

# ON THE CYCLE OF 6THS

From Ted Greene with Mark Levy – Lesson 46 and 43 audio recordings.  
Transcriptions by Robert G Smith, October 2016

From the materials on the TG.com site, I've found Ted cover the fascinating topic of the "Cycle of Sixths" on several occurrences:

- In the Baroque Improvisation part 1 video which contains a brief discussion and illustration of the Cycle of 6ths starting around the **7min15 sec** mark– this Part 1 is transcribed by Will Kriski and available on the TG.com site under Transcriptions.
- In the Mark Levy lesson #26 (1992-10-19) starting at the **14min50 sec** mark where Ted and Mark are in a discussion about using the "V as an approach chord", and Ted illustrates this with a gospel flavored cycle of 6ths
- In the Mark Levy lesson #42 at **35min58sec** mark where Ted talks about Cycle of 6ths in relation to Cycle of Descending 3rds
- In the Mark Levy lesson #43 (1994-01-28) starting at the **53min10sec** mark (audio in which Ted introduces the notion of the Cycle of 6ths and says "only show this to people who love it", "if someone doesn't love it they shouldn't play it")
- And finally the Mark Lesson Aug 1994 lesson #46 which by far contains the most in depth review of the Cycle of 6ths, as an interesting off shoot of a discussion more centered on suspended notes.

The first transcription that follows is an excerpt of Ted's playing a Cycle of 6ths from the Mark Levy recorded lesson Number 46 (from 1994-08-22). This transcription starts at the **10min09sec** mark and ends at **11min50sec** mark, and captures just over 1.5 minutes of Ted's playing around this cycle. Rather than being about an actual song arrangement, this transcription is more about enabling a student to study this general pattern through the examples Ted provides and enabling interested students to dive more in depth into how Ted makes the cycle come to life in his own brilliant manner.

Mark Levy's recorded lesson #46 captures Ted starting a discussion about suspended notes and "delayed resolutions" (starting at **5min10 sec** mark) and going into a discussion about Cycle of 6ths at the **8min** mark, followed by a range of flowing improvised cycle examples filled with a great variety of voicings, bass movement and rhythms out to about the **12min** mark of this lesson.

In the lesson starting around the **8min** mark, Ted illustrates a great many variations of this Cycle. At the **8min05sec** mark, Ted illustrates the cycle (or circle) of 6ths using a pattern where the preparation "V7 of VI" chord is played with 3<sup>rd</sup> in the bass to get to the VI chord and new Root/I chord. This same approach is also illustrated around the **9min30sec** mark with another example. At the **8min55sec** mark, Ted illustrates the circle of 6ths with the Root (I or i) chord followed by its III7 with 5<sup>th</sup> in bass, followed by the same III7 chord with 3<sup>rd</sup> in bass en route to the VI chord (and new I). At the **9min54sec** mark, Ted illustrates a sequence with the Root chord followed by Root with 3<sup>rd</sup> in bass, followed by III7/5<sup>th</sup> in bass followed by III7/3<sup>rd</sup> in bass. At the **10min10sec** mark, Ted plays another example with the III7 chord with Root in bass followed by III7/3<sup>rd</sup> in bass, followed by the VI (new I) ... At the **18min20sec** mark, Ted says "just keep saying III, VI, III, VI, III VI, ..." as a way of looking at the pattern for this cycle. In keeping with Ted's notions from the Mark Levy lesson 26, one could also view this as a V, I, V, i, V, I, V, i series.

The transcribed section of the circle pattern is a variation on the pattern mentioned above from the 9min54sec mark. In the transcribed section interestingly, instead of using the III7/VI/III7/VI pattern, Ted uses a **IV, V, I pattern** (or perhaps a “**II**”, **III7, VI** pattern depending on your point of view).

For these IV chords (think IV of VI) chords, Ted uses chords of varying qualities basic major, major7, dom7, add9, and dom9 which adds great color and interest to the otherwise repetitive pattern. Note the interesting pattern variation (last 4 grids of 3<sup>rd</sup> row of the transcription) where the bass note of the chord voicings rise “diatonically” from R to 2 to 3 to the “3<sup>rd</sup> then 5<sup>th</sup> of IV of VI” to “3<sup>rd</sup> of V7 of VI” then to the Root of the 6<sup>th</sup> (or new I = Em), which delivers sublime upward bass movement and variety in the improvisation. This whole section of the lesson illustrates very well Ted’s astounding depth of knowledge of chords, harmony and the fretboard, especially as the whole thing seems impromptu and improvised.

This whole transcribed section is in 3/4 time. Underneath each grid, I have added in the “beat bars” that Ted at times uses. Feel free to ignore these aids and just follow your ears on the recording instead. (There is a strange timing section at 11:17sec where Ted appears to go from the waltz-like, 3/4 time to what sounds like 2/4 time (2 beats per chord) then reverts from 11:22sec onwards to a clear 3/4 time again on the F minor at the 11:22sec mark. I am assuming Ted may have moved his guitar or something at this point in the audio as I don’t hear 3 clear beats for the G# (I / Root in bass) chord. Perhaps there is another explanation that escapes my ears.)

Finally, in the audio recording, Ted is playing on his guitar in standard tuning and my fret / chord grids reflect such a tuning.

I have also provided a second transcription for Ted’s voice leading view of this Cycle of 6ths that Ted plays in the Mark Levy recording of lesson #43, from the 1hour 9min:40sec mark. Ted is playing one whole step down in the audio, but for the voice leading study here, I suggest it doesn’t matter.

I hope this transcription material and the visual chord shapes are helpful to the reader’s study of this Cycle of 6ths in general. I realize this might be somewhat of a niche topic – please do let me know if this was of interest to any of you.

Robert G. SMITH

October 2016

# ON THE CYCLE OF 6THS (PART I)

From the Ted Greene with Mark Levy Lesson 46 audio recording dated 1994-08-22.

Transcription starting at the 10:09sec mark

Playing order: ● × □ △ ★

**Row 1:**

- C#7**: III7/Root (///)
- C#7**: III7/3<sup>rd</sup> bass (=V7 of VI) (///)
- F#sus, F#m1<sup>9</sup>**: VI (i) /Root bass (VI is the new i) (///)
- F#m1**: i/3<sup>rd</sup> bass (///)
- G**: IV/3<sup>rd</sup> bass (IV of new I) (///)
- A7**: V7/3<sup>rd</sup> bass (V7 of new I) (///)
- Dsus, Dadd9**: I / Root bass (VI is new I) (///)
- D**: I/3<sup>rd</sup> bass (///)

**Row 2:**

- E7**: IV/3<sup>rd</sup> bass (//)
- E7**: / (/)
- F#7**: V7/3<sup>rd</sup> bass (//)
- F#7**: / (/)
- Bm1**: i / Root bass (//)
- Bm1**: / (/)
- Bm1**: i /3<sup>rd</sup> bass (//)
- Bm1**: / (/)

**Row 3:**

- Cadd9**: IV/3<sup>rd</sup> bass (//)
- Cadd9**: / (/)
- D7**: V7/3<sup>rd</sup> bass (//)
- D7**: / (/)
- Gadd9**: I / Root bass (///)
- G**: I/3<sup>rd</sup> bass (///)
- A7**: IV/3<sup>rd</sup> bass (//)
- A7**: IV/5<sup>th</sup> bass (//)

Note rising bass from R of G, to A, to B, to C#, ...to R of Em on 3<sup>rd</sup> grid of p.4

$B^7$	$B^7(b9)$	$E_{MI}$	$E_{MI}$	$E_{MI}$	$E_{MI}$	$F_{MA}^7$	$F_{MA}^7$
13		12		10		12	
V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	/	i / Root bass	/	i / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	/	IV/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	/
//		//		//		//	

$G^7$	$G^7$	$C_{add9}$	$C$	$C$	$C$	$D^7$	$D^7$
14		15		12		14	
V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	/	I / Root bass	/	I / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	/	IV/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	/
//		//		//		//	

$E^7$	$E^7$	$A_{MI}^9$	$A_{MI}$	$A_{MI}$	$Bb$	$C^7$	$F_{sus}, F_{MA}^9$
11		12		8		12	13
V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	/	i / Root bass	/	i / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	IV/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	I/Root bass
//		//		///	///	///	///

$F$	$G^7$	$A^7$	$D_{sus}, D_{MI}^9$	$D_{MI}$	$D_{MI}$	$E_{badd9}$	$E_{badd9}$
5	7	4		1		3	
I / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	IV / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	V7 / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass (rest), //	i / Root bass	i / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	/	IV / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	/
///	///		///	//		//	

$F^7$	$F^7$	$A\#$	$A\#$	$C^7$	$D^7$	$G_{sus}, G_{MI}^9$	$G_{MI}$
V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass //	/	I / Root bass ///	I / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass ///	IV / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass ///	V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass ///	i / Root bass ///	i / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass ///

$G\#$	$A\#^7$	$D\#$	$D\#$	$F^9$	$F^9$	$G^7$	$C_{MI}$
IV/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass ///	V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass ///	I / Root bass ///	I / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass ///	IV/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass //	/	V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass ///	i / Root bass ///

$C_{MI}$	$C\#_{MA}^7$	$C\#_{MA}^7$	$D\#^7$	$D\#^7$	$G\#$	$G\#$	$G\#$
i / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass ///	IV / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass //	/	V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass //	/	I / Root bass //	/	I / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass //

(Sounds like 2/4 time on audio)

$G\#$	$A\#$	$C^7$	$C^7$	$F_{MI}$	$F_{MI}$	$F_{MI}$	$F_{MI}$
/	IV / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass ///	V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass //	/	i / Root bass //	/	i / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass //	/

$F\sharp_{MA}^7$	$F\sharp_{MA}^7$	$G\sharp^7$	$G\sharp^7$	$C\sharp$	$C\sharp$	$D\sharp^7$	$F$
IV / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	I / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	I / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	I / Root bass	I / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	IV / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass
//	/	//	/	///	///	///	///

$A\sharp_{sus}, A\sharp_{mi}^9$	$A\sharp_{mi}$	$B$	$C\sharp^7$	$F\sharp_{add9}$	.... Transcription ends at 11:50sec mark
(Ted says "Bbmin" on audio)					
i / Root bass	i / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	IV / 3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	V7/3 <sup>rd</sup> bass	I / Root bass	
///	///	///	///	///	

## ON THE CYCLE OF 6THS (PART 2)

From the Ted Greene with Mark Levy Lesson 43 audio recording dated 1994-01-28.

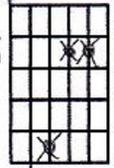
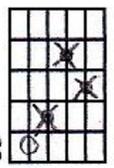
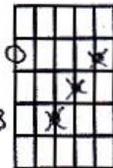
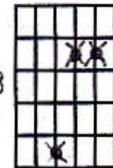
Transcription starting at the 1hour 9min:40sec mark.

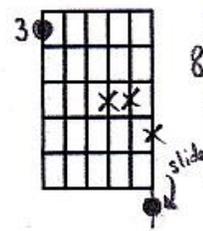
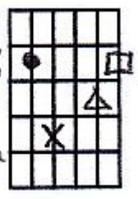
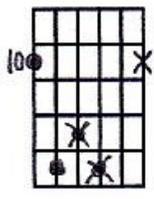
Note: Ted is playing 1 whole step down

Optional notes “o” are added to the grid diagrams to visualize and hear the “descending bass line” & “rising voicing on the top” that Ted describes in this audio section (@ 1h:10min mark). Ted doesn’t play these “o” notes, I’ve just illustrated them for completeness and interest.

The bass notes for the “approach V chords” (both the optional ones and the real ones played by Ted) are all the 5<sup>th</sup> notes of these approach V chords, which leads to the descending bass sound of this particular version of the cycle. Recall in the Part 1 transcription of this Cycle, the IV and V chords are all played in their first inversions (ie with 3<sup>rd</sup> as the bass of the chord) which renders a very different sounding cycle,.

Tune guitar one whole step down, then play:

<b>C</b>	<b>E<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>A<sub>M</sub>I</b>	<b>C<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>F</b>	<b>A<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>D<sub>M</sub>I</b>	<b>F<sup>7</sup></b>
							
I / Root	III7/5 <sup>th</sup>	vi / Root (new i)	III7/5 <sup>th</sup> bass	VI / Root	III7/5 <sup>th</sup>	vi (i)	III7/5 <sup>th</sup>
//	//	//	//	//	//	//	//
<b>B<sub>b</sub></b>	<b>D<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>G<sub>M</sub>I</b>	<b>B<sub>b</sub><sup>7</sup></b>	<b>E<sub>b</sub></b>	<b>G<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>C<sub>M</sub></b>	<b>E<sub>b</sub><sup>7</sup></b>
							
VI (I) / Root	III7/5 <sup>th</sup>	vi (i) / Root	III7/5 <sup>th</sup>	VI (I) / Root	III7/5 <sup>th</sup>	vi (i) / Root	III7/5 <sup>th</sup>
//	//	//	//	//	//	//	//

<b>A<math>\flat</math></b>	<b>C<math>^7</math></b>	<b>F<math>M_1</math></b>	<b>B<math>\flat^7</math></b>	<b>A<math>\flat M_1</math></b> (substitute for <b>E<math>\flat</math></b> )
				
VI (I) / Root / /	III7 / 5 <sup>th</sup> bass / /	vi (i) / Root / /	III7 / 3rd / /	new I / / / /