

A Play That I Would Watch a Third Time

by Triinu Tints, Sakala - 3 March 2026

On the last Friday of February, director Erki Aule presented American playwright and screenwriter Jeff Baron's debut play "Mr. Green's Guest" at the Temufi Theatre. The play has been staged more than 600 times in different countries, but was staged in Estonia for the first time.

The text has been translated into Estonian by Peeter Volkonski. The language is apt, sharp and layered. The dialogue is full of subtle humor and precise wording. Verbal nuances are not accidental, but shape how responsibility is understood and events are interpreted. Language here does not function only as a means of communication, but also reveals the characters' defense mechanisms and vulnerability. Seemingly everyday lines reveal the characters' view of the world, giving an idea of their deep, previously uncontrollable insecurity and fear of the world.

The set design, which is Marje Sep's first work as a theatre artist and hopefully not her last, caught my eye. The music created by composer Martin Aulis was captivating: the sounds matched well with both the characters and the relationships between them.

The choice of actors at Temufi Theatre deserves recognition again this time: Silver Kaljula as Ross Gardiner and Raivo Rüütel as Mr. Green come together, and their partnership was balanced and organic. For me, Raivo Rüütel is primarily associated with the legendary series "M-klubi" from the 1990s, which is why his presence on stage caused a sense of recognition and a small nostalgic look back at that era.

Two opposites meet on stage: men from different generations, with different worldviews and life experiences, whose relationship does not immediately develop in a straight line. Although the action begins with Ross's obligatory visit, the play shifts the focus to Mr. Green's inner world, allowing the audience to follow his slow, sometimes reluctant, but inevitable opening up.

Mr. Green is a recently single, eccentric older man who has a habit of retreating from uncomfortable situations by going to bed. His rigidity is not just a character trait, but a way to maintain control in a situation where life has irrevocably taken something important from him. Ross represents a different world, a different kind of identity experience, and a need for openness and honesty. The conflict

between them stems not only from the age difference, but also from values. Ross feels the need to be confirmed that he is accepted unconditionally.

Friendship and connection develop gradually, and not without resistance. The initial formal and obligatory togetherness gradually turns into interest and expectation. The conflict that arises in the relationship does not immediately resolve the confrontation, but forces both to give up their defensive position, after which a real common ground emerges. The honest treatment of human nature and family relationships makes the characters' individual characteristics convincing, and their experiences of love and pain, and their need for closeness, universally recognizable.

I had the opportunity to watch a preview performance the night before the premiere, and seeing two performances broadened the experience even more. Watching it a second time proved how many layers can be hidden in a story that seems simple at first glance. The characters opened up to me in a deeper and more multi-layered way. The contrasts no longer seemed so sharp, nor the colors so clear-cut; the characters' inner boundaries and the moments when they clashed began to become visible. The closer we look, the more we realize that many things in life do not move towards absolute black and white, but towards gray ambiguity.

"Mr. Green's Guest" is a psychological play that proves that everyday situations can contain very universal questions about belonging, loss, forgiveness, and the possibility of finding common ground where only opposition appears at the forefront.