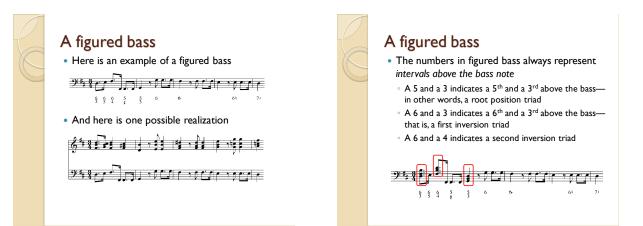
Figured Bass

Figured bass

- The numeric symbols commonly used to indicate chord inversions (such as ⁶ and ^g) originate in the practice of figured bass
- Figured bass was first used in the 18th century (during the Baroque era)
- Keyboard players would often be given a bass line and were expected to be able to improvise chords above it by interpreting (or "realizing") the figures that were written below the bass line





A figured bass

- · Abbreviations are common in figured bass
 - $^\circ$ A 6 by itself also indicates a first inversion triad—it is implied that there is also a 3 above the bass
 - \circ 7, § , 1, and 1 indicate the different positions of a seventh chord
 - For example, $\frac{6}{3}$ indicates a first inversion seventh chord, with a 5th and a 6th above the bass, but also with an implied 3rd (to complete the seventh chord)



A figured bass

- Non-numeric symbols are also used
 - A sharp, flat or natural next to a number means to apply that accidental to that pitch above the bass
 - $^\circ\,$ An accidental by itself is always added to the third of the chord (a $3^{rd}\,above$ the bass)
 - A slash through a number (or a plus next to a number) means to *raise* that pitch above the bass





A figured bass

- Bass notes with no figures are interpreted as follows:
 - Bass notes that are repeated continue to use the previous figure
 - New bass notes with no figure are interpreted as root position triads

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A figured bass

• When a figured bass is realized by a keyboard player, the chord is typically spaced out (adding octaves) and some notes are doubled

