

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons

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Beyond 'Herman'

Still enjoying the fruits of success

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

MR. NOONE, you've got a lovely daughter.
British rock star Peter Noone of Herman's Hermits sang his way to fame with such hits as "Mrs. Brown, You've Got a Lovely Daughter." Now he dotes on his 3-year-old daughter, Natalie. The little girl was sucking a chocolate lollipop when she and her mother, Noone's French wife, Mireille, stopped by the table at the Townsend Hotel where Noone was being interviewed over coffee.

Before bidding her dad goodbye, Natalie said, "Have a good day at the show, Papa." Noone grinned. "She says that to me every day." Noone stars in the musical "Romance, Romance" through Sunday, March 18, at the Birmingham Theatre.

His daughter also said, "I'll give you a flower later." "She saw that on television," Noone explained. She loves old movies in black and white. "She gives me a flower every day."

ALTHOUGH NOONE'S wife of 22 years has herself stayed away from a show business career, the outgoing entertainer predicts his

daughter will end up on stage. Even now, when she helps him with something he needs for the show, she wants to hand it to him on stage, rather than before he goes on, Noone said.

With his streaked, blond hair; vivid blue eyes; ruddy complexion and unlined, boyish features, Noone looks far younger than his years. He's been a star since the '60s (he was 15 when he became "Herman"). But when he goes up against other guys for a part in a show, he always looks different than "that other 16-year-old."

"I always played 10 years younger," he said. "Now I play 32 instead of 22." Noone is pleased that in "Romance, Romance," "I finally play a man, instead of a boy."

The Tony Award-winning show is actually two musicals. In the first one, he is two different characters, as he plays a man who pretends to be a poet. In the second act, "I'm what an American would call a yuppie, or what we (in England) call a nimbly, which means 'Not in My Backyard.'"

Noone said he loved the show when he first saw it on Broadway. He and his wife would fly to New York and see eight shows — "sometimes you can get in nine shows." "Romance, Romance" was the one I liked best, next to "The Phantom" and the roller skating."

He fell in love with the music in the show, "I'm really a tenor," Noone explained. But in order to do, "Romance, Romance," "I trained to be a baritone."

HE FREQUENTLY goes on tour as Peter Noone, the musician, and he hopes to put some of the songs from the musical into his touring show. "I like simple, charming things," he said.

Noone, his wife and daughter live in California. He said he also has a home in England and family in Liverpool but seldom can spend time there. As a child, he lived with his grandmother in Manchester, where his father sent him to the college of music. He hoped to continue his acting career, which began when he was around 12 years old, as a regular for two years on the British TV hit "Coronation Street."

In college, he studied both acting and music but hung out with the guys who played music. "I got the bug," he said. Early on he played guitar and piano but then became lead singer, "because they get all the girls." Herman's Hermits played the same circuit as the Beatles.

In 1964, the song "I'm Into Something Good" became a No. 1 hit in England, and was in the top five in the United States. First No. 1

record in the U.S. was "Mrs. Brown, You've Got a Lovely Daughter."

The band toured from 1964 to 1972, selling more than 50 million records. And in 1965, Herman's Hermits sold more records than the Beatles. Noone said he usually wrote the song for the "B" side of the records. Last year for the film "The Naked Gun" he remade the song "I'm Into Something Good."

"I'M A LUCKY little fellow," Noone said. He attributes his luck to "being in the right place and working so hard."

Currently Noone is host of "My Generation," the No. 1 rated show on cable channel VH-1. The show takes a look at music and other trends of the '60s through the '80s and uses a format similar to a show he did years ago in France.

"I've never had a real down period," Noone said. After leaving Herman's Hermits, from 1972 to 1973, he had a hit TV series featuring comedy and music, called "Look, on the BBC. He starred as Frederic in "The Pirates of Penzance" on Broadway and London and on tour.

"Basically, I'm a musician," said Noone, who flew on 218 flights last year. He wants to cut this down. "The travel wears on my family because I'm never home," he said.



At the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham, a casually dressed Peter Noone talks about his many years in show business, including starring in the current production of "Romance, Romance" at the Birmingham Theatre.

Lead actor Lutzky carries show on his shoulders

Performances of the Jewish Ensemble Theatre production of "The Man in the Glass Booth" continue through Sunday, Feb. 25, at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. For ticket information, call 788-2200.

In a plum dramatic role, Dan Lutzky is outstanding as the title character of "The Man in the Glass Booth." He sets a standard of excellence for the new Jewish Ensemble Theatre at the Jewish Community Center.

While the supporting cast is very uneven, Lutzky's performance is strong enough to carry the whole production. Robert Shaw's riveting, enigmatic play is still as fascinating a psychological study of the Holocaust as when it debuted many years ago.

Lutzky plays Arthur Goldman, prominent Manhattan survivor, Or is

he really the diabolical S.S. Col. Adolf Dorf? As first one facade crumbles and then another, you are left to wonder whether Goldman is insane or has cleverly plotted to sacrifice himself, expunging his guilt at surviving while expiating the Nazi mentality.

Captured by Israeli secret agents and whisked to Israel for a public trial, Goldman/Dorf wears his Nazi uniform and arrogantly testifies from a bulletproof glass booth. Physically the scenario resembles the Adolf Eichmann trial, but unlike Eichmann, Dorf readily admits his atrocities and never hides behind a defense of merely following orders.

LUTZKY DOES a wonderfully consistent German accent, tempered by Goldman's many years in the United States. He also does a fine job of showing the character's restless energy, nervous quirks and mercurial mood shifts.



Barbara Michals

As Charlie, Goldman's most trusted assistant, Richard Marlatt conveys unwavering devotion to his employer, and the very real bond between the two men only adds to the mystery of Goldman's behavior. However, throughout the play Marlatt looks so much like a bewildered child that it strains all credibility for Goldman to regard him as so capable and valuable.

Laurie Logan makes an attempt at proud disdain and tough Israeli single-mindedness, but is never fully convincing as the head Israeli agent, Mrs. Rosen. It doesn't help any to

have a supposed secret agent make her arrest in a very dramatic, conspicuous cape and leopard-skin hat.

Director Nick Calanni has all the supporting players sit on either side of the stage whenever they are not on, acting as silent witnesses throughout. The staging works nicely, and Calanni keeps the pacing generally crisp. The minimalist set is very handsome for Goldman's office but too makeshift in the Israeli scenes, though the Israeli fatigue uniforms look authentic.

Among the many witnesses who testify at the trial, Ann Blecher is

believable as the elderly woman who quietly exposes Goldman/Dorf a second time. Bryant Frank is effective as a South African witness and also as Charlie's nervous, puzzled tailor.

Barbara Michals teaches high school English in Southfield. A theater critic for the last 15 years, she is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

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