



## The View From Here

Reviewed by Ron Cohen

*Presented by Glass Bubble Elizabeth Lucas Productions and Relentless Pursuits as part of the New York Musical Theatre Festival, casting by Michael Cassara, at the 45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St., NYC, Sept. 27–Oct. 2.*

In “The View From Here,” a young writer arrives in New York, becomes exhilarated by the view from his sixth-floor walkup, decides he is ready to conquer the town as a novelist, only to discover quickly it’s a rugged, uphill climb. For about three-quarters of the way through, this one-man musical plays like a fresh variation on “Wonderful Town” propelled by stunning music and a tremendously appealing solo performance by **Shonn Wiley**.

**Timothy Huang**’s score boasts masterful plot- and character-driven songs and comedic set pieces. But what’s surprising is Huang’s way with a ballad. There are several, serving as the letters our hero writes to his absent wife. Some have a contemporary throb, but others have a haunting melodic quality that seems torn from the annals of the Great American Songbook, populated by such folks as George Gershwin and Harold Arlen. Huang’s lyrics, though, sometimes employ a cliché or two.

Under **Elizabeth Lucas**’ evocative direction, Huang’s script, written in collaboration with Lucas, ties the numbers together adroitly until the show takes an abrupt turn toward the end. We learn that the writer has come to New York not only to find success but also to escape a deep personal tragedy. It piles on an emotional heft the show has not been built to support.

Wiley, however, pulls off the pathos movingly, adding another notch to a performance that has him singing 11 big songs in a solid Broadway tenor, doing comic turns with expert timing, and even cavorting a bit in his own self-created choreography. The show’s rich musicality is also the result of the music direction by **David Epstein**, who accompanies at the piano, with an occasional highly valuable assist from trumpeter **Tim Byrnes**.

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