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THEATER

## ‘Linda Vista’ Review: His Own Worst Enemy

*Tracy Letts’s serious comedy about the midlife crisis of a newly divorced man who doesn’t know how to listen to women comes to Broadway.*

BY TERRY TEACHOUT

‘Linda Vista,’ Tracy Letts’s serious comedy about the midlife crisis of a newly divorced man who doesn’t know how to listen to women—or anyone else, for that matter—was first performed in 2017 by Steppenwolf Theatre Company, at which time I wrote in this space that it “might just be Mr. Letts’s best play yet.” Dexter Bullard’s premiere production of “Linda Vista,” in which Ian Barford gave a totally convincing performance, at once repellent and sympathetic, has finally made it from Chicago to Broadway courtesy of Second Stage Theater, somewhat revised but with nearly all of the original cast intact, and I can confirm

that my first impression was on the mark: “Linda Vista” really is that good.

Mr. Barford plays Wheeler, a 50-year-old liberal misanthrope with conservative cultural tastes who, having blown up a perfectly good marriage, proceeds to blow up an equally good relationship with an earnest but very nice “life coach” (Cora Vander Broek) when he meets and falls for Minnie (Chantal Thuy), a 20-something Vietnamese-American “rockabilly girl.” While you feel for Wheeler, you also know that his troubles are his own fault, and much of the strength of “Linda Vista” lies in the fact that Mr. Letts never lets him wriggle off the hook of his own character: He is what he is, and he pays a high price for his adamant refusal to try to be otherwise.

Ms. Thuy replaces Kahyun Kim, who created the role of Minnie in Chicago and gave a hacksaw-sharp

performance that I found to be significantly more vivid than that of her cooler successor. Otherwise, everything about Mr. Bullard’s staging serves the play with plain-spoken faithfulness. I wish Mr. Letts had tightened up the script a bit—it still comes in at about two hours and 45 minutes—but the play works as is, and he was probably smart to let it run long, for “Linda Vista” draws you into the shared plights of its dissatisfied characters with absolute assurance.