

# Comedy pokes fun at 'One Nation Divided Over God'

BY KATHY BROWNING

Staff Writer

Thea Deley is evolving as you read this. Her spirituality is evolving. Her multimedia comedy, "One Nation Divided Over God," is also evolving from what she originally set out to do.

"I think I set out originally to reflect on my experiences growing up in a military, conservative Christian home, and the tension that created in my family as I grew up and changed," Deley shared.

"Initially I was going to point out all these things I just found ridiculous and

funny to me. When I did that it got too personal. It got too close. Too painful.

"So, what I did and I didn't even know I was doing it, is I totally backed away. It's almost like I wrote a research paper. I got all these facts and statistics. I did all this research and I read all these books."

When she showed a very rough draft to playwright Marty Durlin she was asked, "Thea, where is your story? Where is your personal story, the connection to what you are doing here. You are kind of hiding behind all the intel-

lectual, the facts and the research."

Deley then went back rewriting the show telling her painful story, yet dealing with it, for the most part, with humor.

"It's become very cathartic. Which is nice, but when you are doing something so personal and put yourself out there like that," she paused, "It's much easier to hide behind a character. To do something not so personal."

Deley loves social satire. "I take a kernel of truth from my own life or from other people's lives, friends or people I read about in the newspaper or things like that. Then I just twist it a few degrees . . . kind of exaggerate it to get the kernel of funny," she said.

The subtitle for her comedy is "one woman's journey from believer to blasphemer." She chose the word "blasphemer" because to people like her parents, things she does and says would be considered blasphemous.

"But for me the type of spirituality I have, it's not blasphemous at all," she explained. "My spirituality has been evolving. It's changed so radically. Part of doing this show was to realize how much anger I had and to abandon all of it. My faith and the show has given me this opportunity to reconnect. Not necessarily the same way as I was taught as a child, but in a totally new way to see the concept of God and Jesus."

Satire can be mean spirited. Does Deley see herself in that way? She immediately giggled and replied, "Yes, on some level I am. The reason is because I have had to be quiet for so long. I had to repress all this anger,

confusion and sorrow, and I have this Bernie Segal quote. He said that, 'It's okay to make some noise in defense of yourself as a human being.' And I believe that very, very strongly."

She continued, "I feel like the Divine can be questioned. It's not threatened by that. It's so much bigger than anything, any joke I could possibly tell is not in any way going to offend God or harm that. To me it's so obvious the universe has a sense of humor."

Her goal is that the audience will laugh and be inspired. "Some of my best friends are Christians," she giggled.

Release of her anger has been liberating. "How is it any different for me to have such hatred for this entire group of people than for them to have hatred for people like me. I don't want to be caught in that struggle. I feel that is like where our nation is. That's not serving anybody. I see this huge divide. I don't have the answer. But I believe there are conservative Christians and progressive Christians or liberal Christians. They literally see God and Jesus differently. They use the same Bible." She giggled, "If I'm right and you are wrong and that's my belief than where is that shared middle ground. There isn't. There is just this antagonism."

"One Nation Divided Over God" will be presented Friday, Oct. 14, at the Paradise Theatre in Paonia. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. The show starts at 8 p.m. Tickets are on sale at KVNF and the Paradise Theatre for \$13 or six for \$66. This presentation is for mature audiences only.

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