

TEARS IN HEAVEN

Words and Music by Eric Clapton and Will Jennings

Figure 7 – Intro, Verse, and Chorus

The gigantic hit, "Tears In Heaven," a haunting tribute to Clapton's late son Conor, first appeared in the film *Rush*, and was later included in the *Unplugged* collection. Clapton plays it on nylon-string acoustic with a quasi-classical fingerpicking style (which has a warm and intimate quality) and allows for a variety of articulation and arpeggiation options. The approach enables him to pluck selected tones or chords to create fuller chord sounds, thinner dyads, or purely single-note passages at will, resulting in a beautiful, multi-textured accompaniment. Andy Fairweather Low (Gtr. 1) takes an active role in the song adding decorative fills during the verses. The chord sequence of D/F#–E7sus4–E7–A in measures 3–4 was previously heard in "Signe," and was evidently a pervasive compositional idea during this phase of Clapton's writing. Note the signature thumb fretting technique used to play the sixth string bass notes in the E/G#–F#m–D/F# chords of the progression.

For the main thematic riff in the intro and verse, Eric employs a number of simple first-position chords (A, D, and E) decorated with tasty embellishments in the form of hammer-ons, pull-offs, and slides. These elements are present in the accompaniment pattern used during the bulk of the arrangement.

The chorus is more active harmonically, with broader chordal texture in Clapton's part than in the previous sections—relying on a consistent alternating thumb-and-fingers picking pattern. The chords are broken up with a regular bass note/upper partial pattern until the phrase rejoins the main thematic riff in measure 19. In the chorus, Low (Gtr. 1) adds a complementary, harp-like arpeggiated figure as a varied accompaniment.

15 **Featured Guitars:**
Gtr. 2 meas. 1-22

16 **Slow Demos:**
Gtr. 2 meas. 1-4;
5-8; 13-18

Fig. 7

Intro
Ballad ♩ = 80

N.C. A E/G# F#m7 F#m7/E D/F# E7sus4 E7

Gtrs. 1 & 2 (nylon-str. acous.)

mp w/ fingers * T

T
A
B

* T = Thumb on ⑥ throughout for bass notes.

Verse

Gr. 1: w/ Fill 1

4 A A E/G# F#m F#m/E

1. Would you know my name

7 D/F# A E A E/G# F#m7

if I saw you in hea - ven? Would it be the same

10 Gr. 1: w/ Fill 1 F#m7/E D/F# A/E E A/E E7

if I saw you in hea - ven?

Fill 1
Gr. 1

Fill 2
Gr. 1

Chorus

Gr. 1: w/ Fill 3

13 **F#m7** **C#/E#** **A7/E**

I must be strong and carry on,

16 **F#7** **E/G#** **Bm7** **D/E** **N.C.**

'cause I know I don't belong here in hea -

19 **A** **E/G#** **F#m7** **F#m7/E** **D/F#** **E7sus4 E7** **A**

Gr. 1: w/ Fill 1, 1st meas. Gr. 1: w/ Fill 4

ven.

Fill 3
Gr. 1

Fill 4
Gr. 1

Figure 8 – Bridge and Interlude

In the bridge, Eric modulates to a somewhat remote key—G major—for an interesting, expressive musical effect. He alludes to a piece of the main riff's chord progression in the similar C–G/B–Am sequence (transposed)—maintaining a tight thematic unity within the composition. Clapton varies his fingerpicking approach to include more chordal arpeggiation textures.

17	Featured Guitars: Gtr. 2 meas. 1-16
18	Slow Demos: Gtr. 2 meas. 1-4; 5-8; 9-12

Fig. 8

Bridge

C G/B Am D/F# G D/F#

1

Time can bring ya down, — time can bend your knees. —

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

4 Em D/F# G C G/B Am D/F#

Time can break your heart — have ya beg - gin' please, —