

'Beautiful city' looks at division

MARK BARNA
THE GAZETTE

The uncomfortable scene repeated endlessly on TV: Pastor Ted Haggard, the face of the evangelical movement, embroiled in scandal, talking to reporters from his SUV as his distraught wife and children looked on.



Now we can see that moment reenacted onstage as The Civilians, a New York-based theater troupe, bring their touring musical "This Beautiful City" back to the city where it was made. It runs today through Sunday at Colorado College.

The play was conceived three years ago by troupe members intrigued by the growing political power of the evangelical movement.

For 10 weeks the group resided in Colorado Springs, considered the U.S. evangelical epicenter, to not only interview evangelicals but also liberals opposed to evangelical ideas.

While they were in the Springs, the sex-and-drugs scandal broke linking Haggard, New Life Church's senior pastor at the time, to a Denver male escort.

In February 2007, a workshop version of the play, then called "Save This City," played at CC.

Since then, the troupe has extensively re-worked the show and staged it in New York; Washington, D.C.; and Los Angeles, where it received positive reviews for its evenhandedness.

Los Angeles Times critic Charles McNulty called it "a diverting if curiously earnest performance piece. ... The Civilians approach the show ... like anthropologists out to understand a culture that for many urban theater types is as alien as some lost Amazon tribe."

The Civilians created that cultural perspective by relying exclusively on comments taken verbatim from their own interviews with subjects, as well as public statements and media interviews.

“This Beautiful City” by the Civilians

Where: Cornerstone Arts Center, 825 N. Cascade Ave.

When: 7 p.m. today and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday

Cost: Free, but tickets required and available at Worner Campus Center Information Desk, 902 N. Cascade Ave., 389-6607