**Rob's Piano Room - Module 15 - PDF**
**Using Existing Repertoire for Inspiration**

**Main ideas**

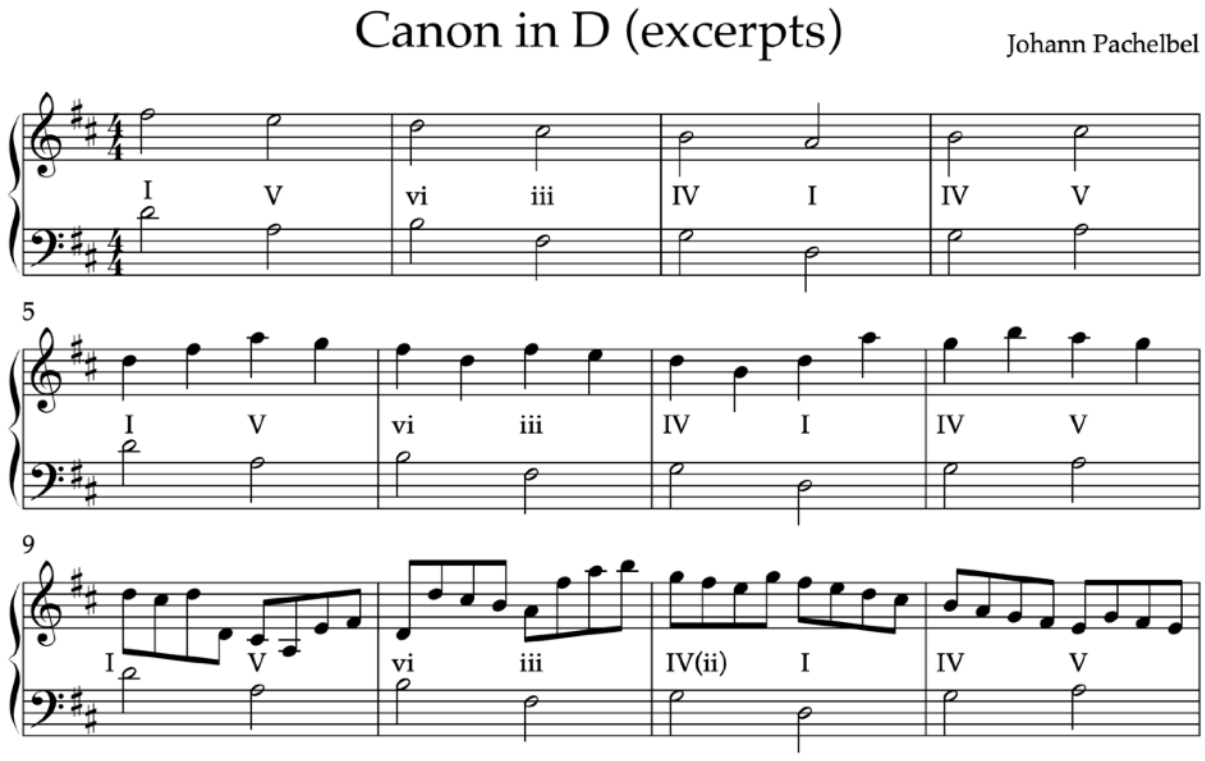
Improvising, and composing, needs familiarity with vocabulary. You can compose your own vocabulary, but it can be very useful to examine pre-existing music for inspiration.

We are going to look at examples from classical music, but the same it true for all styles

Here are some of examples of the kind of inspiration we can glean from others' compositions:

Harmony (chord progressions)
Melodic fragments
Melodic shapes
Phrase lengths
Rhythms
Textures, left hand accompaniment styles
Structural use of material (repetitions etc)
Overall mood, emotional effect
Plus many more….

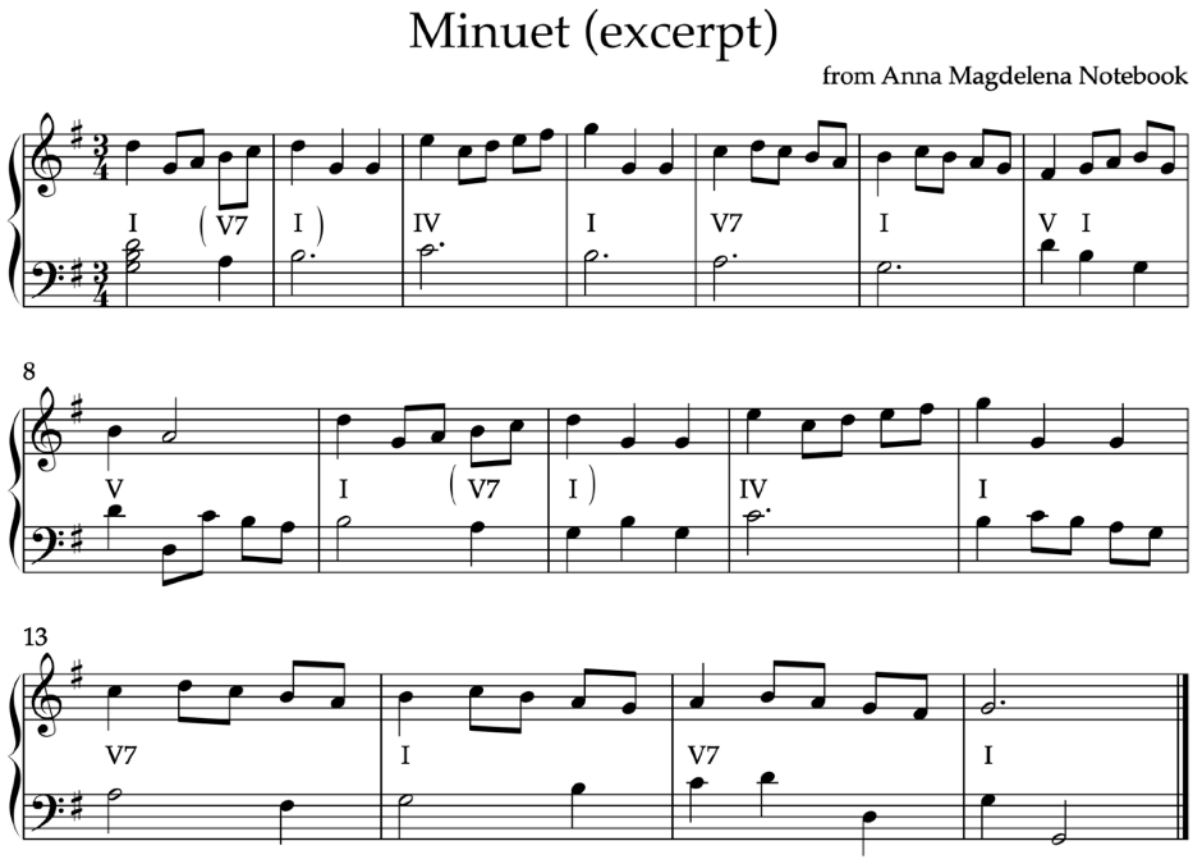
Lets look at a few examples of well known compositions. I've chosen some very well known examples, but the idea is your you to find your own favourite music to analyze

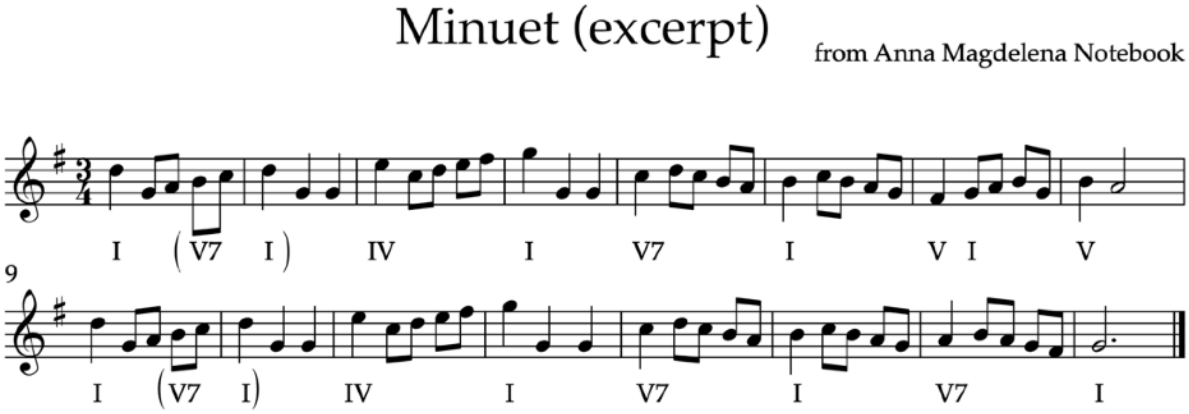


For this piece, we will mostly work with this chord progression.  Practice taking the chord progression and making your own melodies, just over the bass notes as written, or making an accompaniment figure as we have been doing. Try:

- playing out of time at first to become comfortable
- in 4/4, with longer notes at first, gradually building up to more notes
- trying different lengths of phrases
- starting each chord with a non-chord tone
- trying in 3/4, or other time signatures
- transposing to different keys

Now let's look at  this well known piece from J.S Bach



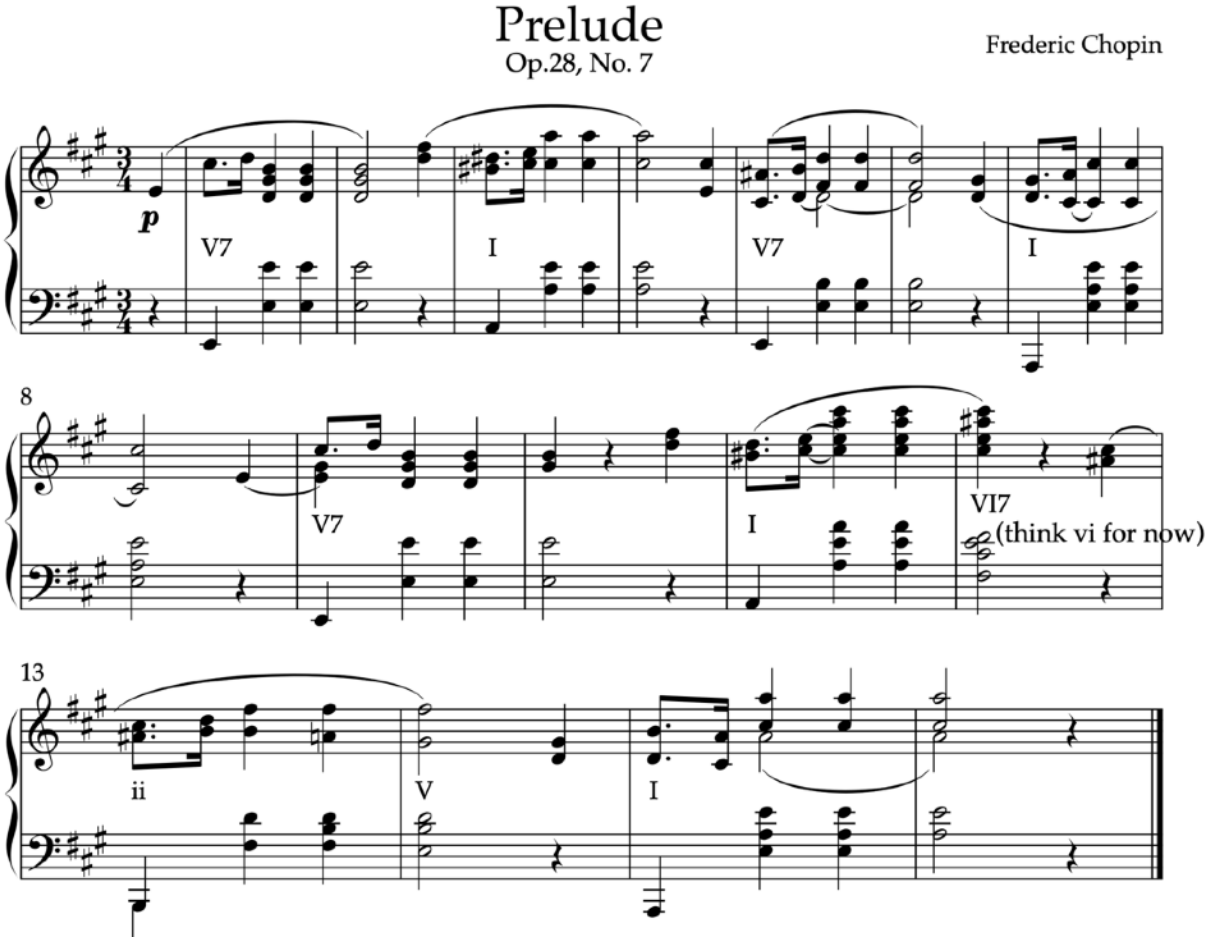



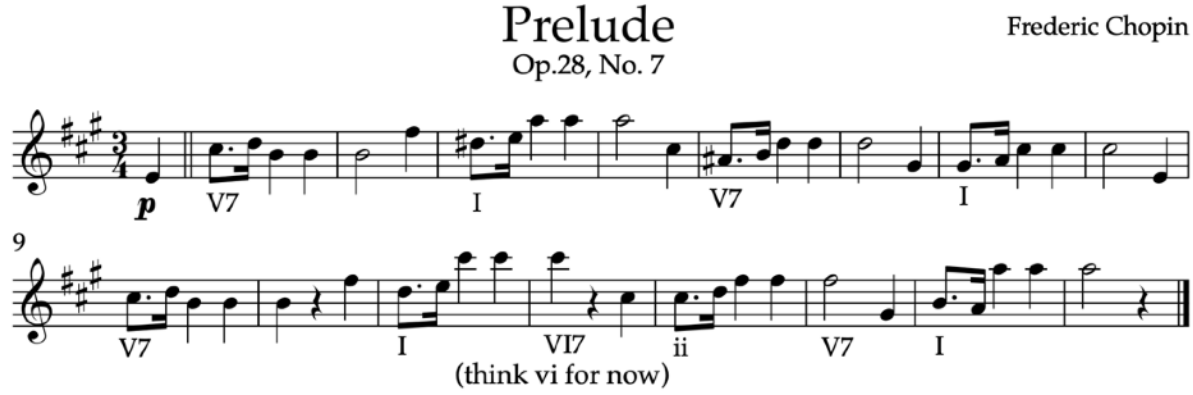
Here again, lets try making own own melody over this chord progression, in 3/4 as well as in 2/4 or 4/4.

As well, let's take a look at some of the shapes Bach uses in this melody, and see if we can use those shapes, or variations of those shapes, in our own pieces. (Especially the 4 eighths, leading into a quarter note, and all the variations of shapes on this rhythm)

As an exercise, you could even try playing the first two bars and continuing in your own way.

Now lets look at a piece by Chopin



The harmony is mostly quite simple in this piece (except for the VI7, which will be explained in module 17)
An important feature to look at here is the use of the non chord tone at the beginning of every two bar group. Listen to the very colourful sound that is achieve for each of these. As a point of interest notice that these all move up to the chord tone except for the last one, which moves down .This idea of the non-chord tone on the beat, as a compositional feature, would be a very useful feature to turn into an exercise for your improvisations or compositions.

Again, you can also try different time signatures, or use the opening motive for your own ideas.

The last idea we are going to look at is simply using the emotional tone of a piece as inspiration, and loosely using aspects of a piece to try to achieve a similar mood, such as rhythmic ideas, range, accompaniment patterns, etc.. See the video for a short exploration of this idea using the first movement of Beethoven's 'Moonlight' sonata.

When looking at your own favourite music, ask yourself what provides the interest. Is it a certain harmonic progression? A colourful melodic device? An interesting rhythm? Whatever it is, try to find a way to incorporate it into your own improvising.