

# Cabaret: 'Jane White? ...'

By JOHN S. WILSON

**J**ANE WHITE has had a long and successful career as an actress and a brief, tentative career as a singer. Part of her problem as a singer, appearing in cabaret or in concert at Town Hall, has been getting a perspective on her songs, finding a means of going below the obvious surface elements.

But in "Jane White, Who? ..." an autobiographical monologue with songs that opened Tuesday evening at 1 Sheridan Square, she has found a context for her singing that enables her theatrical skills to give her songs the foundation they have previously lacked.

This is a witty, penetrating and delightfully musical production, a thoroughly theatrical production, played out in the dressing room of Jane White, the actress. Initially, the tone is flamboyant as the actress, in cadences reflecting Shakespeare and the Greek tragedies, examines the surfaces she sees in a mirror. She traces basic events in her life and the elements that shaped her, not so much in terms of what she did, but of what she thought and what she felt and, eventually, why she is what she is. As she strips away the layers, her tone — and the overall mood — changes from a mocking humor, reminiscent of Duke Elling-

## Musical Autobiography

**JANE WHITE, WHO? ...** by Miss White and Joe Masteroff; musical direction by Roger Leonard; production stage manager, Charles Murodoch; lighting and technical director, Ian McKay. Presented by Jaffron Ltd., at 1 Sheridan Square. WITH: Jane White.

ton's stage manner, to simplicity and directness.

But "Jane White, Who? ..." is not just an exercise in self-discovery. The script, written by Miss White and Joe Masteroff, establishes the stage character of Jane White as warm, witty and self-deflating, and leads her, quite logically, into the songs that give the evening its full flavor — songs by Stephen Sondheim, Cole Porter, Kurt Weill, Kander and Ebb, Charles Aznavour and Harold Arlen, among others.

Working out of her characterization, Miss White is able to get into her songs much more successfully than she did when she simply faced them as individual, unattached bits of music. Her voice is full of warm, rich colors and she has a very positive delivery that gives emphasis and shading to songs that do not always get such perceptive treatment.

Her open, exuberant, large-scale songs have tremendous vitality. Her rhythm songs ride joyously on the bright, sparkling piano of Roger Leonard, who leads a trio, with Michael Fleming, bassist, and Kay Stonefelt,



Nathaniel Tilleson

## Jane White

drummer, that gives Miss White excellent support. But Miss White is at her best in two totally dissimilar songs. One is Stephen Sondheim's "risqué," to use Miss White's term, "I Never Do Anything Twice," which she delivers with beautifully calculated style. The other is Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child." She sings it in a subdued fashion, but with a growing inner intensity.

But there is an added subliminal element in her performance when one realizes she is singing the song on the same spot on the same floor in the same room that Billie Holiday sang it 40 years ago, when 1 Sheridan Square was Cafe Society.