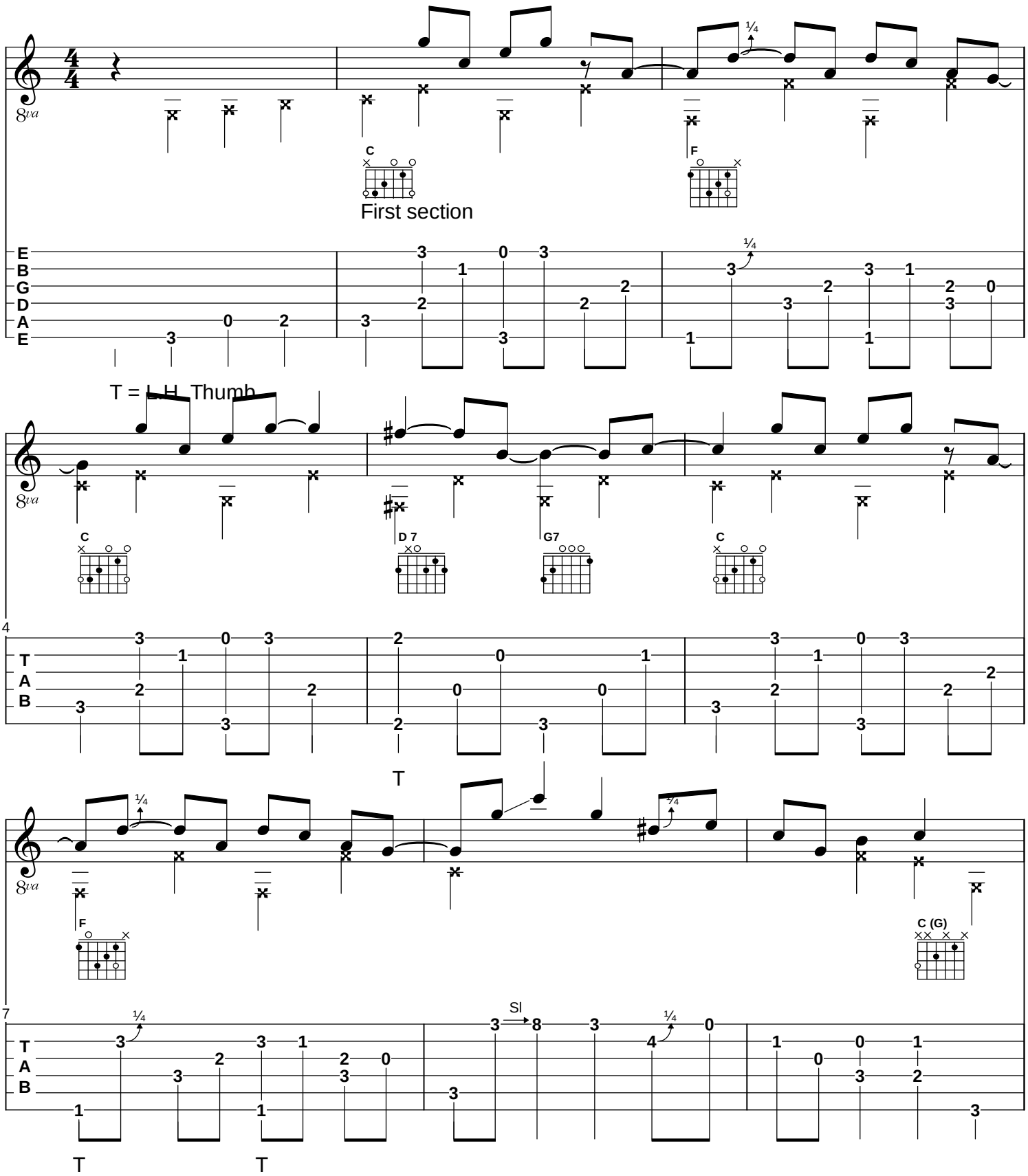
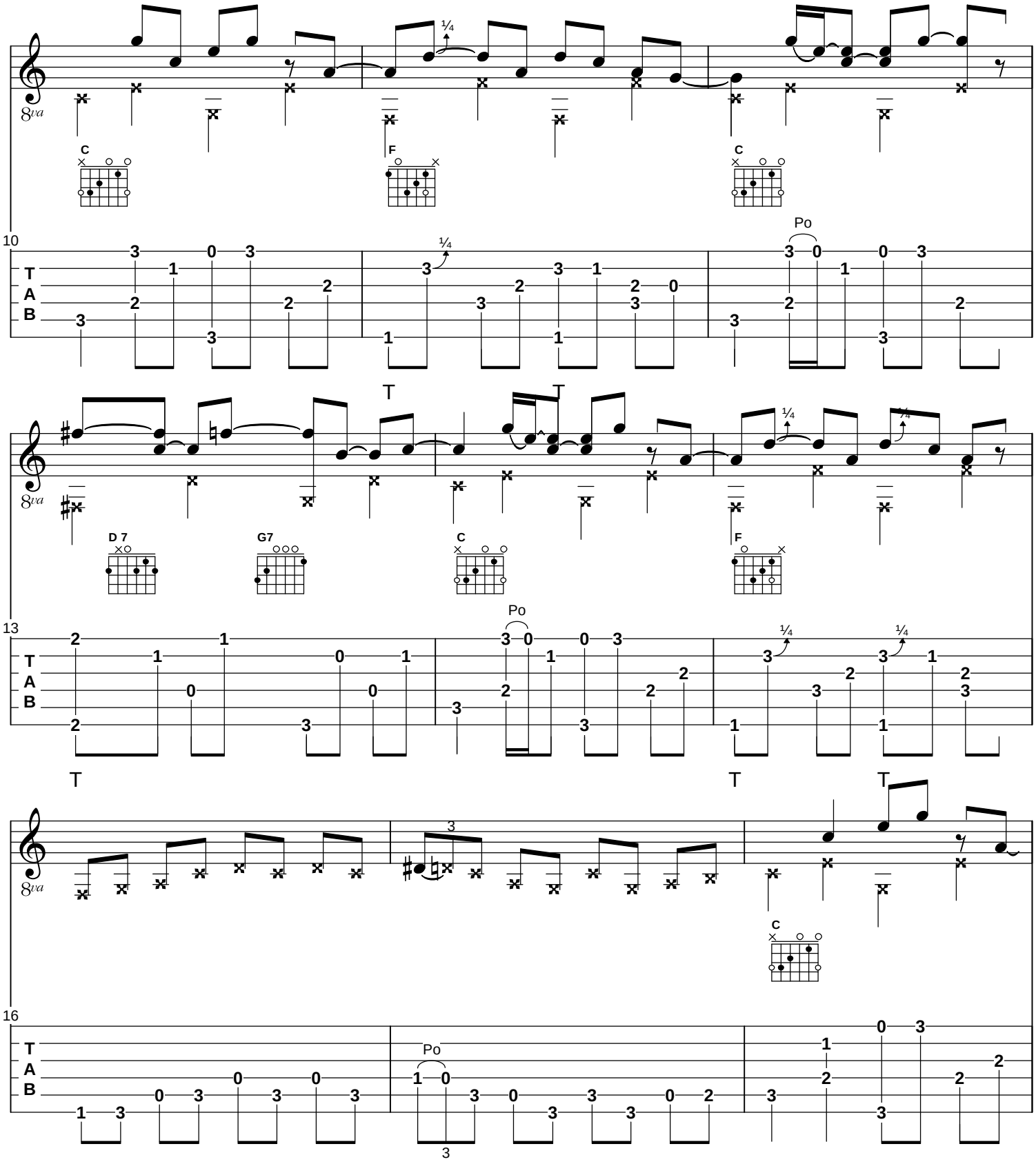
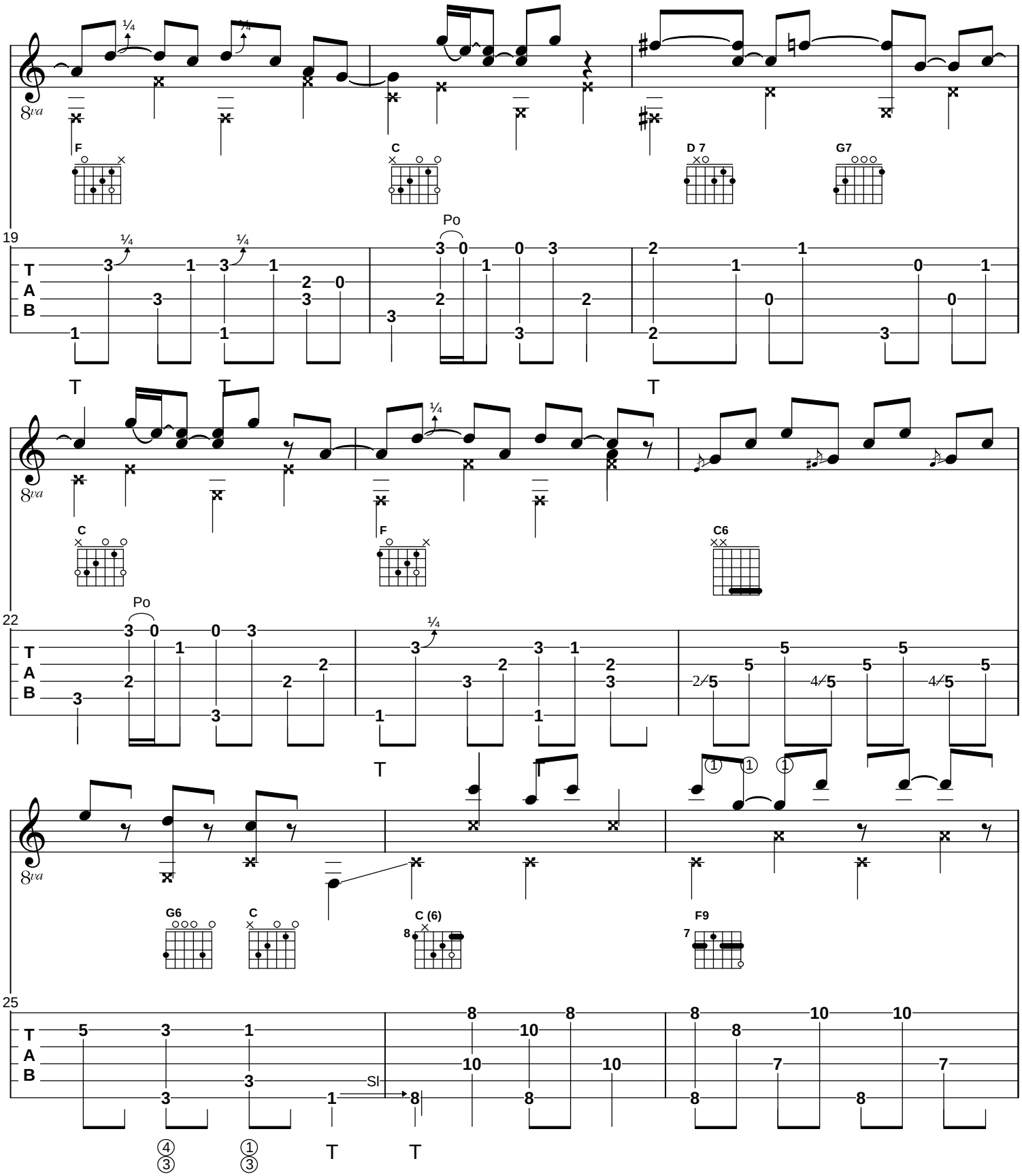
# Saturday Night Shuffle

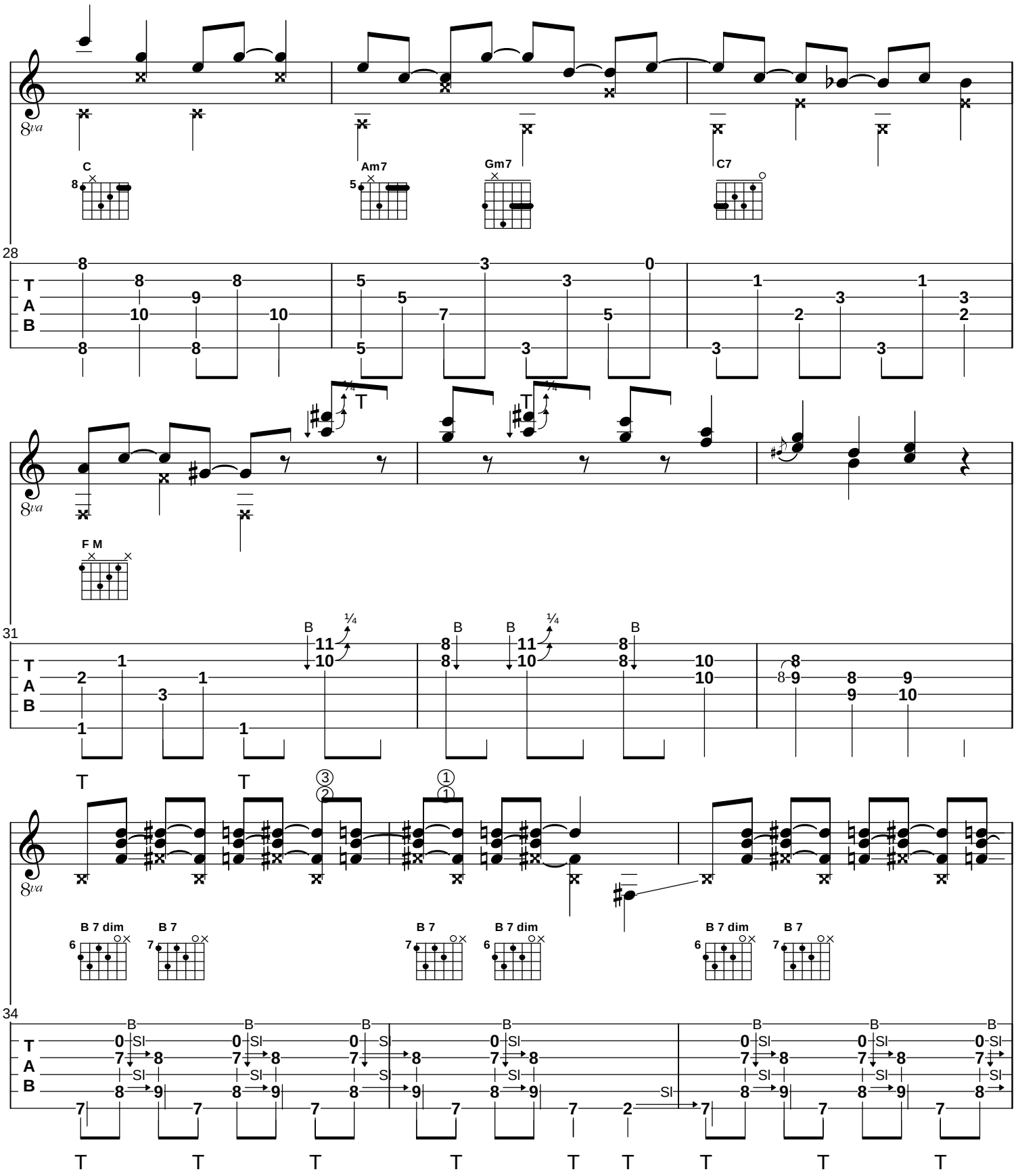
**Merle Travis**

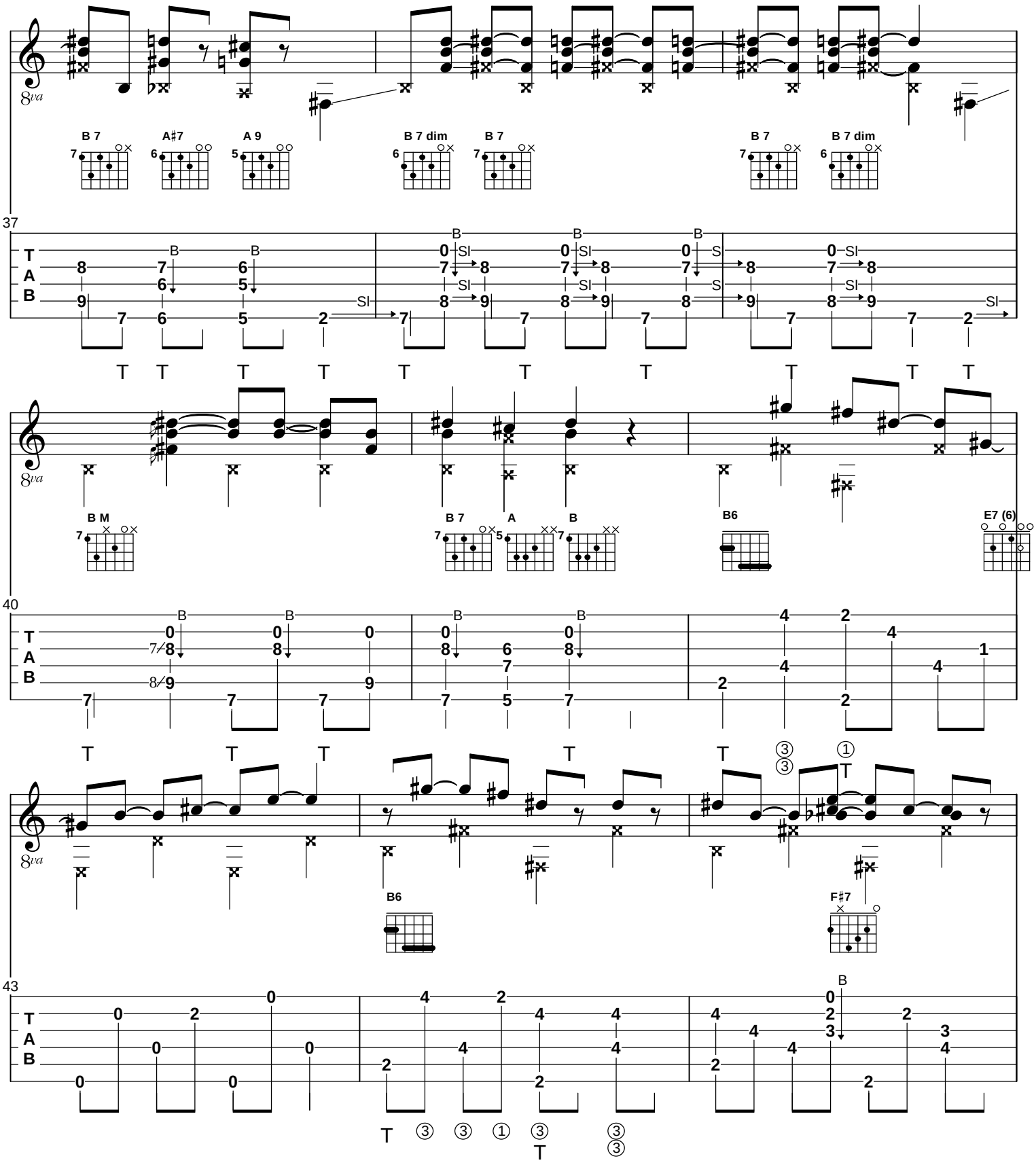
Arr: Tom Thomason (1974-1999)
TablEdited by Tom Thomason (1999)

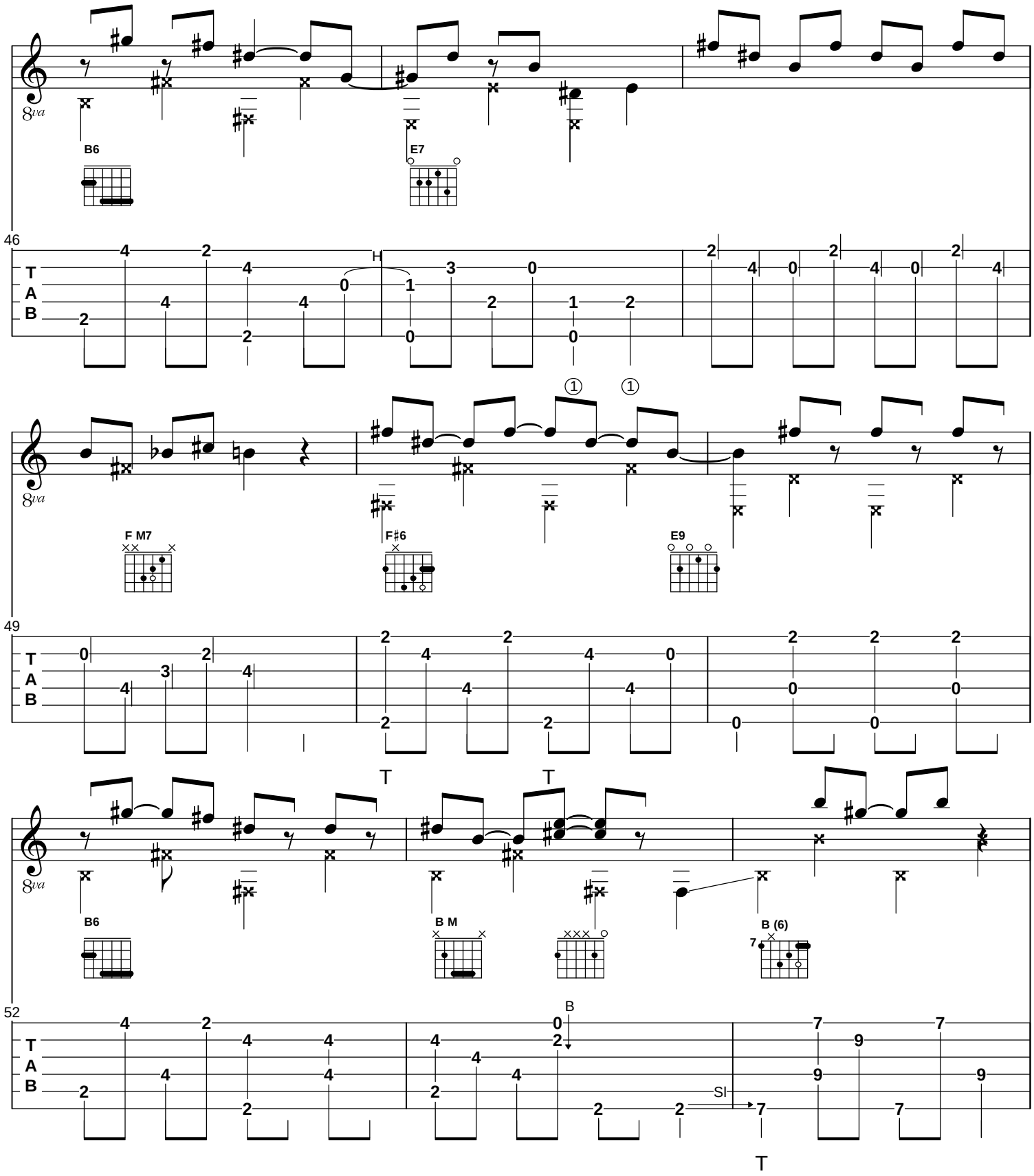


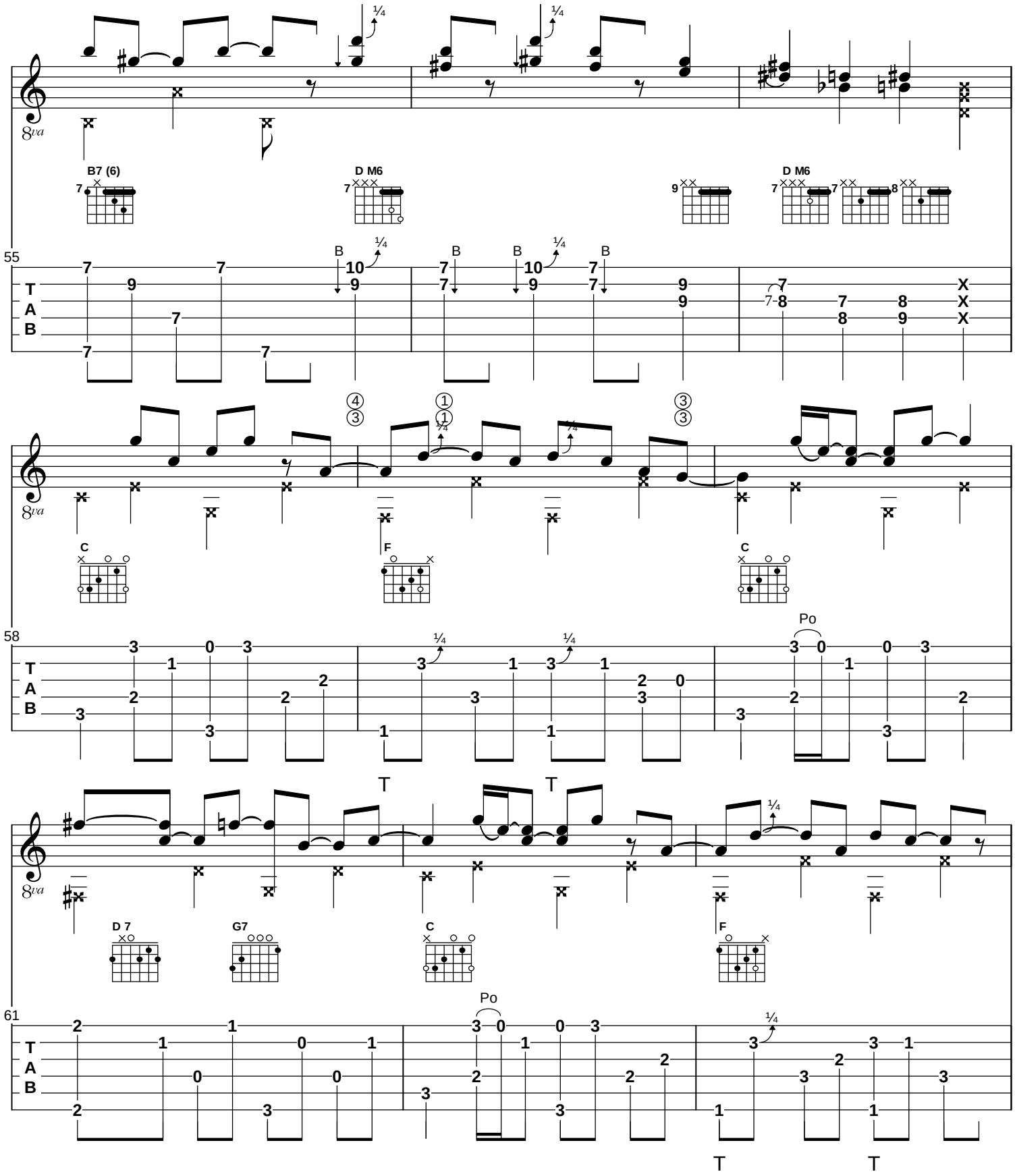

8va
C
F
C
10
T
A
B
¼
Po
T
T
8va
D 7
G7
C
F
13
T
A
B
Po
¼
¼
T
T
T
8va
3
C
16
T
A
B
Po
3

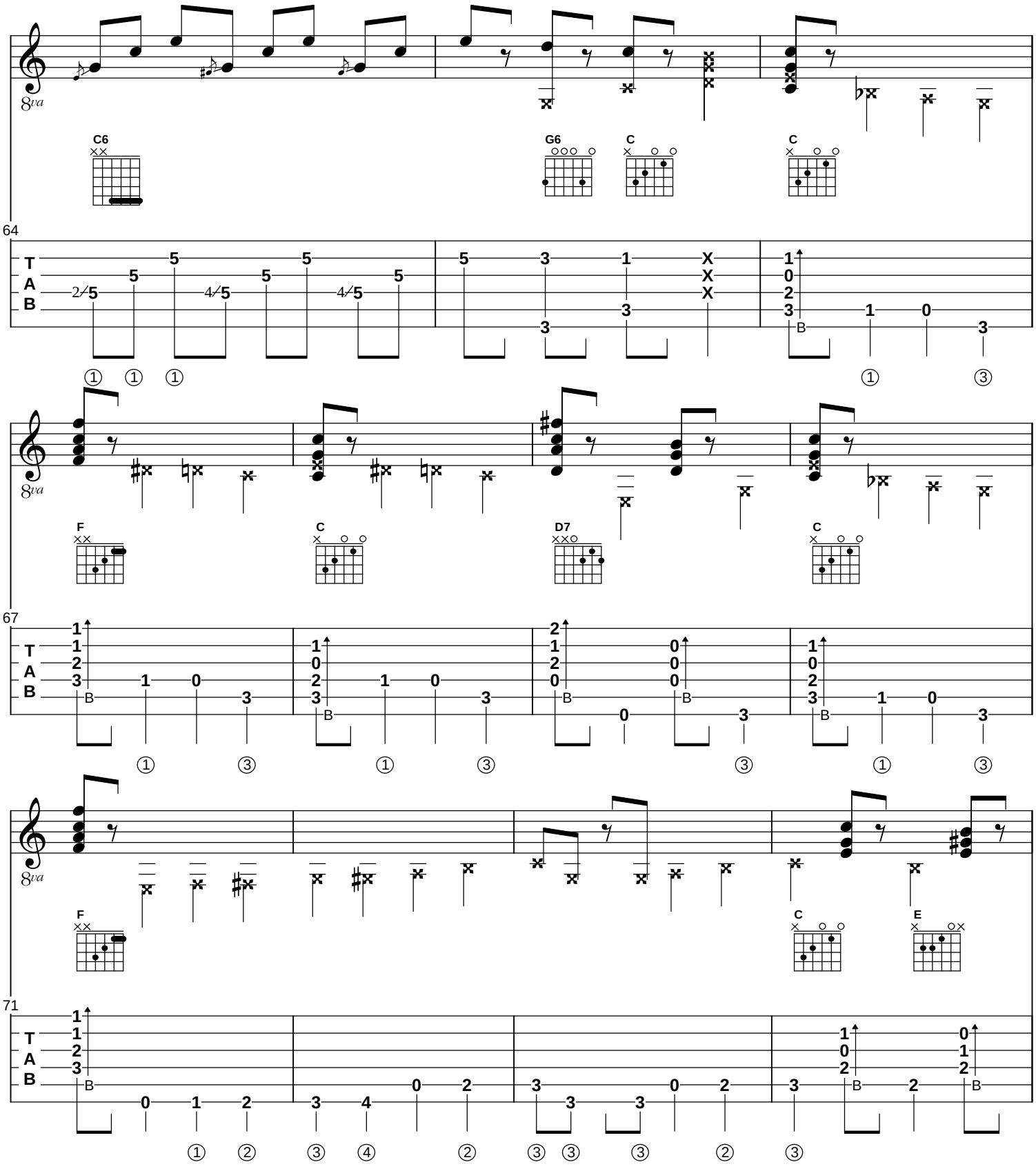

F
C
D 7
G7
19
Po
C
F
C6
22
Po
G6
C
C (6)
F9
25
Sl

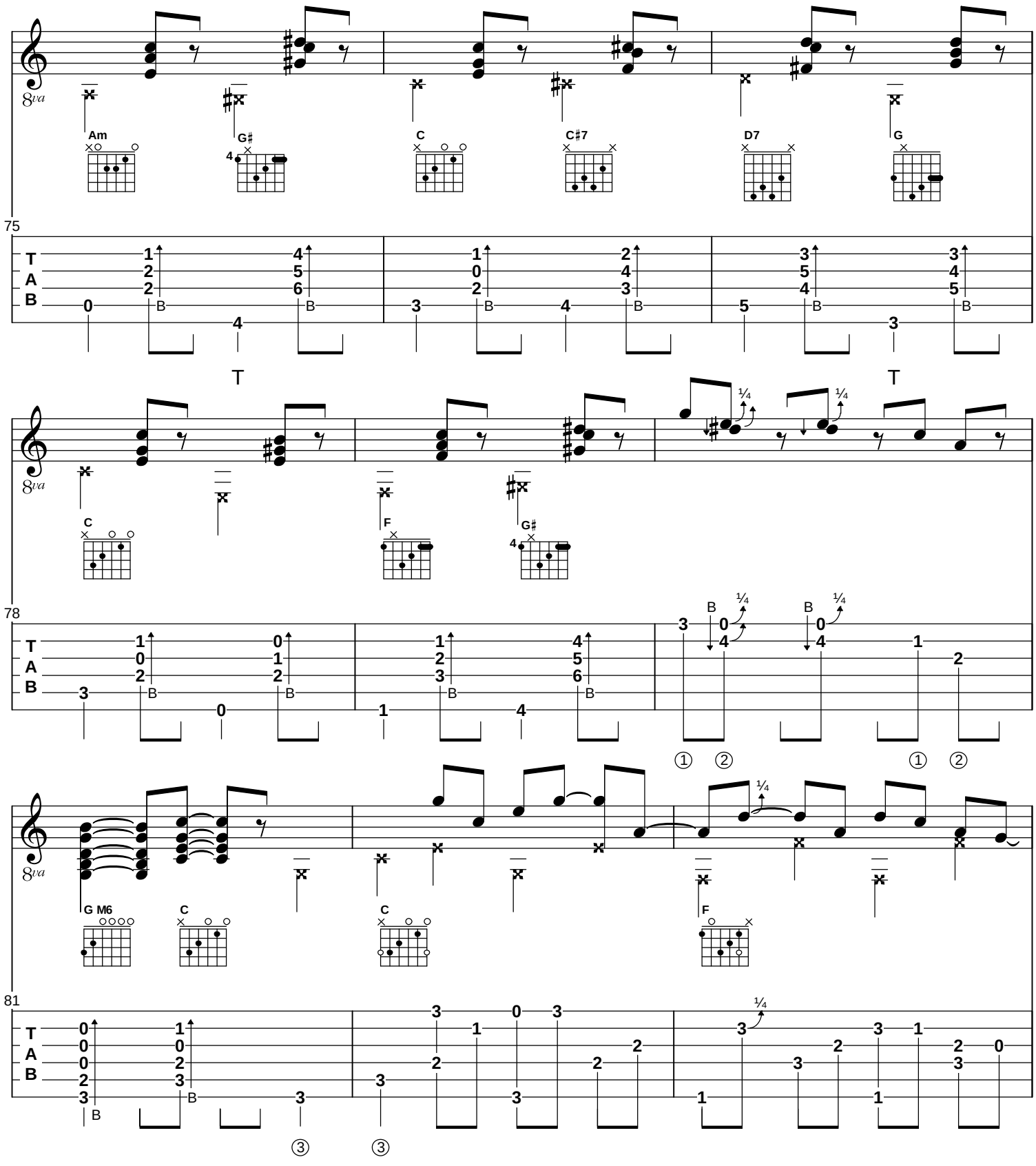

C
Am7
Gm7
C7
F M
B 7 dim
B 7
B 7
B 7 dim
B 7 dim
B 7

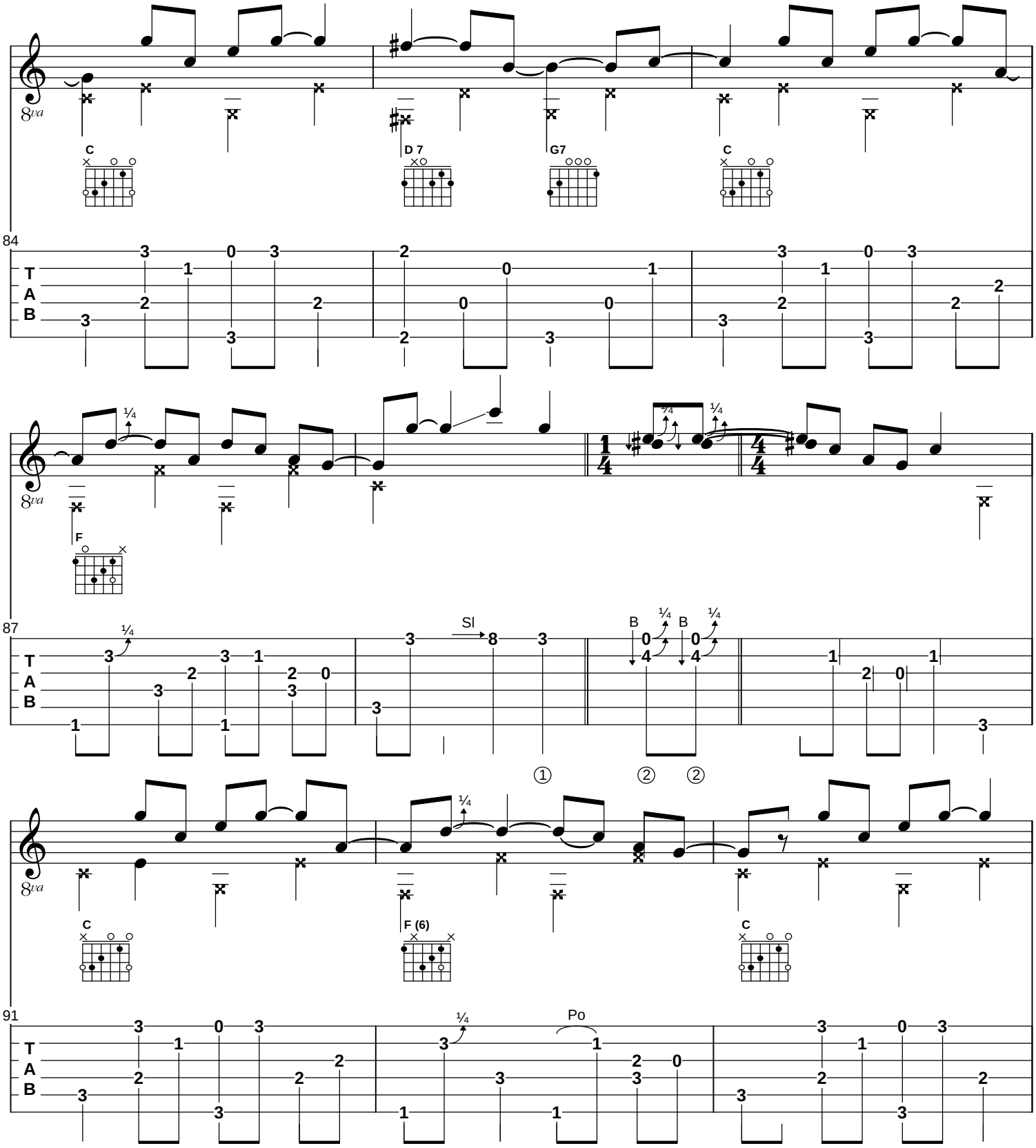

8va
B 7
A♯7
A 9
B 7 dim
B 7
B 7
B 7 dim
37
T A B
B M
B 7
A
B
B6
E7 (6)
40
T A B
B6
F♯7
43
T A B

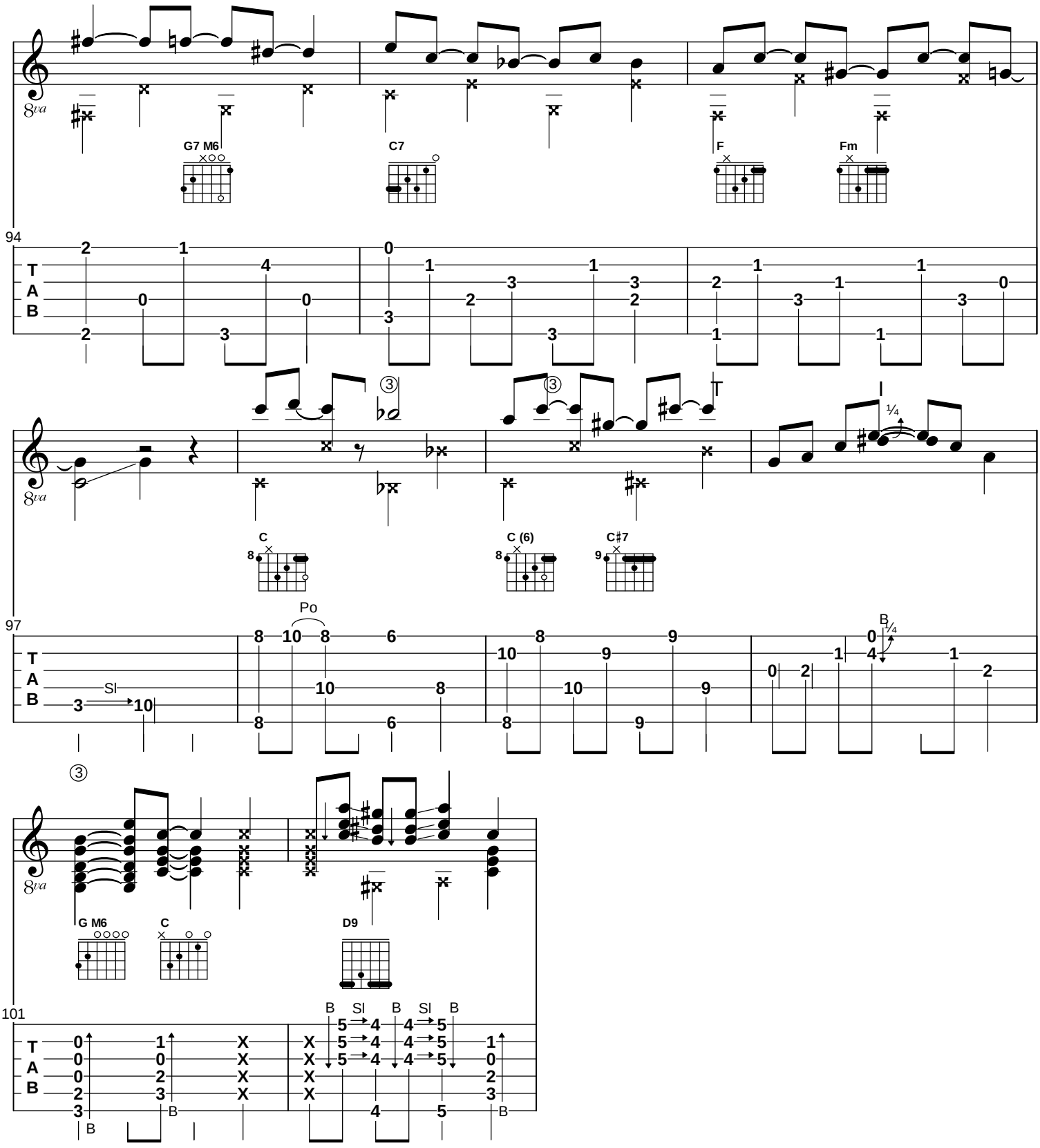

8va
B6
E7
46
T
A
B
H
F M7
F♯6
E9
49
T
T
B6
B M
B (6)
52
B
SI
T


8va
B7 (6)
D M6
D M6
55
T
A
B
C
F
C
58
Po
T
T
8va
D 7
G7
C
F
61
Po
T
T


8va
C6
G6
C
C
64
T
A
B
F
C
D7
C
67
F
C
E
71


8va
Am
G♯
C
C♯7
D7
G
75
T
A
B
C
F
G♯
78
G M6
C
C
F
81


8va
C
D 7
G7
C
84
T
A
B
F
87
Sl
B
B
C
F (6)
C
91
Po




Here's my version of Merle Travis' famous "Saturday Night Shuffle". It's not an exact transcription of any of the several versions that Travis recorded (I'll be doing these at a later date as a part of my "Project Muhlenberg") but all the licks are taken from one or the other of them (I never did like the intro he used on the 1960 version).

It should always be remembers that Travis kept three fingers solidly planted on the top of his guitar and used ONLY his thumb and index finger when he played. This provides a very distinctive sound and actually makes a big difference in some licks. It also has a tendency to make life more difficult for us ordinary humans. I usually use both my index and middle fingers to pick with.

Another thing to keep in mind is the way Travis played those lightning fast "rolls" of his. Take a look at the figure beginning in measure 24. This is one of the simplest forms of his "rolls" (he also played this backwards in some cases). The first two notes are played with his thumbpick with only the last note of each roll being picked with the index finger. This is one of the cases where his, rather odd, right hand position was a bonus. Although the angle resulting from the fact of his three-finger anchoring looks horrendous (about on a par with Django Reinhardt's fretting hand), it actually makes this particular type of roll easier to play smoothly.

I've written the chords out Travis style. This is to say that you'll notice that several chords use that famous Travis trick of fretting the two bass strings with his thumb. There are occasions where this technique is of positive use as in the C6 chord first appearing in measure 42.  You just can't get exactly  the same "Travis swing" any other way. As far as this particular chord (C6) is concerned, you'll note that a supplementary note is played at the 2nd fret of the 1st string. The index finger doesn't actually stay anchored there. It's put down as needed to catch that particular note. Keeping it anchored just makes the ring finger barré at the 4th fret more difficult to play.

He also habitually used this technique in the playing of the 9th shape occuring, for example, in measure 27 and in the ending lick. It works fine in the figure in 27 and I've run into cases where it's a very comfortable way of running certain chord combinations down the neck but I'll be damned if I can get it to work in that ending lick. In most cases, this particular shape can be replaced with the more standard shape that uses the left hand ring finger to fret the 5th and 6th strings.

The spots that are marked as left hand damping are, in actual fact, something completely different. This is intended to simulate slapping the strings with the rioght hand, either while moving the left hand to a new position or, as in the end tag, simply to provide a rhythmic effect. I use a closed right fist to strike the strings but I suppose an open hand would work just as well if it's more comfortable for you.

All the downwards brushes are, of course, played with the thumb.

The C7 in 94 is played with the ring finger straddling the 5th and 6th strings, not as a "thumb barré".

In measure96, the long slide sound provided by TablEdit, for once, provides a fairly good approximation of what's really happening sound-wise. On the recording, it almost sounds as if Merle is using his thumbpick as a flat pick to play a very fast trill as he slides his ring finger from the 3rd to the 10th fret. Try as I will, I've never been able to get the timing of such a technique exactly right. On the other hand, I can get something similar by fretting the string slightly harder so that each fret change is clearly heard.

I can't really say that I'm satisfied with the solution I've used for the 3->8 slide in 88 but it was the only way I could get the measures to come out even. Any suggestions?

This same measure contains another little trick that's kind of nice. As he leaves the Fm chord and swithches to the C at the end of 95, he picks the open 3rd string. The G note is allowed to ring out until the left hand is about halfway up to the 10th fret at which point the string is actively damped with the right hand index finger.