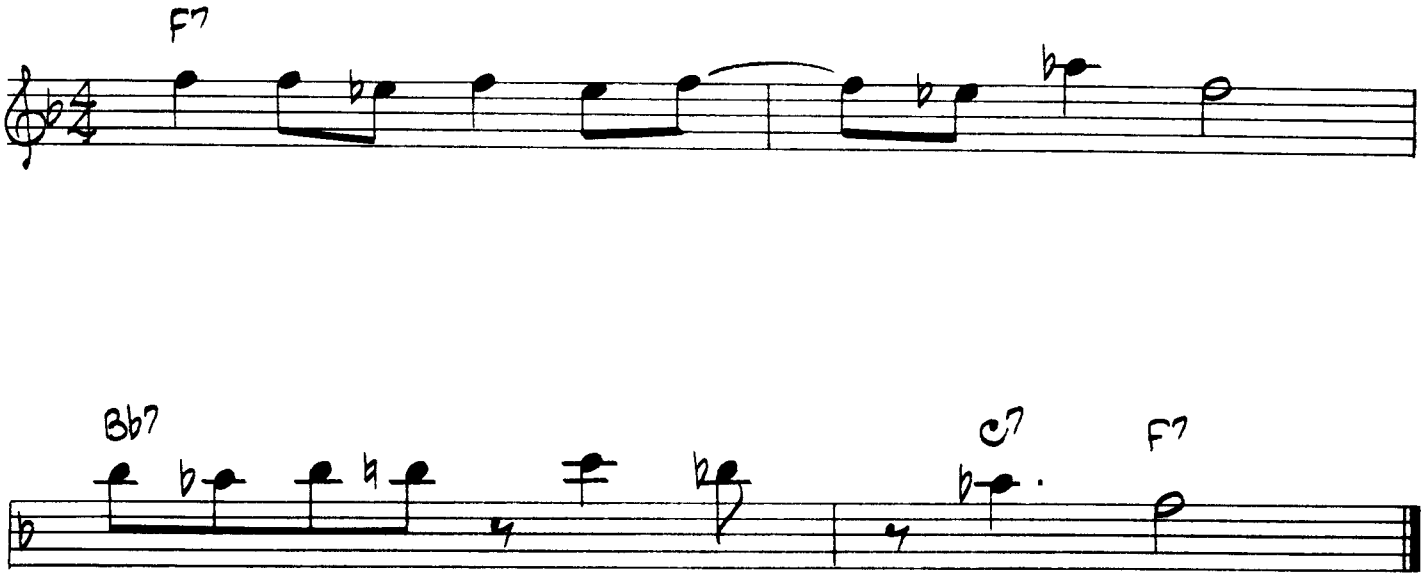


Examples 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57 and 58 are short fragments constructed to simulate standard pop tunes. Here the examples are presented in lead sheet form showing only the melody and chord symbols. Using the devices previously explored in this book, develop chord melody solos for each of these examples, keeping them as simple as possible. Concentrate mainly on finding chord voicings that sound good to you and still permit the melody to be played. You may then compare your choice of voicings to those found, respectively, in Examples 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64 and 65. See Page 46.

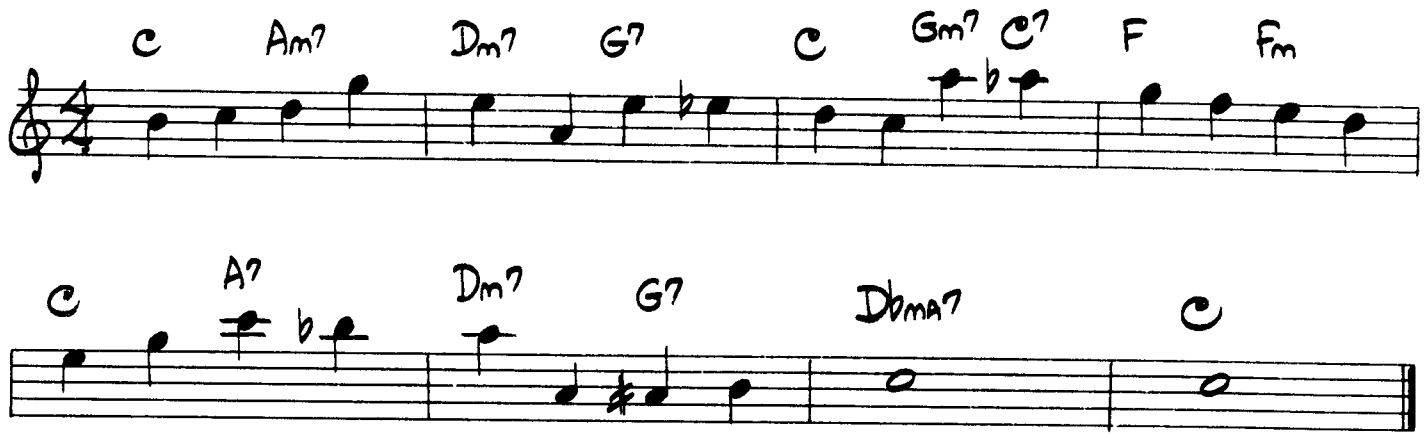
Ex. 52



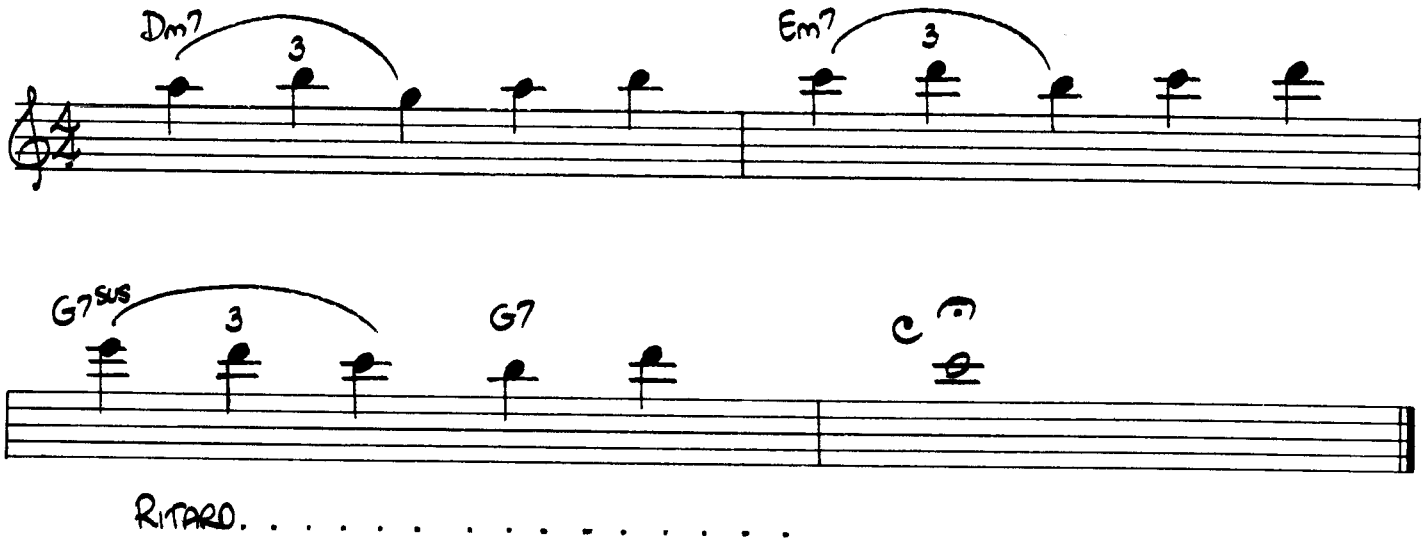
Ex. 53



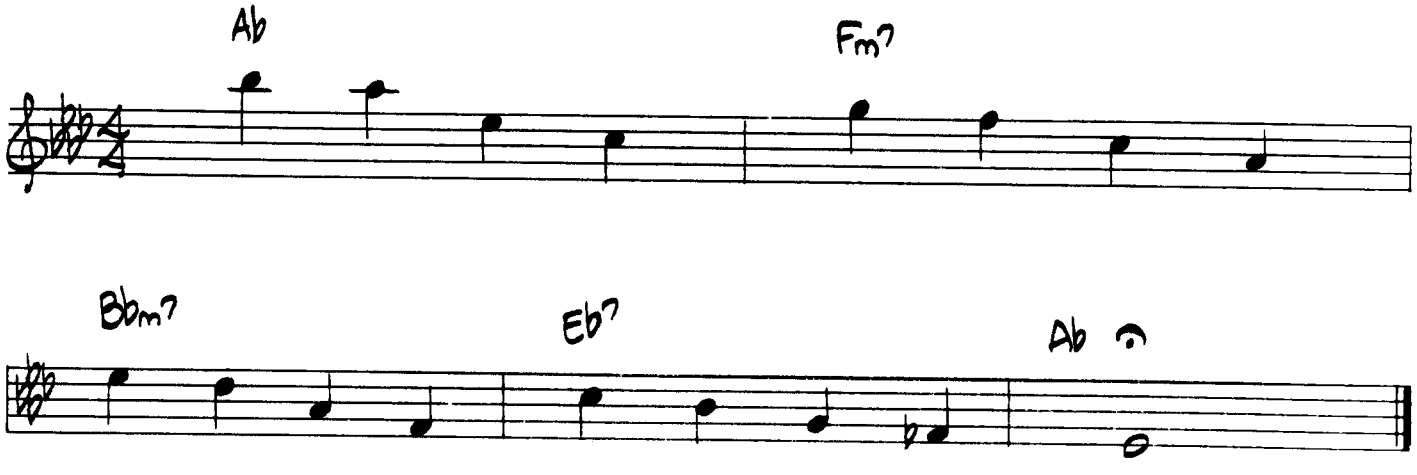
Ex. 54



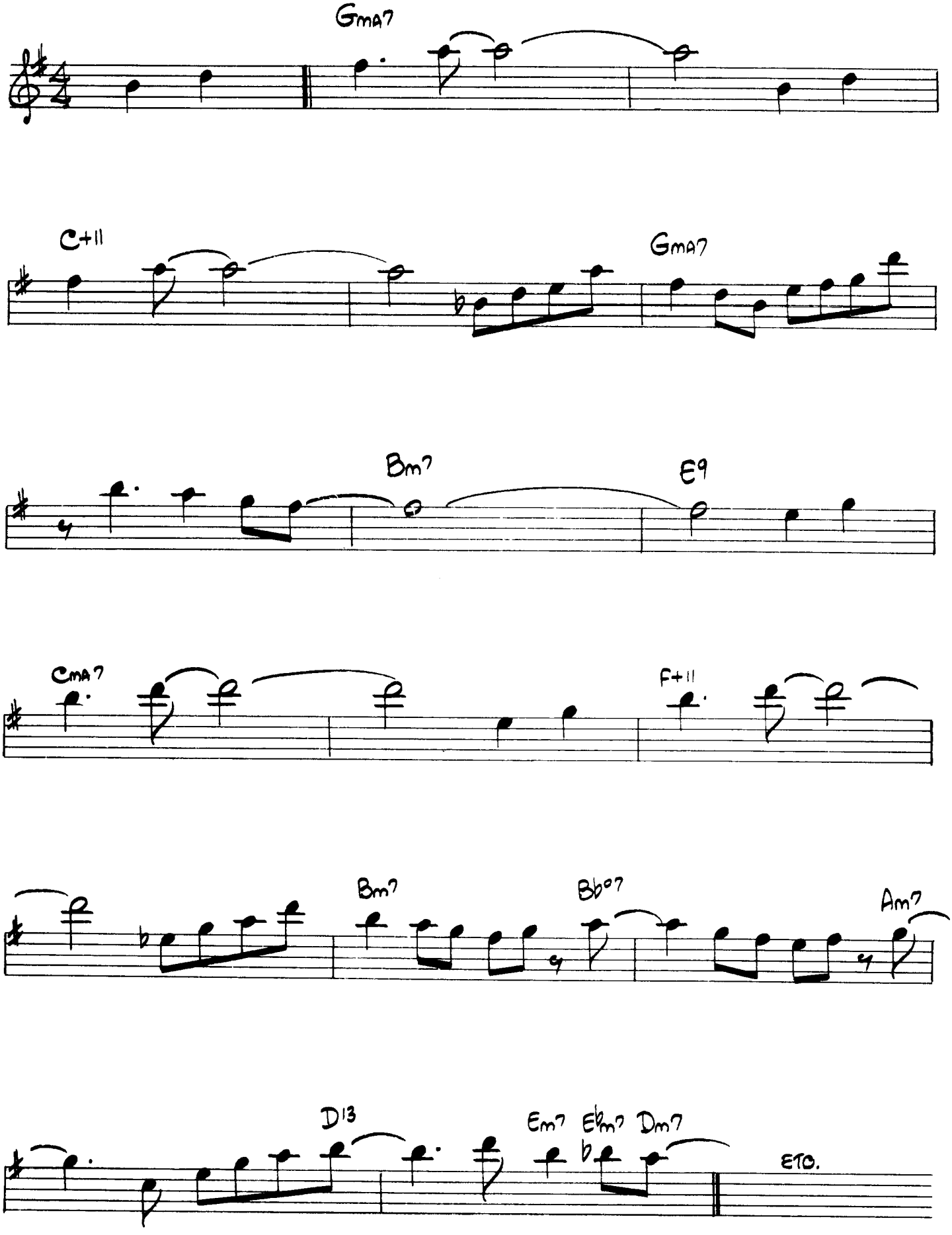
Ex. 55



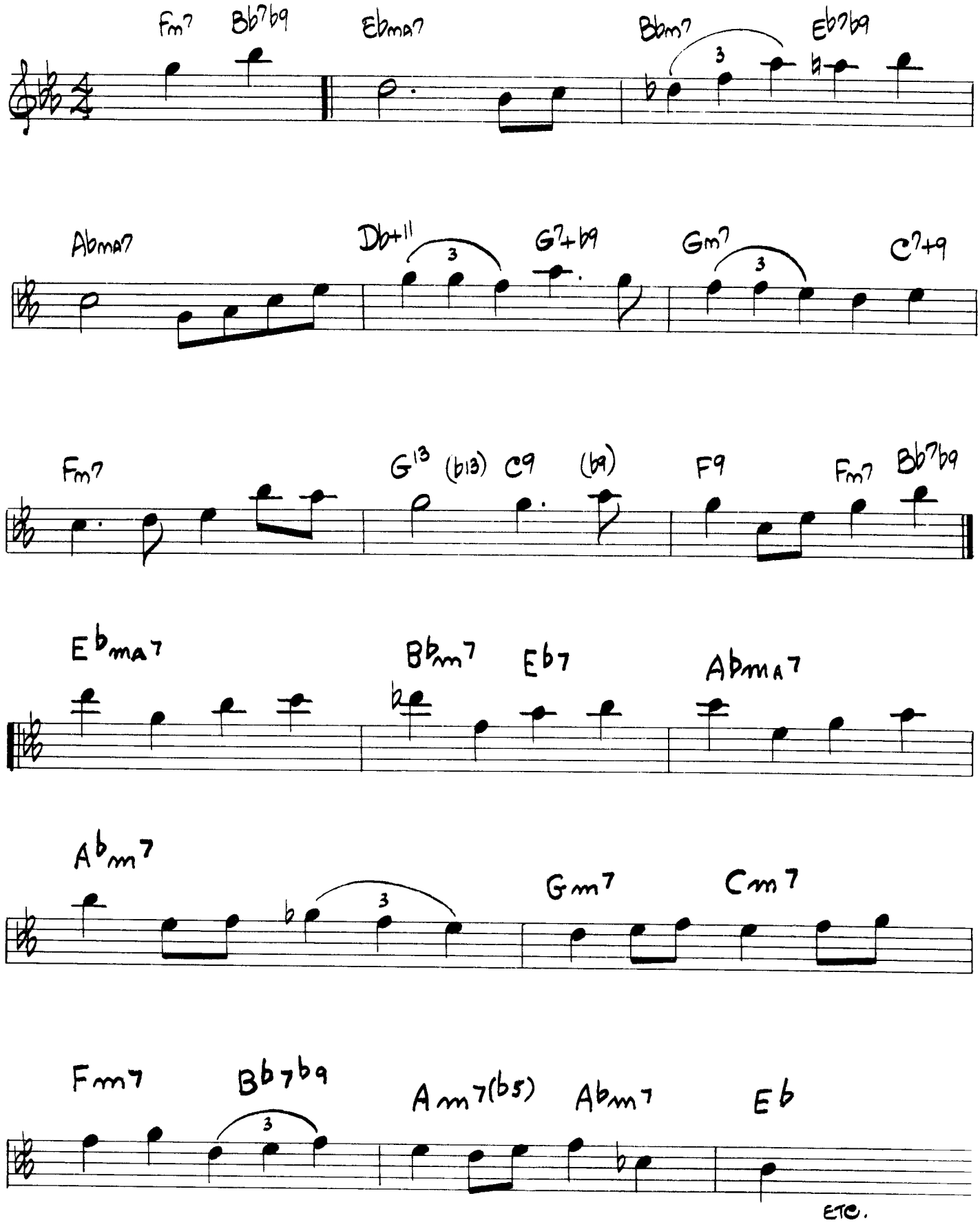
Ex. 56



Ex. 57

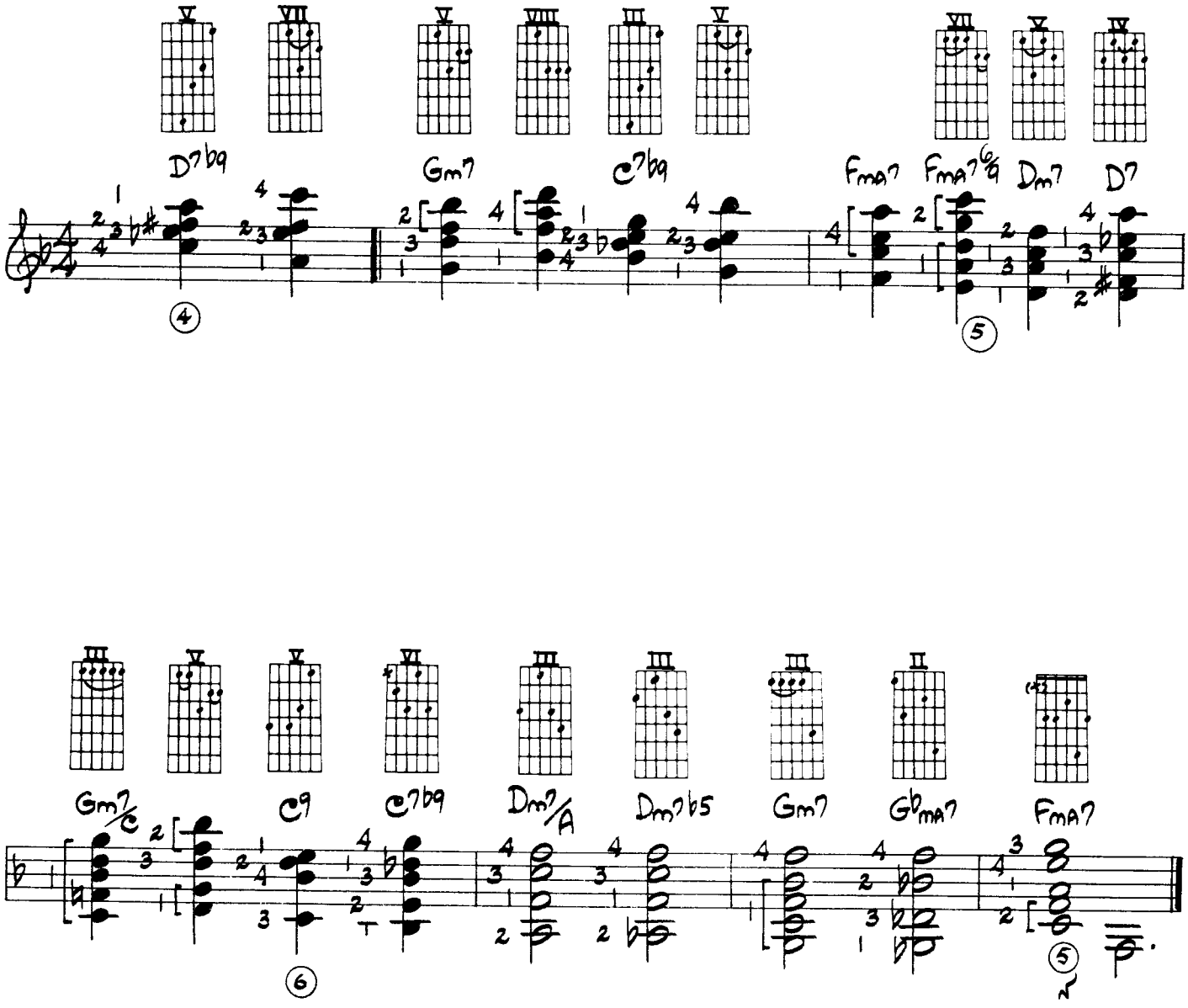

Gmaj7
C+11
Gmaj7
Bm7
E9
Cmaj7
F+11
Bm7
Bb°7
Am7
D13
Em7
Ebm7
Dm7
ETC.

Ex. 58

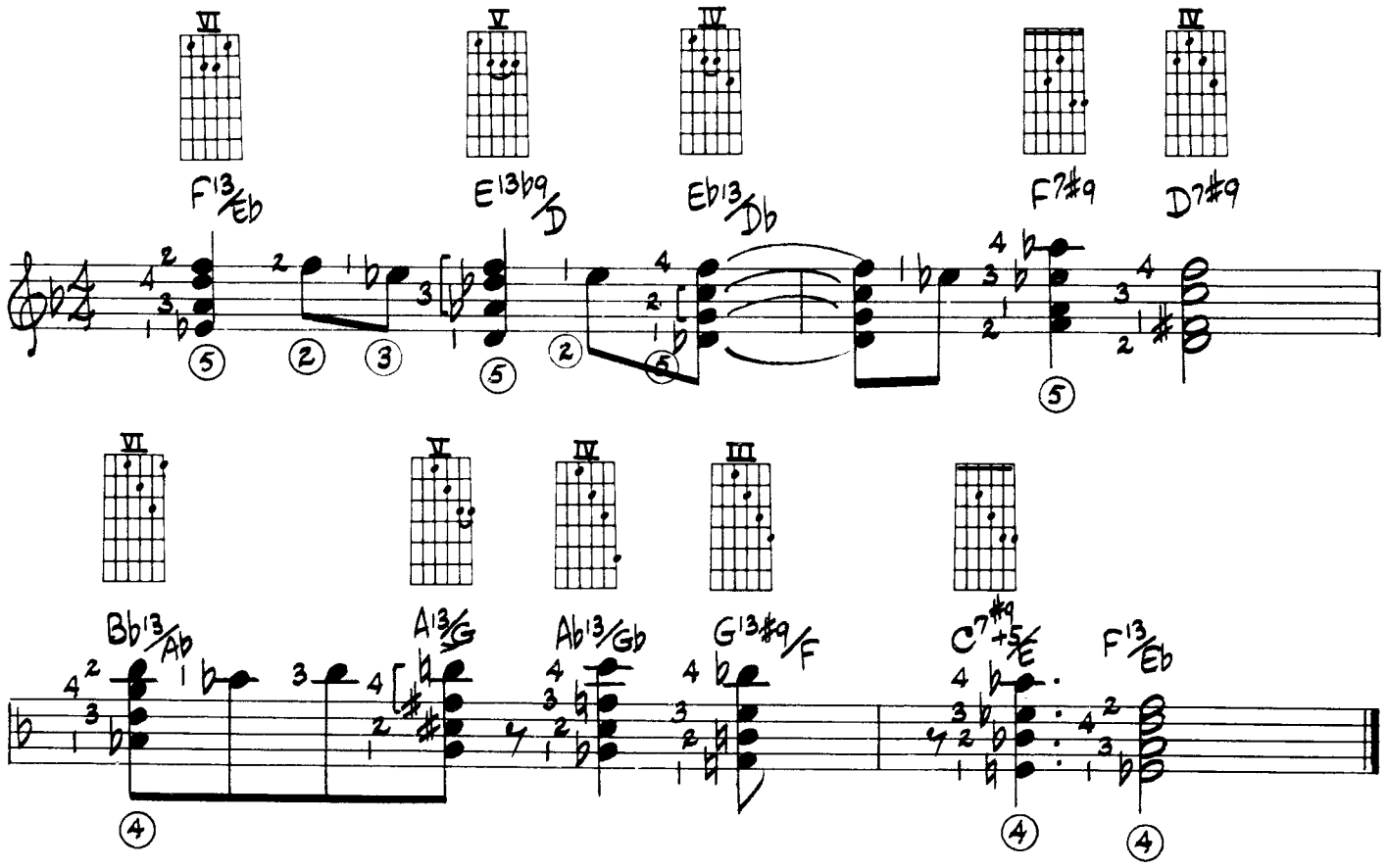

Fm7 Bb7b9 Ebmaj7 Bbm7 Eb7b9
Abmaj7 Db+11 G7+b9 Gm7 C7+9
Fm7 G13 (b13) C9 (b9) F9 Fm7 Bb7b9
Ebmaj7 Bbm7 Eb7 Abmaj7
Abm7 Gm7 Cm7
Fm7 Bb7b9 Am7(b5) Abm7 Eb
ETC.

Examples 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64 and 65 offer some of the possibilities for harmonizing Examples 52 through 58, respectively. See Page 42.

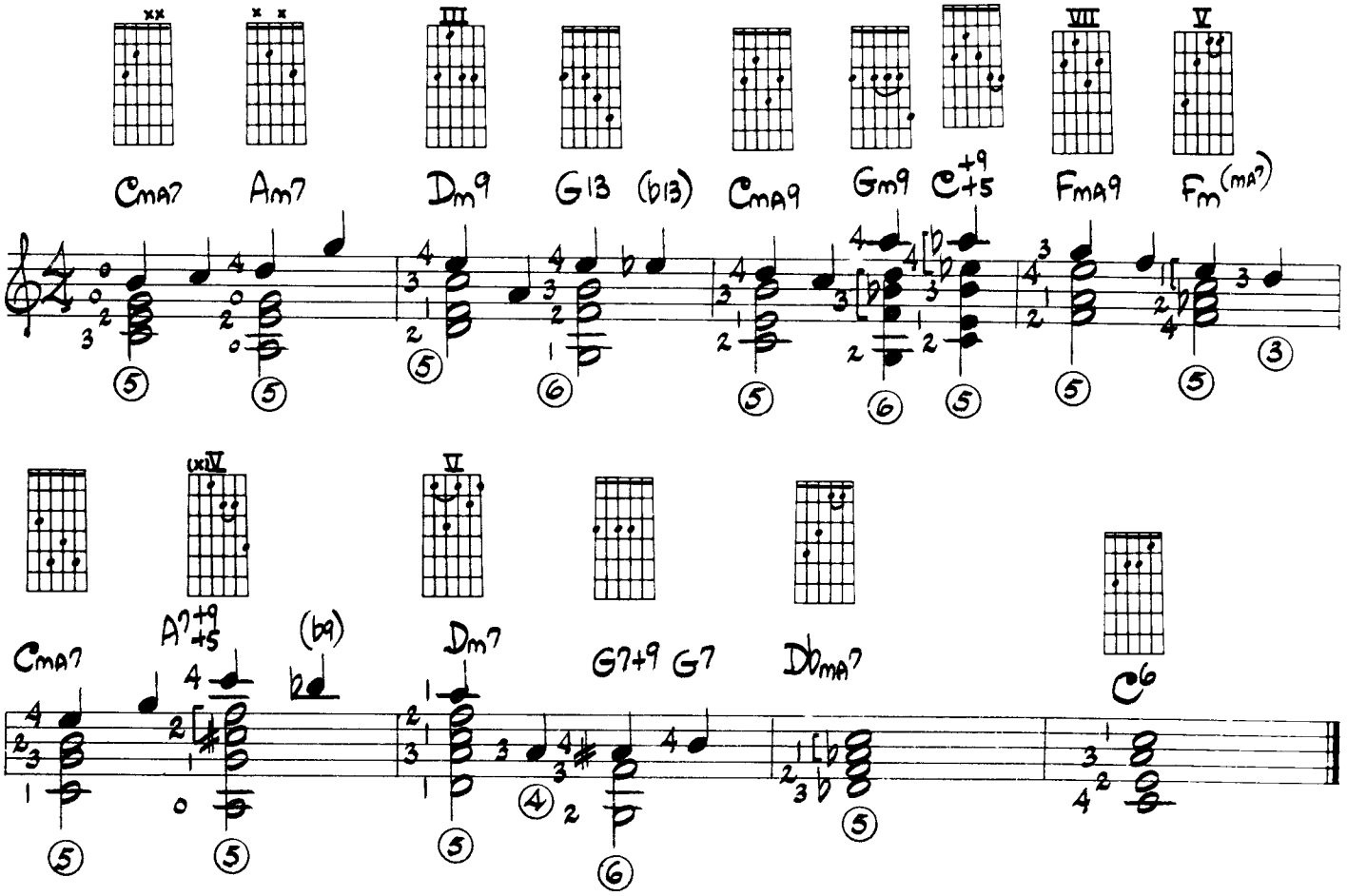
Ex. 59



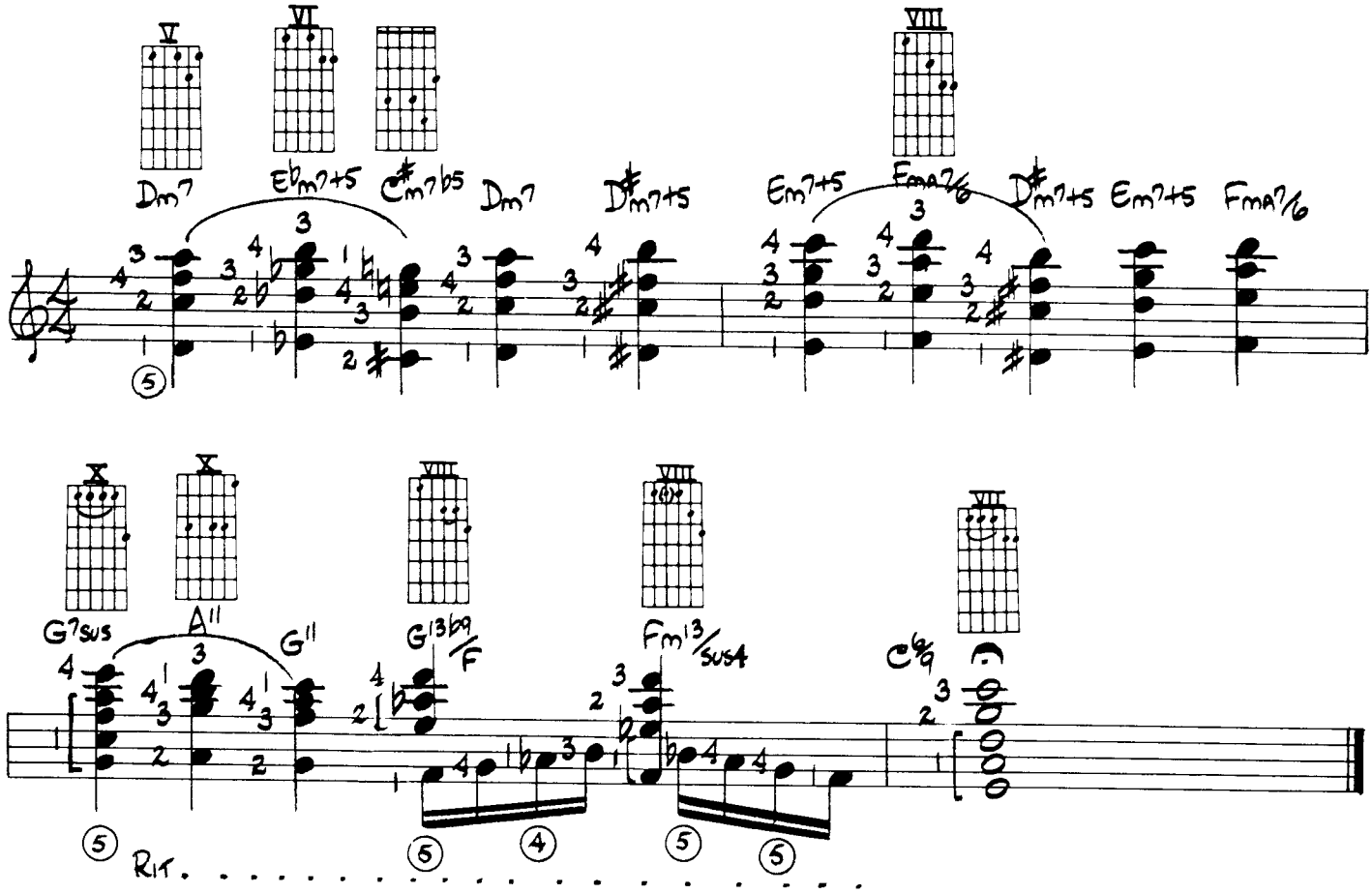
Ex. 60


VII V IV III
F13/Eb E13b9/D Eb13/Db F7#9 D7#9
VII V IV III
Bb13/Ab A13/G Ab13/Gb G13#9/F C7#9+5/E F13/Eb

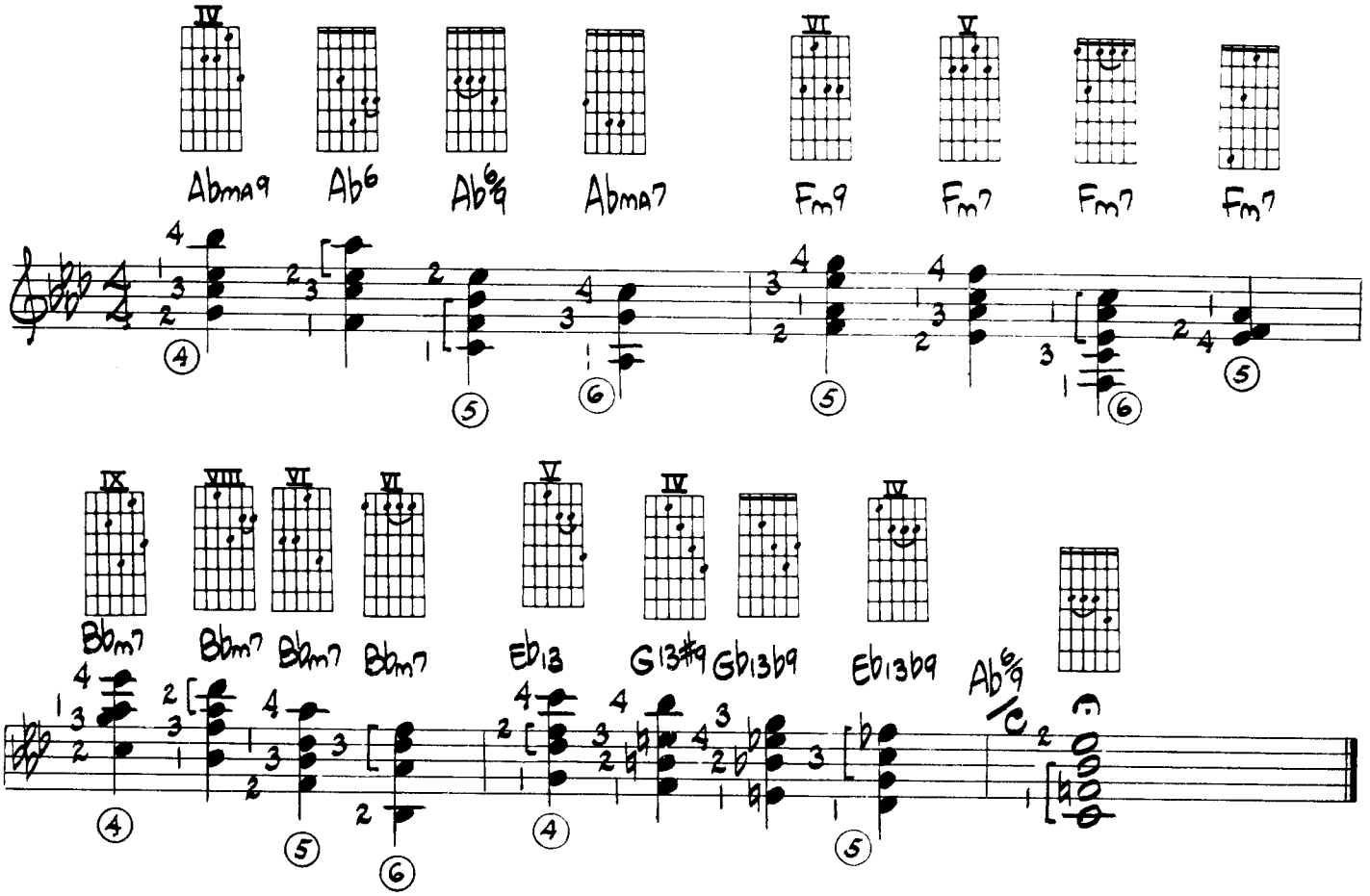
Ex. 61


III VIII V
Cmaj7 Am7 Dm9 G13 (b13) Cmaj9 Gm9 C+9+5 Fmaj9 Fm(maj7)
VII VI
A7+9+5 (b9) Dm7 G7+9 G7 Dbmaj7 C6

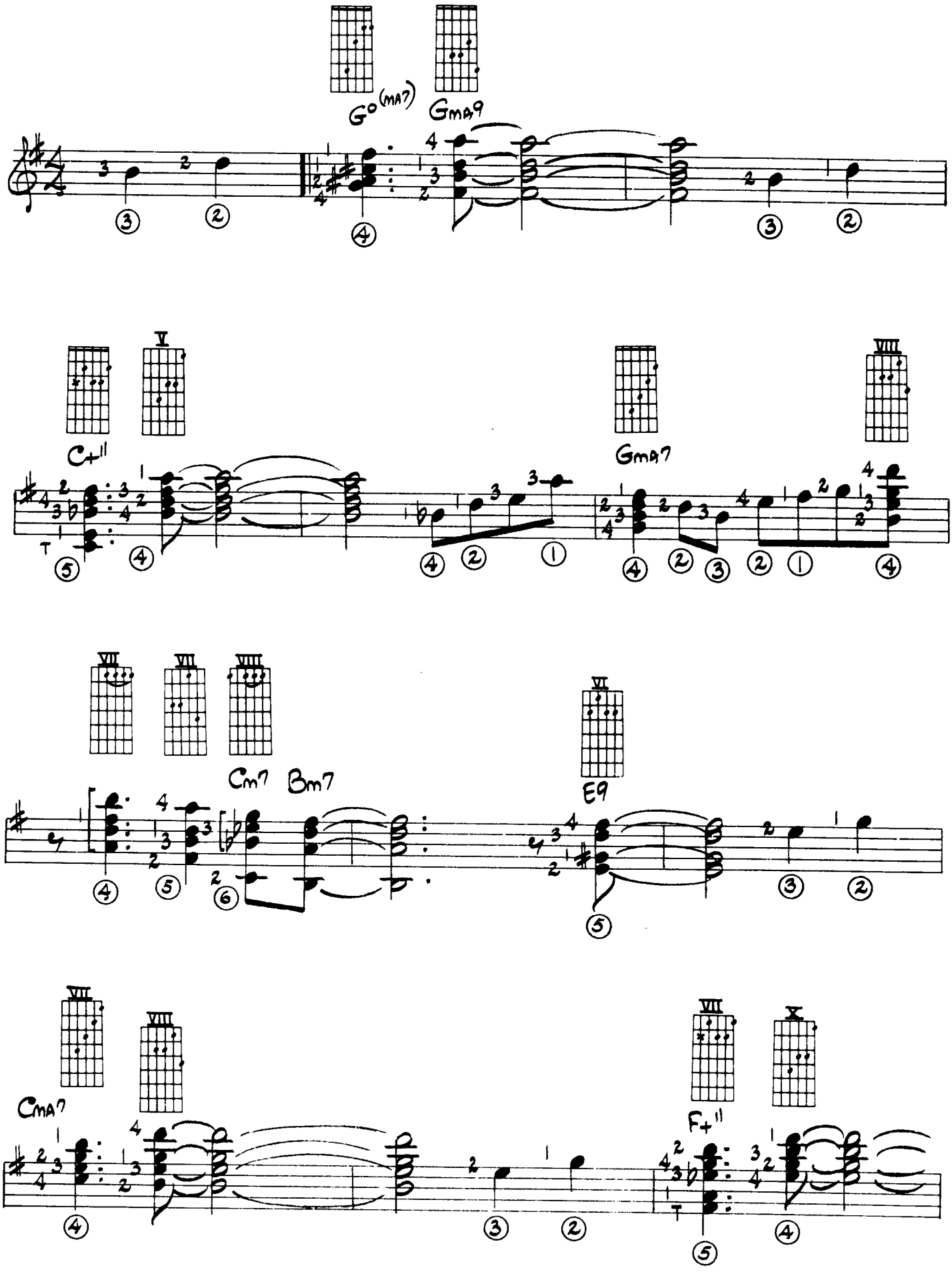
Ex. 62


Dm7
Eb m7+5
C#m7b5
Dm7
D#m7+5
Em7+5
Emaj7/6
D#m7+5
Em7+5
Fmaj7/6
G7sus
A11
G11
G13b9/F
Fm13/sus4
C6/9
Rit.

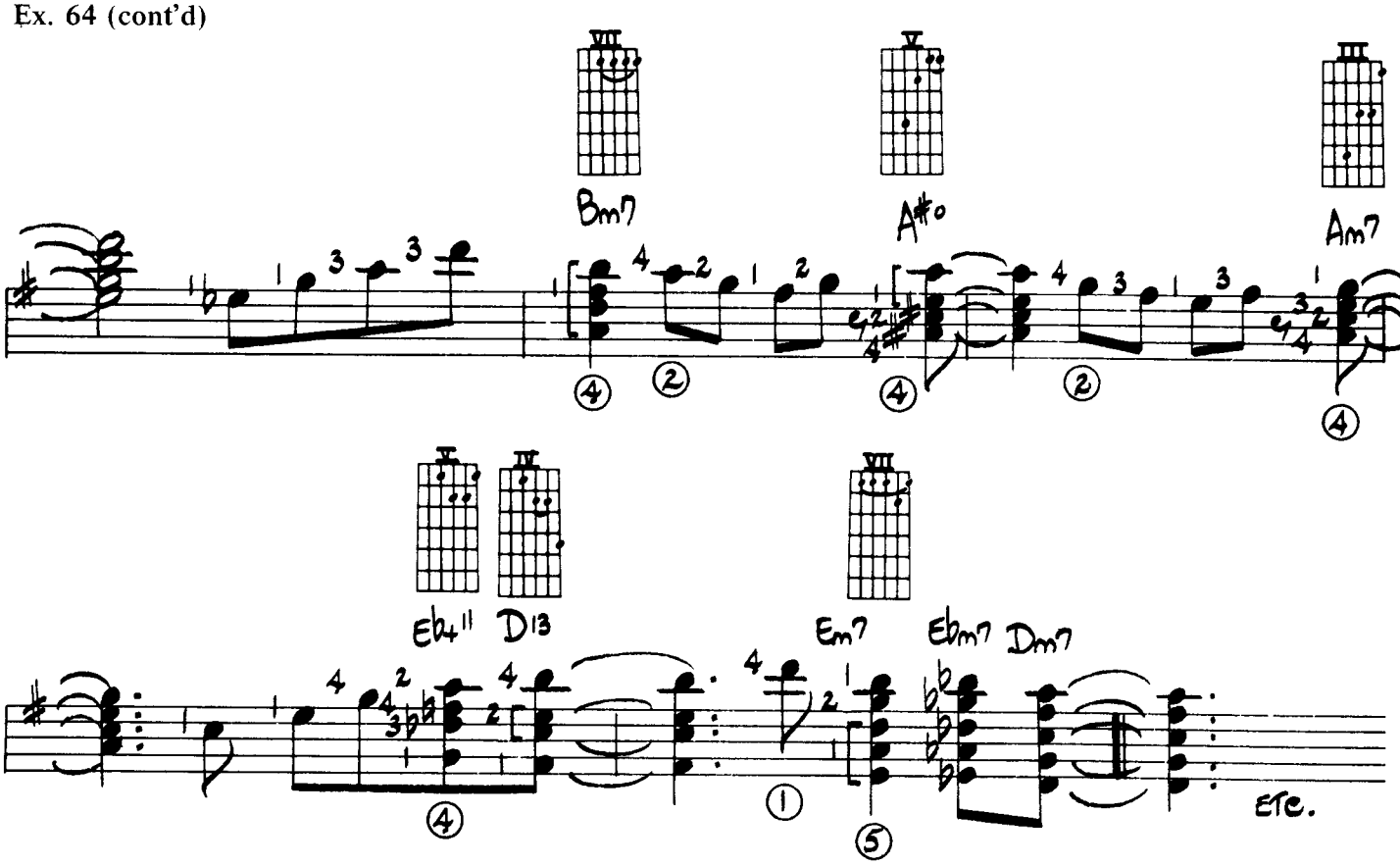
Ex. 63


Abmaj9
Ab6
Ab6/9
Abmaj7
Fm9
Fm7
Fm7
Fm7
Bbm7
Bbm7
Bbm7
Bbm7
Eb13
G13#9
Gb13b9
Eb13b9
Ab6/9/C

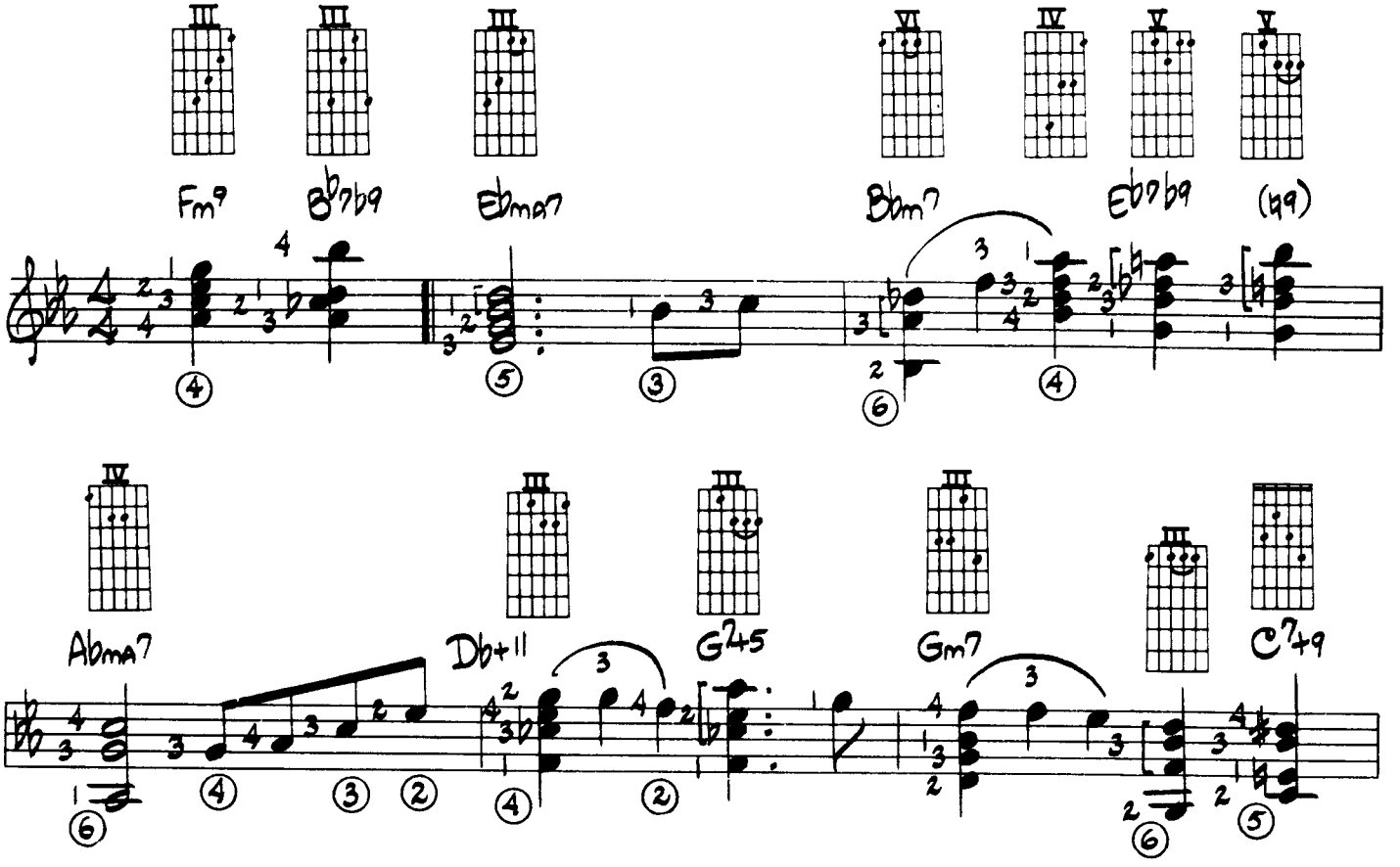
Ex. 64



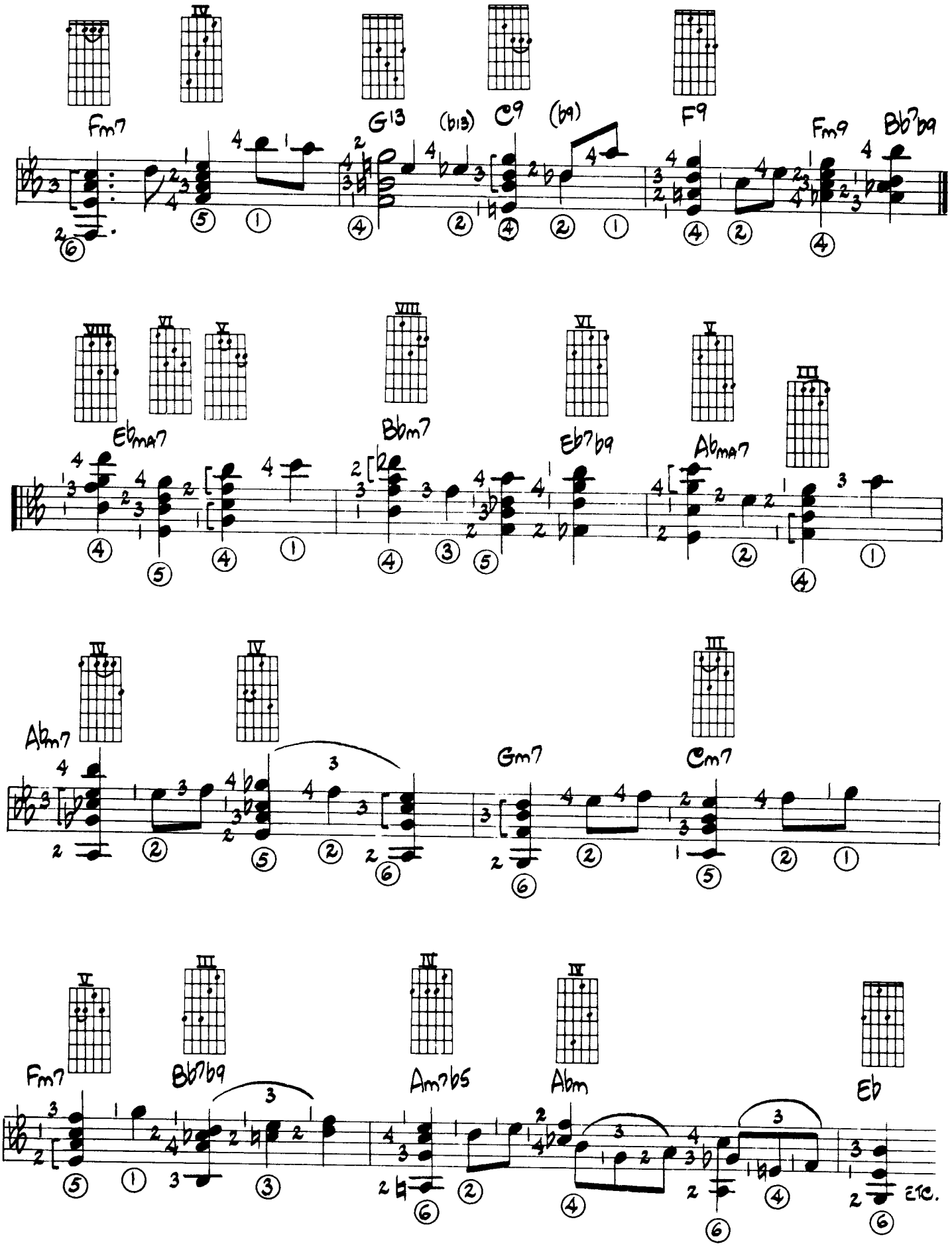
Ex. 64 (cont'd)



Ex. 65

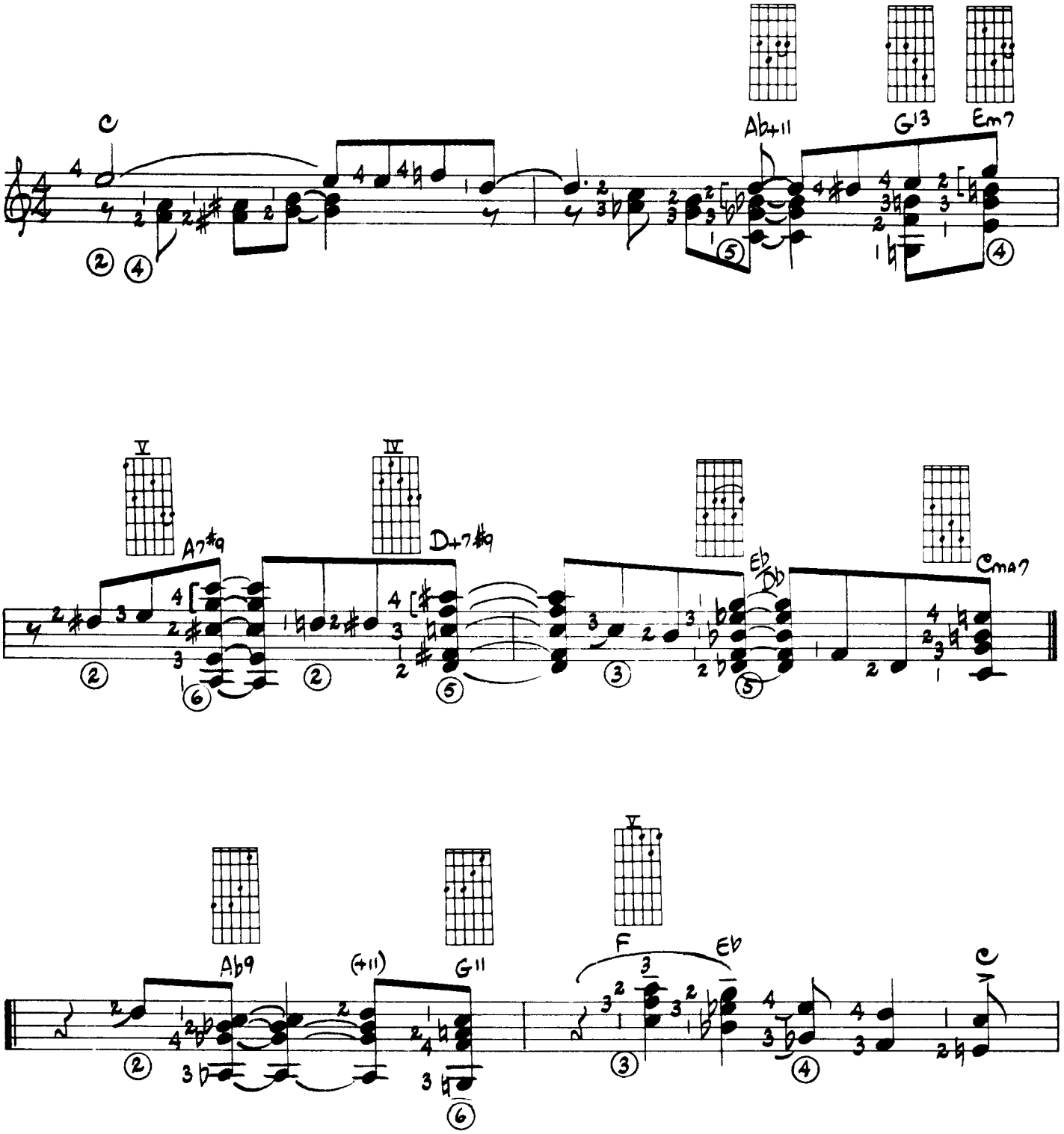


Ex. 65 (cont'd)

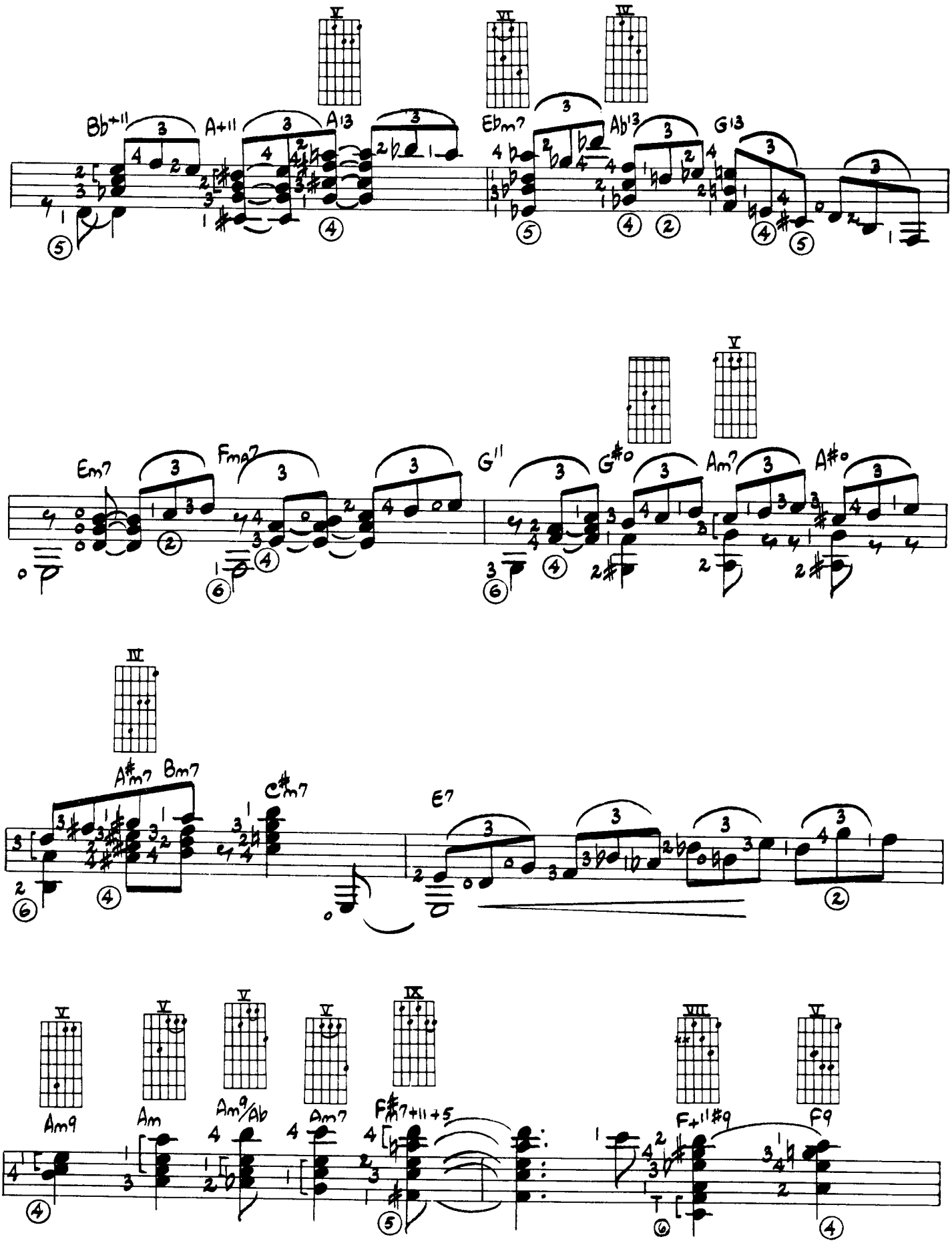

Fm7
G13
(b13)
C9
(b9)
F9
Fm9
Bb7b9
Ebmaj7
Bbm7
Eb7b9
Abmaj7
Abm7
Gm7
Cm7
Fm7
Bb7b9
Am7b5
Abm
Eb
etc.

Example 66 is a chord melody solo based on a standard chord progression and includes the structural devices presented throughout this book. Continue to explore other possibilities of the material presented here, in application to other tunes. The more of this you do, the more proficient you will become and you will then begin to acquire an instinct for finding the right chord voicings, jumping octaves, etc., thus bringing you within reach of extemporaneous improvising in a chord melody style of your own.

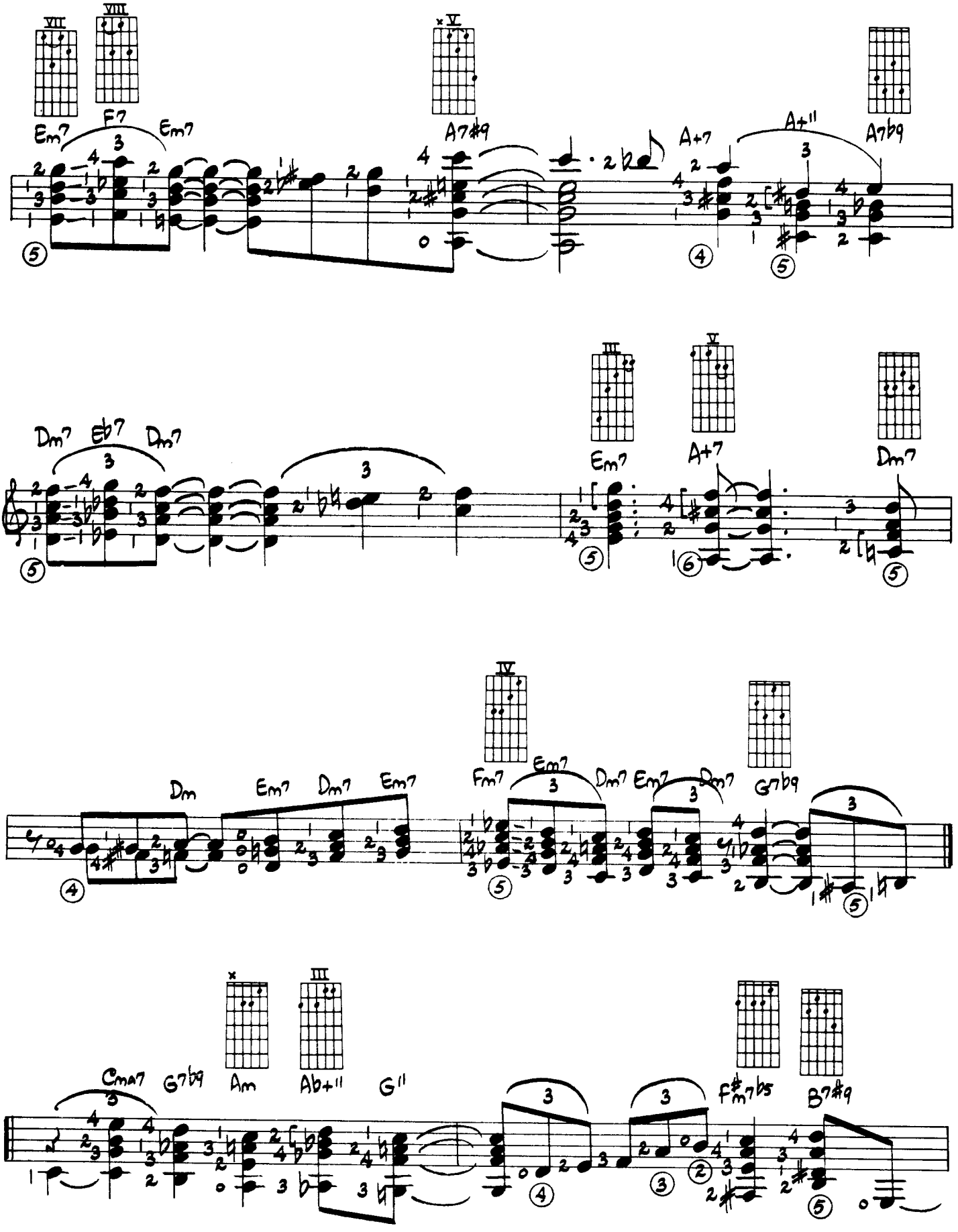
Ex. 66



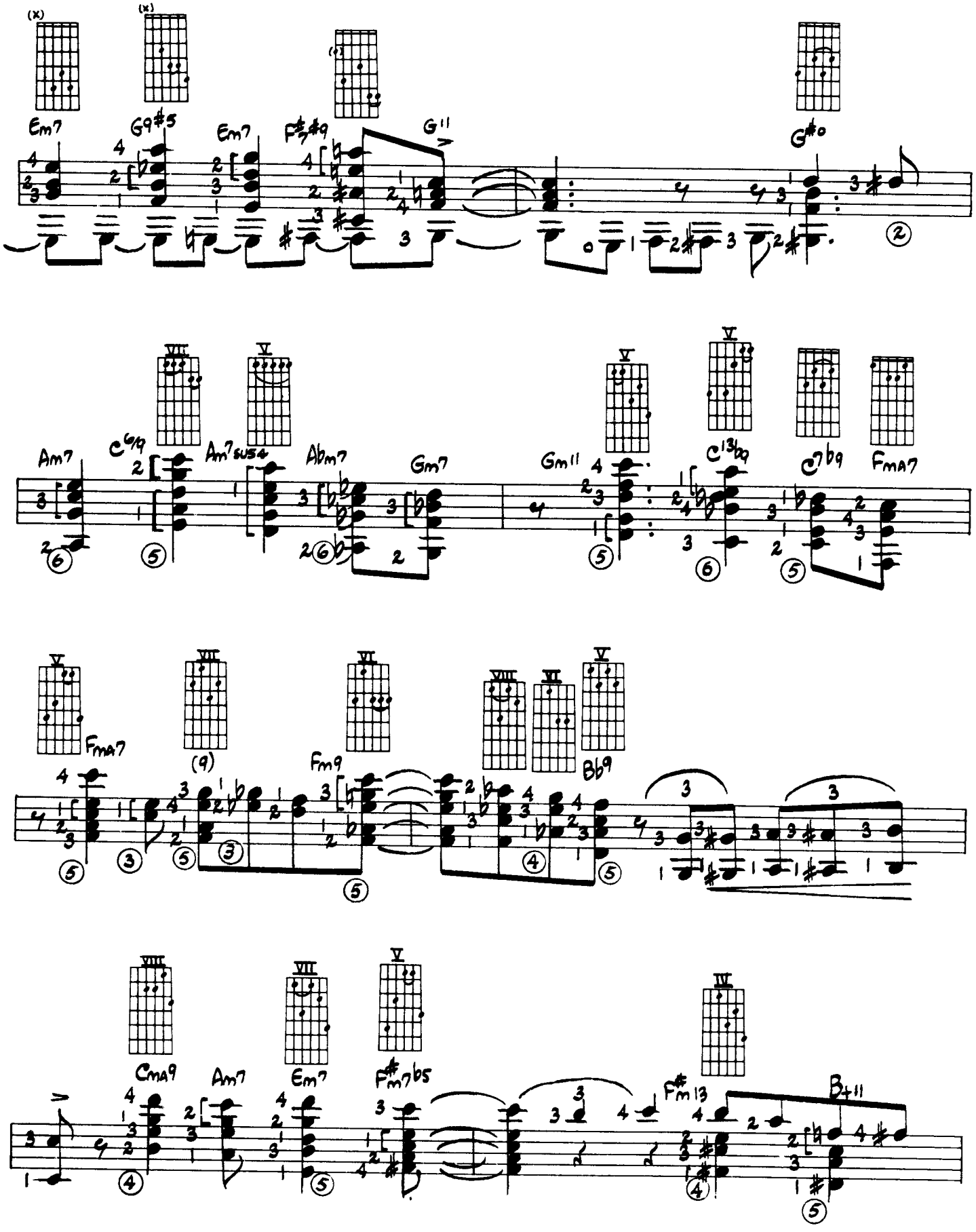
Ex. 66 (cont'd)


Bb+11
A+11
A13
Ebm7
Ab13
G13
Em7
Fmaj7
G11
G#o
Am7
A#o
A#m7
Bm7
C#m7
E7
Am9
Am
Am9/Ab
Am7
F#7+11+5
F+11#9
F9

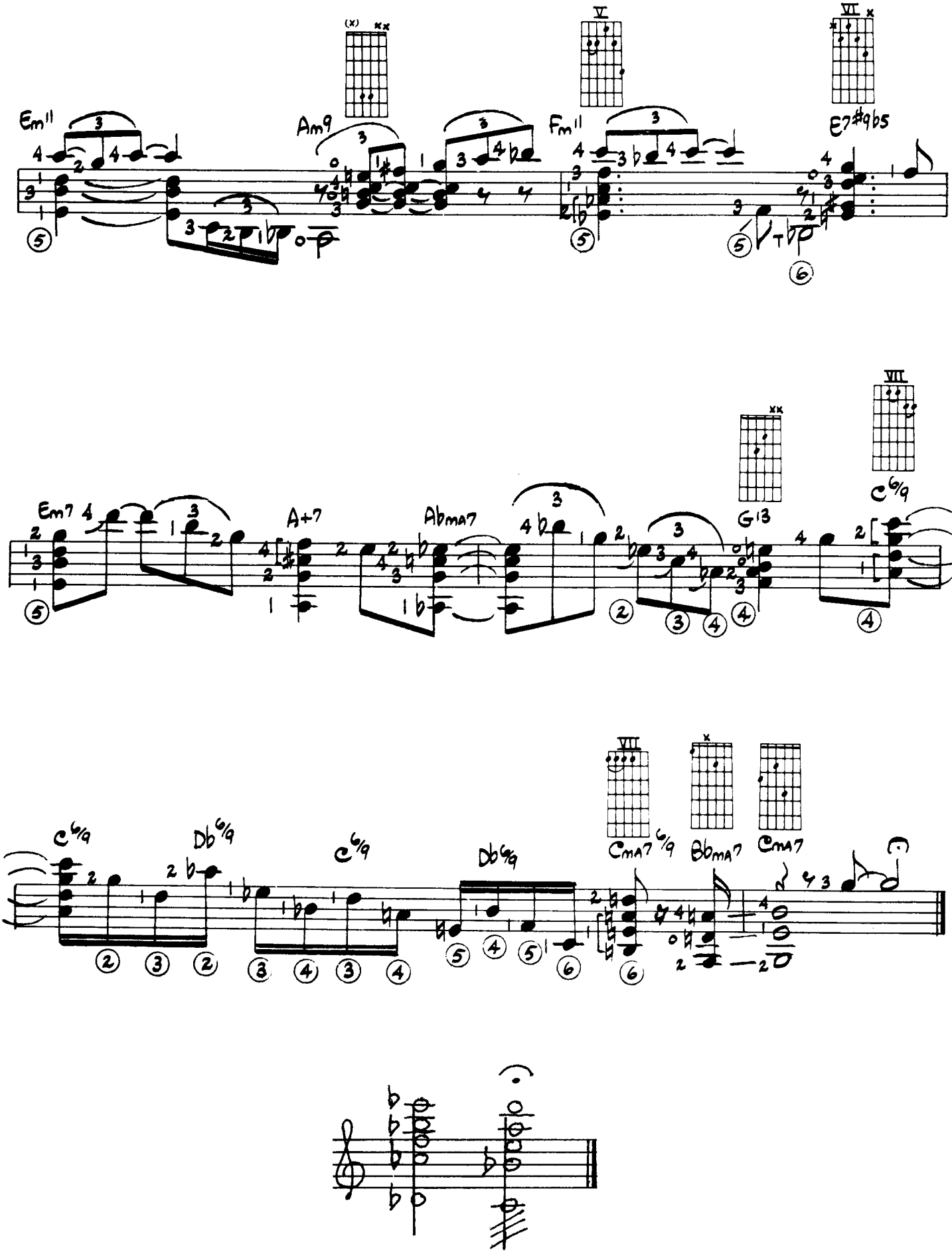
Ex. 66 (cont'd)


Em7
F7
Em7
A7#9
A+7
A+11
A7b9
Dm7
Eb7
Dm7
Em7
A+7
Dm7
Dm
Em7
Dm7
Em7
Fm7
Em7
Dm7
Em7
Dm7
G7b9
Cmaj7
G7b9
Am
Ab+11
G11
F#m7b5
B7#9

Ex. 66 (cont'd)


Em7
G9#5
Em7
F#7#9
G11
G#o
Am7
C6/9
Am7sus4
Abm7
Gm7
Gm11
C13b9
C7b9
FMA7
FMA7
(9)
Fm9
Bb9
Cma9
Am7
Em7
F#m7b5
F#m13
B+11

Ex. 66 (cont'd)


Em11
Am9
Fm11
E7#9b5
Em7
A+7
AbMA7
G13
C6/9
Db6/9
CMA7 6/9
BbMA7
CMA7