



**Krom**  
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 SELF-RELEASE  
 ★★☆☆½

**Helge Lien Trio**  
*Badgers And Other Beings*  
 OZELLA 055  
 ★★★★★

Krom's name comes from its putative leader, pianist Adam Kromelow. The music is seamless, and the overall effect is one of a composed trio performance. Airtight, and still somewhat fluid, the sensibilities use the rock vending machine as opposed to a more Keith Jarrett Standards Trio-style quietude. The Helge Lien Trio's *Badgers And Other Beings* also borrows from a rock vibe, with a Northern European sensibility. The approaches these relatively young musicians take are interesting in part because of the overlaps: two piano trios, similar sights, contrasting narratives.

Krom's self-titled second release—following 2012's *Youngblood* (Zoho), which was released under the name Adam Kromelow Trio—draws principally from the pianist's energetic, propulsive chordal attack. (Think Jerry Lee Lewis minus the flying hair and rancid vocals.) The New York-based group—with bassist Raviv Markovitz and drummer Jason Burger—is a forceful trio, but it also has an affinity for nuance. "The Experiment" is a good example of the players' quirky sensibilities and knack for interactive dialog.

The trio doesn't shy away from more gentle touches, floating through the almost ballad-like "The Better Story," with scant improvisation but a healthy dose of conversational playing. The album, full of virtuosic twists and turns, ends up being more of a romp, more a dizzying, marching kind of pop than either jazz or rock, which is a rare virtue these days.

Norway's Helge Lien Trio is a mirror back to America of what the jazz-piano trio has sounded like over the decades, full of rumination, romance but also some bite. The trio's third release for Ozella suggests an underlying narrative that's less "Stardust" and more roving star. "Mor" opens the set with something akin to what one might have heard from Keith Jarrett in the late 1970s—minus horns—with a dash of Esbjörn Svensson. Both "Joe" and the dream-like "Hvalen" avoid a swing feel for more of a dance-

able, free-flow rhythm, a mattress that the music tosses and turns on, full of chords and flowing gestures—restless without being pointless.

Veterans all, composer-pianist Helge Lien, bassist Frode Berg and drummer Per Oddvar Johansen are clearly of one mind. There's a patience to these tunes that coincides with an underlying, undefinable unease, the combination a subtle fascination. "Hoggormen" sports a deft left-hand chordal movement from Lien that keeps you listening for what's coming next in this soft tumbler of a rocking funk tune that threatens to but never boils over. Solo spots throughout

this CD—the poetic "Badger's Lullaby" is a perfect example—keep us listening to everyone, again the accent being on a trio and not just one voice, the piano at its center.  
 —John Ephland

**Krom:** Savior Complex; The Experiment; The Better Story; Fly; See With Your Eyes; Hard Hearts; Trust Your Instincts; Sven's New Identity; Monster Bite. (39:49)  
**Personnel:** Adam Kromelow, piano; Raviv Markovitz, bass; Jason Burger, drums, percussion.  
**Ordering info:** [kromtrio.com](http://kromtrio.com)

**Badgers And Other Beings:** Mor; Joe; Hoggormen; Hvalen; Folkmost; Early Bird; Knut; Calypso In Five; The New Black; Badger's Lullaby. (53:41)  
**Personnel:** Helge Lien, piano; Frode Berg, bass; Per Oddvar Johansen, drums.  
**Ordering info:** [ozellamusic.com](http://ozellamusic.com)

## RENOVATIONS AND IMPROVISATIONS ON:

Mozart, Sonata in B-Flat Major K.333

Bach, Italian Concerto BWV 971

Chopin, Ballade No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 23

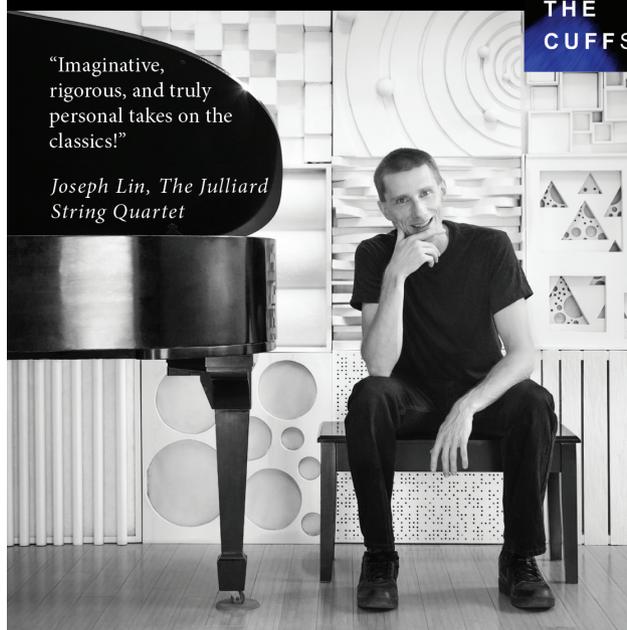
Shostakovich, Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87

"John's vibrant and whimsical playing is totally engaging - *Off With The Cuffs* highlights his witty and clever sense of improvisation, and is great fun to listen to."

Lisa Kaplan, *Eighth Blackbird*

"Imaginative, rigorous, and truly personal takes on the classics!"

Joseph Lin, *The Julliard String Quartet*



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 CUFFS

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 There is such clarity  
 and so much humor  
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Rufus Reid



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