

# The Eight Faces of Jane

THE LIFE AND WORK OF JANE CHAMBERS  
A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY ALISON McMAHAN

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## Review of A LATE SNOW at the Vermont Pride Theater Festival

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*Left to Right: Shanon Sanborn (Director), Susan Louynd (Pat), Amy Elizabeth (Margo), Andra Kisler (Ellie), Ashley Hall (Quincey), Heather Pagel (Peggy), and a presenter from the Vermont Pride Theater Festival at the talk back.*

Last night we drove nearly two hours to see a rare production of [Jane Chambers' A Late Snow](#).<sup>[1]</sup> directed by Shannon Sanborn. The play will be performed once more on [August 2nd, 2019](#).<sup>[2]</sup> at the Chandler Center for the Performing Arts as part of the Vermont Pride Theater

Festival.

A Late Snow was first produced by Playwrights Horizons at Clark Center for the Performing Arts in 1974. It was the first of Jane Chambers plays to "break out," but the lesbian content also led to her losing her job writing for a TV soap opera. She would never work in television again.

Another writer might have quit writing lesbian-themed plays, but [Chambers recognized that she had found her mission in life:](#) <sup>[3]</sup> to present lesbians, not as the psychologically damaged, 'deserving of death' figures of previous lesbian-themed literature, but as joyous and driven, conniving and mystical, driven and farcical, fully alive. Human.

In the play, five women gather, most of them pulled by the magnet that is Ellie, a firmly-in-the-closet professor at a college who nevertheless collects lovers like an ant-trap collects ants, played by Andra Kisler. In the talk back, Ashley Hall, who plays Quincey, Ellie's most adoring acolyte, pointed out a line in the play in which Ellie herself a lesbian to a vampire: "she looked in the mirror and there was no reflection."

The theme of the play is about the difficulty of living openly as a lesbian, and each one of Ellie's lovers that end up at the cabin with her come looking to her for solace and answers, whether it's Perfect Peggy, who returns to her closet in the end, or young, idealist, Quincey, who Ellie pushes away because she doesn't share the young woman's courage.

On a first read, it's easy to mistake Ellie for one of the beauty queens of life, who collects hearts as her due and breaks them at her pleasure. But under Sharon Sanborn's direction, Andra Kisler's performance is about a woman who has seized too much life, loved too many women, and can't let go of any of them. Whether it's the old trauma inflicted on her by Pat (Susan Loynd), or her youthful pedestalizing of Perfect Peggy (Heather Pagel), Ellie's fists are full. She has to slowly open them and let her old loves slip away before she can enter a more open, and more equal, relationship with Margo, a writer with a mystical bent, who is ready to experience her own healing. Amy Elizabeth brings an ethereal quality to Margo, a woman whose been immobilized by grief for many years. She's now ready to leap into Ellie's arms, but has to wait patiently while Ellie comes to terms with the previous stages of her life and prepares herself for the next by cleaning her emotional house.

I wish the play could have a longer run. The performances are excellent. The character of Pat, embodied with charismatic vividness by Susan Loynd, is written to steal the show. It would be easy, in another production, to let Pat upstage the rest, but in this production Pat's alcohol-fueled insight, her cutting humor, and her courage in coming to terms with her own tragic mistakes make you wish you could go out with her for drinks and let her skewer you with her insights. As long as she's not driving.

### Tags:

[Jane Chambers](#) <sup>[4]</sup>

[A Late Snow](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

[Vermont Pride Theater Festival](#) <sup>[6]</sup>

[Chandler Center for the Performing Arts](#) <sup>[7]</sup>

[Amy Elizabeth](#) <sup>[8]</sup>

[Ashley Hall](#) <sup>[9]</sup>

[Andra Kisler](#) <sup>[10]</sup>

[Susan Loynd](#) <sup>[11]</sup>

[Heather Pagel](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

[Shannon Sanborn](#) <sup>[13]</sup>

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[2] [https://www.chandler-arts.org/event/a-late-snow/?instance\\_id=495](https://www.chandler-arts.org/event/a-late-snow/?instance_id=495)

[3] [https://www.amazon.com/Jane-Chambers/e/B001JP0OX8/ref=ntt\\_dp\\_epwbk\\_0](https://www.amazon.com/Jane-Chambers/e/B001JP0OX8/ref=ntt_dp_epwbk_0)

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