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THEATER REVIEW | 'I (HEART) KANT'

Seeing Four Women's Lives, Full of Pluses and Minuses

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Correction Appended

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In any work with three or four lead characters of the same sex, it is traditional for each audience member to identify with one character more closely than the others. Strangely, for me, in Keith Urban's "I {Heart} Kant," it was Maureen, the size 0 heroin addict in her early 20's.

There, on Lee Savage's crafty segmented set, are four women whose only apparent common bond is that they live in New Jersey. Under Dylan McCullough's direction, they all reveal the little humiliations and unexpected certainties of daily life.

This is a nimble, knowing one-act with an admirable script carefully structured to appear free-flowing. Linda (Kate Benson), a graduate student in philosophy, has been working on the first chapter of her dissertation on Immanuel Kant for four years. She is annoyed about a male graduate student who is suddenly a star because of his paper on vagueness.

Betsy (Frances Mercanti-Anthony) is on edge for two reasons: she is about to turn 30 and she recently drank too much at a family reunion and had sex with her brother.

Pam (Edelen McWilliams) is a divorced mom, and really, everything in her life would be fine if someone hadn't just detonated a bomb in her high-rise office building.

Then there is Maureen (Kate Downing), whose boyfriend (Steven Boyer) hits her and explains to her why they take drugs. ("So we don't have to do all this talking.") Maybe it's Maureen's vulnerability that arouses such empathy.

Mr. Boyer plays all the men in the women's lives, including Betsy's psychiatrist and the man who manipulates a stuffed cat that turn out to be Linda's faculty adviser.

All the performances are impressively detailed. Unfortunately, the overlapping dialogue, which may have been meant as some comment on avant-garde theatrics, is just noisy. A gimmick that is described in the program (different wardrobe, music and light cues each night) is meaningless to