

*Crystallography* was commissioned by Standing Wave, the longstanding new-music ensemble based in Vancouver, Canada, in 2012. The premise of the commission was for me to set text drawn from the eponymous 1994 book by the experimental Canadian poet Christian Bök. The book starts with an underlying belief that written language itself is a crystallization process. The author explores the poetics of the book's own patterns in a series of poems which borrow from the language of geological science to misread the poetics of rhetorical language. I imposed my own form on the book by excerpting the seven jewel poems that appear interspersed among the other poems--Amethyst, Ruby, Topaz, Emerald, Jade, Opal, and Sapphire--and arranging them in a symmetrical arc, which gave rise to a palindromic form in one continuous trajectory, with the central axis (and apex of the form) lying within the Emerald movement. The jewel poems are the most abstract writing in Bök's book--truly devoid of any literal meaning, in the manner of lucid dreaming--but they are still rigorously structured, and they possess an elusive beauty both in their sounds and in their imagery. It was natural for me to set Bök's "lucid writing" in lyrical, chant-like vocal lines, enjoying the way that the symmetry of my palindromic form interfaced with both the parallelism among the distinct poems and the freely associative quality of the words. *Crystallography* is about twelve minutes in duration.

-Kati Agócs