



## *Thinking of My Home* by Chen Yi

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Featured readings and worksheets designed to be printed and shared with students can be found throughout this curriculum. They are easily identifiable - each page has a border and contains an image of Rondo, the ChoralQuest® mascot!





## Teacher's Guide

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### INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Following the success of the BandQuest® series from the American Composers Forum, the Forum launched ChoralQuest® in order to commission high quality new works for middle level choirs by living composers. In addition to new pieces created by some of today's leading composers, ChoralQuest also provides a rich curriculum with multiple resources for ensembles and music classrooms. The goals of the ChoralQuest curriculum are to provide educators with:



- Tools to create effective ensemble lessons that teach students how to perform the piece
- Resources that support interdisciplinary teaching and learning related to the music

We believe that when students approach a piece through multiple entry points and make connections between the music they sing and other disciplines, they not only develop into stronger performers, but also make meaning of the music and its relationship to their own life experiences.

### THE FRAMEWORK

The materials were developed using a curricular framework called the Facets Model (Barrett, McCoy, & Veblen, 1997). The Model is a comprehensive approach for studying musical works in depth, one that helps students relate music to other disciplines in meaningful ways. Though used to create curricula in many settings, it provides an exemplary scaffold for the content of the ChoralQuest curricula.

Eight essential questions are key to the Facets Model. The questions are grouped into categories which encourage teachers and students to address fundamental ideas about the origins of the work, its elements and form, and the range of expressive meanings it conveys. For in-depth information on the facets model, go the ChoralQuest® website ([www.ChoralQuest.org](http://www.ChoralQuest.org)) or by [clicking here](#).

The materials for each ChoralQuest® curriculum can be downloaded. The curriculum includes:

- A Teacher's Guide
- Composer Biography and Program Notes
- Lesson plans for Rehearsing the Music including Warm Ups
- Lesson Plans for Listening and Responding
- Lesson Plans for Creating Music
- Lesson Plans with an Interdisciplinary Focus
- Readings for Students
- Assessment Strategies
- Links to other web based resources

*Thinking of My Home* was commissioned by the American Composers Forum with generous support from individual donors. It was premiered May 5, 2015 by the Frontier Middle School Choir in Olathe Kansas under the direction of Gretchen Harrison.

# Thinking of My Home REHEARSAL NOTES

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The following notes for rehearsing *Thinking of My Home* provide teaching suggestions and information about musical elements and characteristics that will help students perform the work and understand how the piece looks and sounds. Your rehearsals may highlight a single element and concept, or they may highlight multiple facets of the piece. Either approach helps students understand the musical building blocks that Chen Yi chose and combined to create *Thinking of My Home*. This is a very vibrant piece. To absorb the fullness of it, directors should listen to this work several times before introducing it to students. It is important for students to also exercise their aural skills both by reading the text by listening to the recording of the composer reciting the text. Chen Yi advises using patience in understanding the lyrics to better convey both the song's message and the charm of the language. Listening to the recording of the piece also gives the singers a feeling for the beauty of the melody as well as the accentuations in the text, which are both subtle and delicate.

Below are numbered suggestions for musical elements to highlight as you rehearse *Thinking of My Home*. The elements in **bold** fonts have specific mini-lessons in the SKILL BUILDER section of this curriculum.

## 1. Meter

- Starts in 4/4 meter and remains the same throughout

## 2. Tempo

- Begins at  = 72
- Remains steady throughout the piece, but changes in rhythm create nuances in tempo

## 3. Rhythm – Skill Builder #1 – Rhythmic Accuracy

- Find places where syncopated rhythms occur (such as mm. 7-9, mm. 15-17, and m. 23)
- Find recurring rhythmic figures (such as m. 6 and mm. 9, 28)
- Differentiate between eighth note and triplet rhythms
- Identify triplet rhythms and their counting patterns

## 4. Dynamics

- Review dynamic markings as they are found in the piece
- Questions: How do the dynamic markings relate to the text? Why do you think there are so many dynamic markings in the song?
- Ask students to find 3 places in the song where dynamics in the piano accompaniment set the meaning/mood of the upcoming text (mm. 14, 19, 21)

## 5. Text/sound connections - Articulation, Tone Painting, Tonality

- Find places in the text where the melody and dynamics support the text, such as mm. 6-8, where the melody rises with the words “gazing at the moon.” Are there other places where Chen Yi’s words help explain what is going on in the music?
- Question: Why do you think Chen Yi often has high and low voices singing separately, imitating each other?

- Question: What effect do the passages using vocal sounds (“Mn”, “Woo”) have on the piece? Why do you think Chen Yi used these vocal syllables?

#### 6. Harmony - Harmony based on the pentatonic scale

- Play portions of the piece at the keyboard using both pentatonic harmony and major/minor harmony.
- Question: How would the musical effect of this piece change if it were in a major or minor key?
- For further background for your students, show [Bobby McFerrin's video](#) on the pentatonic scale.

#### 7. Accompaniment

- Play piano accompaniment as students follow the score. Do the dynamic markings in the accompaniment follow those in the voice parts?
- Question: Judging from the piano accompaniment, where are two places in the music that can hint at high points in the piece? (mm.10, 22-23)
- Question: Are there places in the piece where it might more effectively be sung *a cappella*?
- The optional triangle part is an opportunity for students to audition.

#### 8. Vocal Colors - Vocal Production/Intonation with accidentals in a pentatonic harmonic structure

- Select examples from the different voices where there are accidentals in the music.
- Play passages with and without accidentals
- Question: What effect do the altered notes have on the sound?

#### 9. Vocal Production - Skill Builder #2 – Singing Harmony with Intervals of a 2nd

- Find short homophonic sections in the song, and practice each part with solfege, gradually building up to a balanced 3-part harmony. Many opportunities for this can be found throughout the piece. For example, mm. 20-22.
- Divide students into groups of 8 or 12 (depending on voice parts); practice the section and sing for the choir; determine which groups have the best vocal blend.

#### 10. Texture – Skill Builder #3 - Texture

- Review monophonic, homophonic and polyphonic definitions
- Discuss the effect of moving from a monophonic texture to homophonic (ex. mm. 10-11 and 20-22).
- Review imitation. Find several places where imitation occurs.
- Discuss Chen Yi's use of texture in this piece. How does her choice of texture provide clarity to the music?

#### 11. Coda

- Discuss what a coda is. Have students identify the coda section in *Thinking of My Home*.
- Question: What changes in the coda sets this section apart from the rest of the piece? Does the coda relate to the introduction in any way?
- Practice m. 33-end on a neutral syllable or given text with *mezzo piano (mp)* dynamics
- Question: How is a ritard created in the coda?

# Musical Elements in Thinking of My Home

Voices indicated in parenthesis: Voice 1 (V.1), Voice 2 (V.2), Voice 3 (V.3), and Voice 4 (V.4)  
Items marked with an asterisk (\*) give the piece its Chinese characteristics.

<p><b>MELODY/MOTIVE/TEXTURE</b></p> <p>The main melodic or motivic material and textures are highlighted below.</p>	
<p>Melody throughout is legato; eighth note piano accompaniment reinforces the vocal parts and adds to the legato flow.</p> <p>Piano Accompaniment has sixteenth note flourishes which prepare singers for a change in dynamics.</p> <p>*Melody uses the pentatonic scale in triplet and eighth note patterns to produce a smooth rhythmic flow.</p> <p>*Portamento/vocal slide A short, straight line between two notes to indicate a steady rise in pitch, followed by a short cut-off</p>	<p>Piano Accompaniment: mm. 10, 13-14, 19, 22, 24-25</p> <p>mm 13-14</p>
<p>Texture: The way multiple voices interact in a composition A variety of textures are used</p> <p>Imitation: Copying or repeating a melody or motive shortly after it first appears in a different voice</p>	<p>Monophonic sections: mm. 1-5, 8-9, 20 Homophonic sections: mm. 15-17, 21-18, 30-32 Polyphonic sections: mm. 6-7, 10-11, 17-18, 33-36</p> <p>Sections with imitation: mm. 6, 10-11, 18-19, 24-25, 33-35</p>

<p><b>RHYTHM, METER AND TEMPO</b></p>	
<p>*Duple Meter – most common meter in Chinese music</p> <p>4/4 time signature- 4 beats per measure with an eighth note receiving 1/2 beat</p>	<p>4/4 meter throughout</p>

Triplet: A subdivision of the beat or beats into three equal parts	mm. 3 (V1, 8-9 (V1-3), 11(V1-3), 12 (V1), 21 (V1), 22 (V1-3), 24(V1,2), 27 (V1-2), 28, 29 (V1-3), 36 (V1-3)
*Syncopation: Placing rhythmic emphasis on a weak part of the beat. (dotted sixteenth followed by a dotted eighth on the beat)	mm. 6 (V1-3), 22 (V1-3), 23 (V1-3)
Creating ties in the triplet pattern to create a subtle syncopated effect	mm. 8 (V1-3), 11 (V1-3), 12 (V1), 16 (V1), 17 (V1,2), 21 (V1), 24 (V1,2), 28 (V1-3)


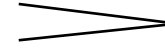

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FORM</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">The overall structure or plan of a piece of music; the layout of a composition as divided into sections.</p>	
Overall form is a through-composed work in three sections, with introduction and coda	
Introduction has simple layered melodic figures that set the mood	Introduction – mm. 1-5
Part 1 introduces the text using a variety of textures	Part 1 – mm. 6-14
Part 2 is primarily homophonic; uses text painting	Part 2 – mm. 15-19
Part 2 continues with a variety of textures; a dynamic build-up leads to the song's climax at m. 24.	Part 2, continued – mm. 20-25
Part 3 is homophonic; music returns to a peaceful mood	Part 3 – mm. 26-32
Coda is polyphonic; imitates mood of the introduction	Coda – mm.33-36
Call and response: Sections where one voice sings a phrase and 2 or more voices echo or answer	Sections with call and response: mm. 6, 11, 18-19, 33-35

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HARMONY</b></p>	
*Harmony: Harmony is created throughout through the use of the pentatonic scale. Note that frequently this harmony is created from major 2nds.	
*Heterophony Singing or playing two or more versions of the same melody with slight variations at the same time	Short sections with heterophony: Mm. 15-16; 20-22

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## EXPRESSIVE MARKINGS

The composer's marks and terms included in a musical score to communicate his/her wishes about how a piece should be performed.

<p>Crescendo: sections where the music grows louder.</p> 	<p>mm. 2 (V1-3), 8 (V1-3), 14 (piano), 16 (V1-3), 21 (V1-3), 22 (V1-3, piano), 23 (V1-3, piano)</p>
<p>Decrescendo: sections where music gets softer.</p> 	<p>mm: 13 (piano), 19 (piano)</p>
<p>*Legato: Singing or playing in a smooth and flowing manner without breaks between the notes</p>	
<p>Slurs: Places where a curved line over two or more notes shows notes sung in one breath, in order to move smoothly from one to the other without a break.</p>	<p>mm. 3 (V1-3), 5 (V1-3), 7 (V1-3), 11 (V1-3), 12 (V1), 16 (V1), 17 (V1,2), 18-19 (V1-3), 21 (V1), 24 (V1,2), 27-29 (V1-3), 33-36 (V1-3)</p>
<p>Dynamics: Degree of loudness or softness of the music.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piano – soft (<i>p</i>): mm. 1-2 (V1-3), 3 (V1-3), 20-21 (V1-3), 30-33 (V1-3)</li> <li>• mezzo piano-medium soft (<i>mp</i>): mm. 3 (V1-3), 6 (V1-3), 15-16 (V1-3), 18 (V1-3), 21 (V1-3), 25 (V3), 26-29 (V1-3), 33 (V2,3)</li> <li>mezzo forte-medium loud (<i>mf</i>): mm. 10 (V1-3), 17-18 (V1-3), 23 (V1-3)</li> <li>• forte – loud (<i>f</i>): mm. 24-25 (V1-3)</li> </ul>
<p>Fermata: Musical symbol placed over a note or rest that extends it beyond its normal duration.</p> 	<p>m.35 (V1-3)</p>
<p>*Articulation: the composer's intent is indicated through the slurs, long melodic lines and smooth dynamic changes, suggesting an overall legato flow.</p>	
<p>*Portamento: a short, straight line between two notes to indicate a steady rise in pitch.</p>	<p>mm. 13-14 (V1-3)</p>

## MEET COMPOSER CHEN YI

### Biography for Educators

Chen Yi\* was born in Guangzhou, China in 1953, the second daughter of two doctors who loved music. She began music lessons at the age of three. Her first teachers were Zheng Ri-hua, violin, and Lee Soo Sin, piano.

During the 1960's a great period of unrest call the Cultural Revolution overtook China. Despite the chaos during a time when all aspect of Western culture were banned, Chen Yi continued her music studies and practiced her violin at home with the mute attached. When she was fifteen years old, Chen Yi was sent to the countryside for two years of forced labor. She found a way to smuggle her violin with her other possessions. This was a period of great hardship for the composer, but there was one positive outcome of this experience. In the country, Chen Yi learned about the music and traditions of China and the Chinese people. This deeper understanding provided inspiration for her life as a composer.



Chen Yi returned to the city at the age of seventeen, called back in order to serve as the concertmaster and composer for the Beijing Opera Troupe. She also began to study Chinese traditional music and Western and Chinese music theory under the supervision of Zheng Zhong.

When the school system was restored in 1977, Chen Yi, at the age of 25 was finally able to attend college. She enrolled in the Beijing Central Conservatory, where she studied composition under

Professor Wu Zu-qiang and British guest composer Alexander Goehr. She continued violin studies with Professor Lin Yao-Ji and began an eight-year systematic study of Chinese traditional music. In 1983, Ms. Chen composed the first Chinese viola concerto, *Xian Shi*, and in 1986, Chen Yi became the first woman in China to receive a Master of Arts in Composition. To honor this achievement, the Chinese Musicians Association, the Central Conservatory of Music, Radio Beijing, CCTV and the Central Philharmonic of China jointly presented an entire program devoted to Chen's orchestral works.



Chen Yi as Young Composer\*\*

Chen Yi traveled to the United States in 1986 to continue her musical training. In 1993, she received her Doctor of Musical Arts, with distinction, from Columbia University, where she studied under Chou Wen-chung and Mario Davidovsky. In the same year, Dr. Chen was appointed, through the Meet the Composer New Residencies program, to a three year term as Composer-in-Residence for the Women's Philharmonic, Chanticleer and the Aptos Creative Arts Program, all in San Francisco.

Chen Yi's compositions take the essential character and spirit from both Chinese and Western traditional music and develops them into new ideas and concepts. She thoughtfully combines the sound and feel of the Western orchestra with traditional eastern pentatonic tonalities. That, and the desire to create "real music" for society and future generations, is her main goal.

In addition to composing, Ms. Chen also serves on the Board of Directors of Meet the Composer and the New Music Consort, on the Composer Advisory Board of the American Composers Orchestra and the International Alliance for Women in Music. She is a member of ASCAP and the American Music Center, and is also active as a violinist in new music and as an ethnomusicologist in Chinese music. She is a frequent guest lecturer throughout the United States and China. For the last seven years Chen Yi has served as a co-editor of *The Music from China Newsletter*, an English and Chinese bilingual publication, introducing Chinese music, both traditional and contemporary, to wider audience and scholars.



Chen Yi as College Professor\*\*\*

She was a member of the composition faculty of Peabody Conservatory and Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (1996-1998). She is currently the Cravens/Millsap/Missouri Distinguished Professor in Composition at the University of Missouri Kansas City Conservatory.

One of China's most important composers, Chen Yi has received numerous awards and prizes including first prize from the Chinese National Composition Competition (Duo Ye for solo piano) and the Lili Boulanger Award. Other honors include the 1996 Sorel Medal for Excellence in Music from the Center for Women in Music at New York University, a 1997 CalArts Alpert Award for music, the first Eddie Medora King Composition Prize from the University of Texas at Austin School of Music, and the Adventurous Programming Award from ASCAP (for Music From China).

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\* Chen is family name, Yi is personal name. Chen Yi can be referred to Dr. Chen, Prof. Chen, Ms. Chen, or Chen Yi, but not Dr. Yi, Prof. Yi, or Ms. Yi.

For More on Chen Yi:

[Chen Yi's web site at the UMKC Conservatory](#)

[Chen Yi in an interview with composer Bruce Duffie](#)

[Web Scrap book of images and biographical information at Theodore Presser Publishers, Chen Yi's publishing company](#)

\* [http://www.carnegiehall.org/chinafestival/themes/classof78\\_chenyi.aspx](http://www.carnegiehall.org/chinafestival/themes/classof78_chenyi.aspx)

\*\* <http://www.bruceduffie.com/yi6.jpg>

\*\*\* <https://conservatory.umkc.edu/release.cfm?cont=1C28EB>

## MEET COMPOSER CHEN YI

Chen Yi\* was born in 1953 in Guangzhou, China, the second daughter of Chen Ernan and Du Dianqin, two medical doctors.

Because her family loved Western classical music, Chen Yi grew up surrounded by the sounds of Mozart and Beethoven. When she was three years old she began to learn both piano and violin.

Music was important to all the children in the family. Her older sister, Chen Min, became a professional pianist and her younger brother, Chen Yun, became a violinist and violin professor at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music and concertmaster of the China Philharmonic Orchestra.



3 Year Old Chen Yi\*

The Revolution brought chaos and confusion to China. Music, drama, dancing and art were discouraged and artists, teachers, and intellectuals (for example, scientists and doctors) were punished. The Revolution brought great hardship to Chen Yi's family. When Chen Yi was 13, her father and older sister were sent away into hard labor. When she was 15 years old, the family house was searched, all possessions were taken, and the rest of her family broken up and sent into forced labor at different locations in the countryside. Chen Yi found a way to smuggle her violin to the country. She calls this time the 'dark period.'

During the Revolution, all Western music was banned. So Chen Yi invented different ways to practice her technique without being punished. Sometimes, she attached a **mute** to her strings. Bowing the strings this way made almost no sound. When she played the Revolutionary songs, which no one objected to, she would insert phrases and flourishes from the classical pieces she loved. She also silently practiced the fingerings of familiar melodies without bowing the strings. Using these strategies, Chen Yi maintained her violin skills for Mozart's and Beethoven's music. And when she played the piano, she would cover the windows, doors, and the piano with blankets to muffle the sound.

\*Chen Yi explains the Chinese approach to first and last names. "Chen is my last name, my family name. We put it in front because I guess it's the agricultural culture in China. We had the whole family living in one spot at one time, so we have the family name treated more importantly. The family name goes first. So Chen is my last name, Yi is my first name. You put it together as Chen Yi." \*\*

Though this was a period of great hardship, there was one positive outcome for Chen Yi, one that became an important part of her musical future. In the country, Chen Yi heard and played traditional music of Chinese people. She made connections between two musical worlds by playing Chinese revolutionary folk songs using Western techniques. This experience inspired her to learn more about Chinese Traditional music. When she began composing, she wove these sounds into her new pieces.

By the time Chen Yi was seventeen, the Revolution had lost much of its energy, and music and the arts were again allowed. The Peking Opera Troup of Guangzhou came looking for her because they needed a skilled violinist for their orchestra. They Opera helped her return to the city where she was named concertmaster **and** composer for the Troup.



As a seventeen year old violinist practicing the Brahms Violin Concerto\*\*\*

When school systems were restored in 1977, she enrolled in the Beijing Central **Conservatory**. As a college level student, Chen Yi studied violin and composition under Professor Wu Zu-qiang and British guest composer Alexander Goehr. She also launched an eight-year research project investigating Traditional Chinese Music. In 1983, Ms. Chen composed the first Chinese viola concerto, *Xian Shi*. In 1986, she became the first woman in China to receive a Master of Arts in Composition. The Chinese Musicians Association, the Central Conservatory of Music, Radio Beijing, CCTV and the Central Philharmonic of China presented an entire program of Chen's orchestral works to honor of this achievement.



Professor Chen Yi\*\*\*\*

Chen Yi came to the United States in 1986 to continue her musical training. In 1993, she received her Doctor of Musical Arts, with distinction, from Columbia University. That same year, Meet the Composer named Dr. Chen to a three-year term as composer-in-residence for three San Francisco, California organizations: the Women's Philharmonic, the Chanticleer chorus, and the Aptos Creative Arts Program. She is currently a Distinguished Professor of Music Composition at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music.

Chen Yi's compositions skillfully weave together the spirit and sound of Chinese traditional music and Western classical music. When Western sounds are melded with traditional eastern pentatonic tonality, new musical ideas are created. This is her way of creating "real music" for today's and for future generations of performers and listeners.

Learn more about Chen Yi at these sites:

- [New Music Online Library](#)
- [Carnegie Hall Modern Voices](#)
- [Interview with Bruce Duffie for WQXR](#) radio where she relates some of her stories in her own voice.
- [PDF titled A Chen Yi Scrapbook](#) at the Theodore Presser website. Presser is Chen Yi's music publisher

\*[http://www.carnegiehall.org/chinafestival/themes/classof78\\_chenyi.aspx](http://www.carnegiehall.org/chinafestival/themes/classof78_chenyi.aspx)

\*\*<http://www.bruceduffie.com/chenyi.html>

\*\*\* <http://www.bruceduffie.com/yi4a.jpg>

\*\*\*\*[http://blog.coas.missouri.edu/blog\\_mnmsf/?tag=r-paul-crabb](http://blog.coas.missouri.edu/blog_mnmsf/?tag=r-paul-crabb)



## Mini-Lesson: Meet Composer Chen Yi

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### OVERVIEW

Investigating some of Chen Yi's history while learning to sing *Thinking of My Home* will help students better understand what the composer might be expressing through music. After reading "Meet Composer Chen Yi" and/or viewing the PowerPoint, "Chen Yi and the Chinese Cultural Revolution," students will discuss and share information they noted. They will focus on her background, the historical events that shaped her life, and how she came to become a musician and composer. They will also create a "Portrait of the Composer" using a graphic organizer.

### LEARNING GOAL

Students will read and view biographical resources about the composer to support their learning, understanding, and performance of *Thinking of My Home*, and create a Portrait of the Composer to demonstrate what they know and understand about the composer.

### MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- The article, "Meet Composer Chen Yi" electronically or using hard copies
- Copies of the graphic organizer "Create a Composer Portrait"
- PowerPoint biography, "Chen Yi and the Chinese Cultural Revolution"

### PROCESS

An optional process is to post the article and PowerPoint on the choir website and assign them as homework prior to the discussion in step 3.

1. Divide students into small groups and direct them to read the article. They can read silently or out loud, sharing the reader's role within their group.
2. View the PowerPoint as a class. Ask individual students to read the text aloud.
3. Direct the groups to discuss what they've learned about the events, experiences, and details of Chen Yi's life and note what they found interesting or significant. They will collect these points of interest and use them to complete the "Composer Portrait" graphic. (Decide ahead of time if you wish every student to complete a portrait or ask them to do it as a group with one student acting as their scribe.)
4. This activity can also be assigned as a homework project.

## ASSESSMENT


Use the “Composer Portrait” organizer to assess student knowledge about the composer immediately after this lesson, or as a final assessment after completing your study and performance of the music.

## EXTENSIONS

- Ask students to find and read the [\*Chen Yi Composer Scrapbook\*](#) featured at the Theodore Presser website, and report back on what else they’ve learned about the composer.
- Assign students the task of writing a short biography of the composer for a written program for the concert at which you perform *Thinking of My Home*. Include one or more of their bios in the program notes.

## A Portrait of Chen Yi

If you were asked to introduce Chen Yi to someone who knows nothing about her, what would you say? Reflect on events, facts, and/or interesting details you've read, found on the web, or heard from you teacher. Summarize them in the circles. (You can write inside AND outside the circles.)



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Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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## PROGRAM NOTES

Here is what composer Chen Yi wrote about *Thinking of My Home*:

*Commissioned by the American Composers Forum (ACF) as a part of its ChoralQuest® Program, Thinking of My Home for treble clef choir and optional piano sets a famous ancient Chinese poem with the same title by Li Bai in the Tang Dynasty to music. It was my privilege to have such great opportunity to work together with ACF and the lovely students in the Frontier Trail Middle School Choir, guided by their wonderful and enthusiastic director Gretchen Harrison during my creation of the work. Our piece was premiered by at the FTMS in Olathe, Kansas, on May 5, 2015.*

This choral work by Chen Yi takes its gentle and beautiful lyrics from an ancient poem by Li Bai, a highly revered Chinese poet from the Tang Dynasty (618–907 C.E.). There are many translations of the poem. The version used by Chen Yi is taught to school children all across present-day China. The song opens with two Chinese words: *Yeu* (moon) and *Ye* (night). This simple Chinese text sets the mood for the song. The lyrics continue with an English translation of Li Bai's poem:



**Frontier Trail Middle School Choir**

*Moonlight in front of my bed,  
Is it frost on the ground I guess?  
Lifting up my eyes, gazing at the moon,  
Low down my head, thinking of my home.*

The reflective mood of the first section of the song gives way to the uplifting melodies and stronger dynamics of the middles section as the poet raises his eyes to gaze at the moon. In the final section, the quieter, reflective mood returns as the poet and the composer provide warm thoughts with some wistful longing for home.

*Thinking of My Home* was commissioned by the American Composers Forum for its ChoralQuest® series of new works for Middle School Choirs.

## A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF *Thinking of My Home*

Some musical ideas to listen for:

- Pentatonic tonality and harmonies
- Legato melodies
- Triplet figures
- Reflective mood that paints a picture of nature



	The Text	Musical elements & characteristics
<b>Introduction</b> mm 1-5	Yue__ Ye__ Ye__ Ye Ye__  (Yue is moon in Chinese. Ye is night in Chinese.)	A quiet, almost melancholy mood is set as the choir vocally illuminates the Chinese words for <i>moon</i> and <i>night</i> . A repeating harmonic element, harmonizing in 2nds, opens the work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In m. 2 the three voice parts hold long dotted half notes a second apart as they sing <i>yue</i> (moon)</li> <li>• At m. 3, high voices <b>ornament</b> the melody with a quick upward <b>triplet</b> figure on the word <i>ye</i> (night)</li> <li>• The close harmony in 2nds in all voices returns in m. 4, but the section closes with a <b>unison</b> partial triplet in m. 5</li> <li>• Piano accompanies with mostly 8<sup>th</sup> note melodic figures</li> </ul>
<b>First Section</b> mm 6-8	Moonlight__ Mmm__ in front of my bed,  Mm__	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voices enter in layers singing “moonlight” – highest, lowest, middle – again in the close harmony of major 2nds and with a rhythmic figure of a 16<sup>th</sup> note followed by a dotted 8th</li> <li>• After a <b>legato</b> phrase in harmony on humming syllable, the singers join in a unison triplet to sing “in front of my bed”</li> <li>• <b>Dynamics</b> now <b>mp</b></li> <li>• Piano accompanies with many triplet figures in <b>pentatonic</b> mode</li> </ul>
mm 9-14	Is it frost on the ground__  I guess__ I guess.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy steps up; dynamics move to <b>mf</b></li> <li>• Singers accent the word “frost” in a rising melody (high voices) with major 2nds in middle voices and lower voices</li> <li>• All voices then tumble from high to low, repeating the word “frost” in succession</li> <li>• Music phrase is completed with triplets singing “on the ground”</li> <li>• These words are highlighted in an interesting way: the first time in closed harmony. The second time all voices begin on middle c, then softly sweep upwards to an approximate Eb – over an octave in one long <b>portamento</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Middle Section</b> mm 15-19	Lift up my eyes gazing at the moon,  Woo, woo, woo__	<p>This section builds a long arc upwards to the highest note in the piece: an upper octave “f” in the high voices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 voices begin in unison, then break into 3-part harmony with intervals widening from unison, to 2nds, to a full octave on the high “f”</li> <li>• Dynamics crescendo as the melody moves upwards</li> </ul>

mm 20-25	Gazing at the moon at the moon__ at the moon, Lift up my eyes gazing at the moon,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The measures after the climax on high “f” weave around and down in 8<sup>th</sup> notes on the syllable “woo”</li> <li>• Focus on the moon continues and voices once more build phrases from lower pitches that move upwards, with soft dynamics that expand in intensity and volume to <i>f</i> at the end of the section</li> <li>• Some syncopation in the rhythm (mm. 16, 17, 20, 21 etc.) usually highlighting the words “gazing” and “moon”</li> </ul>
<b>Final Section</b> mm 26-32	Low down my head__  Thinking of my home__	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low voices hold a low ‘a’ below middle ‘c’ as a transition into this section</li> <li>• Middle and upper voices return to lower pitches and quieter dynamics as they think about their home – maybe with warm thoughts or wistful longing</li> <li>• The section remains in a low to middle melodic range with soft dynamics</li> </ul>
<b>Closing</b> mm 33-36	Woo__ Mm__	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final four measures are sung with gentle syllables from earlier sections of the song’s melody, ending on a triplet figure moving upwards</li> <li>• The piano supports the mood and melodic gestures</li> </ul>



## Assessing the Facets of *Thinking of My Home*

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### SUGGESTIONS FOR USING

Teachers assess student learning in the areas of musical performance throughout the process of rehearsing a new work using rubrics that address district, state, or national standards in music. This suggested assessment provides a simple tool for summarizing student learning in the related interdisciplinary content you've presented in *Thinking of My Home*, the other facets of the work.

Enclosed are two suggested organizers/assessment templates. Determine the areas about which you'd like to collect information and assess student learning. Write these topics in the small box of each segment of the template. Some examples of interdisciplinary faces for the song might include: Chinese Cultural Revolution, Li Bai, Chen Yi's Life Story, the Poetry in the Song, Chinese Music, and other facets and topics you've emphasized.

Students complete the assessment as directed at the top of the organizer to provide evidence of learning.

## SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW!

Your turn to show what you know about the many facets of *Thinking of My Home*.

Write at least two sentences about the topic listed in each box.

If you wish, add sketches and diagrams to provide more information.


Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW!

Show what you know about *Thinking of My Home* by writing two sentences about the subjects in each box.  
You can also add sketches and diagrams to provide more information.

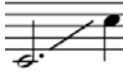


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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Thinking of My Home Glossary

<b>Accidentals</b> -sharp -flat -natural	a sharp, flat or natural sign that is not in the key - a sharp (#) raises a note a half step - a flat (b) lowers a note a half step - a natural (♮) cancels a previous sharp or flat in the same measure
<b>Accompaniment</b>	music that supports the main melody or theme
<b>Articulation</b> -Accent -Legato -Slur	how the notes are connected or separated -strongly emphasized notes as in a march -smooth & connected -for singers, a slur indicates smooth singing; it can also mean that a single syllable should sound through several notes
<b>Coda</b>	the ending or “tail” of a musical work
<b>Conservatory</b>	a music school
<b>Consonance</b>	when the “ear” of the music listener has an impression of stability and repose, a sense of fitting together
<b>Counterpoint</b>	the addition of one or more independent melodies added above or below an established melody
<b>Crescendo</b>	musical term (Italian) for music growing louder
<b>Decrescendo</b>	musical term (Italian) for music getting softer; same as diminuendo
<b>Dissonance</b>	when the “ear” of the music listener has an impression of discord and unrest
<b>Dynamics</b> -piano -mezzo piano -mezzo forte -forte	the degree of loudness or softness of the music; the volume levels of music soft ( <i>p</i> ) medium soft ( <i>mp</i> ) medium loud ( <i>mf</i> ) loud ( <i>f</i> )
<b>Expressive elements</b>	that which helps communicate the emotional effects of music; including dynamics, phrasing, articulation, intensity, energy, and subjective interpretation all help convey the composer's/performer's intentions
<b>Fermata</b>	musical symbol (◡) placed over a note or rest that extends it beyond its normal duration
<b>Harmony</b>	two or more pitches sounding simultaneously, such as in chords
<b>Heterophony</b>	singing or playing two or more versions of the same melody with slight variations at the same time
<b>Imitate/echo</b>	to copy or repeat a melody or rhythm shortly after it first appears with a different voice or instrument; usually at a different pitch in a melody
<b>Legato</b>	singing or playing in a smooth and flowing manner without breaks between the notes
<b>Lyrics</b>	the words of a song
<b>Melodic contour</b>	the shape of a melody as it moves up, down, or repeats tones
<b>Melodic phrase</b>	a group of measures of music (which might include even a single measure) that has some degree of structural completeness
<b>Melody</b>	a series of succession of pitches that make up a tune

<b>Meter</b>	the recurring pattern of stresses or accents that organize the pulses or beats of the music into meter groups such as 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4	
<b>Metronome</b>	a device used to help keep a steady beat and set the tempo of a composition	
<b>Motive</b>	a short musical idea; it can be a rhythmic motive (for percussion) or a fragment of melody (which includes rhythm and pitch)	
<b>Mute</b>	to muffle or soften the sound	
<b>Ornaments</b>	embellishments or decorations added to a melody	
<b>Pentatonic scale</b>	a scale having five tones to an octave, as one having intervals that correspond to the five black keys of a piano octave	
<b>Phrase</b>	a musical line that states a complete idea, many times a part of a much larger section of music	
<b>Polyphony</b>	Music in more than one part, in which the parts have relatively independent melodies and rhythms	
<b>Portamento/Vocal slide</b>	a short, straight line between two notes to indicate a steady rise in pitch, followed by a short cut-off	
<b>Prelude</b>	a short piece of music that introduces a longer piece	
<b>Rhythm</b>	the patterns of musical movement through time	
<b>Slur</b>	a curved line over two or more notes used to show where notes are sung in one breath, so that the notes move smoothly one to the other with no break	
<b>Sound painting/ tone painting/ word painting</b>	writing music that reflects the literal meaning of a song; for example, writing an upward melody for lyrics about a bird taking flight, or a low, dark, minor melody for a song about death	
<b>Structure</b>	the shape or form of the music	
<b>Syncopation</b>	placing rhythmic accent where it wouldn't normally occur; off-beat	
<b>Tempo</b>	the speed of the music	
<b>Text/lyrics</b>	the words of a song	
<b>Tie</b>	a curved line that connecting the heads of two or more notes of the same pitch, indicating that those notes are to be played as a single note held through their total time value	
<b>Triplet</b>	a group of three notes having the time value of two notes of the same kind	
<b>Unison</b>	when all performers play, or sing the same pitches or in octaves	
<b>Vocal range</b>	the total span of "musically useful" pitches that a singer can produce	