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Jay O'Berski, Lucius Robinson and Jeffrey Scott Detwiler as terrorists 'Z,' 'O' and 'Q.' The play is staged in commercial space.

Jay O'Berski

A worthwhile work on terrorism

BY ROY C. DICKS, Correspondent

DURHAM - Can there be anything funny about terrorism and the apocalyptic destruction of the world? Little Green Pig Theatrical Concern and playwright John Justice think so, and they make a pretty good case for the approach in "Goodnight Everything."

Terrorism and the atrocities it sanctions are nothing to laugh at, but the gullibility, greed and grand illusions of those involved can be mocked and exposed. Here, Justice envisions what it might be like for three perpetrators of a nuclear holocaust as they wait out the aftermath underground.

In a series of short scenes, the 80-minute one-act play established the ineptitude, infighting and instability among the leader "O" and his two followers "Q" and "Z." The leader is portrayed as a poetic visionary, leaving practical matters to "Q," the thinker, and "Z," the man of action.

The two followers make sure their leader eats, keeps clean and works on his memoirs, while they argue about food, self-improvement and how things should go in their new world. The three fill up their down time telling stories and recounting dreams about family and loved ones.

Designated a work in progress, the play shows promise as a companion to the company's widely praised production of Justice's "Europe Central," employing many of the same absurdist and surreal elements. For now, "Goodnight Everything" seems a collection of ideas not yet knit into a single entity. There's inherent humor in the premise, but there are also a lot of sight gags and punch lines grafted on. Still, the serious theme does come through.

The production is worth seeing for its performers. Lucius Robinson embodies the lofty charisma of a leader such as "O," wafting about with hilarious disdain for the desperate situation. Jeffrey Detwiler makes "Q" a priggish stickler for details who blindingly spouts that all is for the best. As Q's pragmatic nemesis "Z," Jay O'Berski combines great physical comedy with well-timed wisecracks. The actors play comfortably together, throwing themselves fully into whatever director Rus Hames cooks up for them.

Katja Hill and Sean Murnane add hilarious and haunting elements as puppeteers, enacting the characters' stories and dreams with everything from marionettes and hand puppets to life-size figures and objects on sticks. Their artistry takes these episodes to a wholly different plane, enhanced by Emily Hower's puppet designs.

The company fulfills one of its missions for unexpected venues by producing the play in an unused commercial space in Durham's Golden Belt complex (made coldly claustrophobic by Steve Tell's apt lighting). Intrepid theatergoers will find the somewhat circuitous trek to the space worth the trouble to observe one the Triangle's most daring and creative theater groups at work.

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Details

What: "Goodnight Everything" by Little Green Pig Theatrical Concern

Where: Building 2, Golden Belt, Durham

When: 8:15 p.m. Thursday-Saturday

Cost: \$12, \$8 student rush

Contact: 919-452-9204, www.littlegreenpig.com

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