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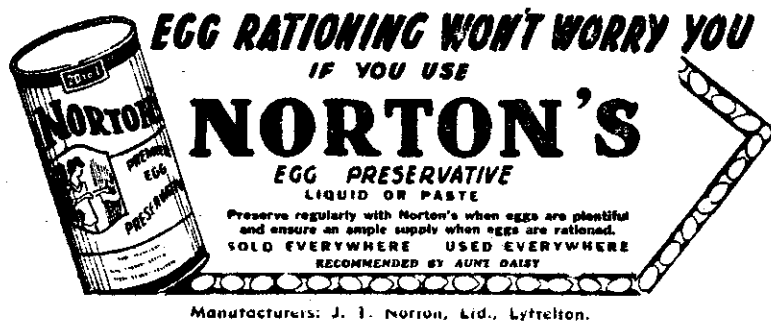
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Music For Middlebrows



Jay Wilbur to Settle in New Zealand

he said. "I am sure many people there are getting a bit tired of swing, but there are still thousands, mostly the younger generation, who like it, and who am I say that they shall not have it? Still it's just not my type. I rather think that when young fellows and girls get past their 20's they begin to lose the swing habit, and so I would like to establish a sort of musical half-way house."

During the last few years dance band players in London were faced with great difficulties. "You would have a full band one week and half a band the next as the men were called up," said Mr. Wilbur.

JAY WILBUR (left, back row) is seen in this photograph with other members of the "Hi Gang" show. On his left is Sam Browne, and, in front, Vic Oliver and Bebe Daniels

JAY WILBUR, the British dance band leader, who became best-known through his association with Bebe Daniels, Ben Lyon and Vic Oliver in the BBC's *Hi Gang* show, has arrived in New Zealand and plans to settle here.

Slim and balding, he looks more like a business man (with perhaps a suggestion of America's Mr. Byrnes) than a band leader who has been pianist, arranger and composer, and who has made hundreds of familiar recordings.

With his wife he reached Wellington the other day, and is now looking forward to a much quieter life than he had in London with its food problems and transportation difficulties, its rush and bustle. He plans, he told *The Listener*, to form an orchestra of about 25 players, composed wholly of strings, with piano or harp, to present what he calls middle-brow music. This type of band, he says, has proved acceptable in England and he does not see why it should not find a place in New Zealand.

"I think I will now have a chance to do what I always wanted to do," he said, "and I hope also to have the opportunity to do some broadcasting. What persuaded me to select this country in which to settle down was the fine character of the New Zealand servicemen my wife and I met in England during the war. They were the best ambassadors you ever had, and that's not soft soap. And, too, London to-day is so over-populated and so distracting that I find it impossible to work there."

A Half-way House

Mr. Wilbur has brought with him a large quantity of music, and he proposes to add to it with new arrangements and new orchestral scorings and compositions. "There is a trend in Britain to-day towards the more serious type of music,"

"Travelling to engagements in the black-out and getting food were also nerve-racking." The night before he left England he was playing for the BBC and was pleasantly surprised when the Corporation, not usually given to sentimentality, told listeners about his departure for New Zealand and publicly wished him the best of luck.

Started as a Choirboy

Jay Wilbur's career started when he was a choirboy at St. Peter's Church, Bournemouth. Later he joined the Seymour Hicks company playing *Bluebell in Fairyland*. Then he played in a show called *Casey's Court* with Charles Chaplin in the cast. His voice broke when he was 16, while he was doing a solo act on the halls, so he took up the piano, teaching himself from a book which cost him 6d. In the old silent picture days he became a cinema pianist at the Grand Theatre, Camberwell, when there were only two other cinemas in London. Then he became musical director to a chain of picture theatres which, by this time, had orchestras instead of solo pianists.

During the 1914-18 war he worked as a coppersmith in an aeroplane factory, playing at dances in the evenings to earn a little extra cash. This was when jazz first materialised in Britain. He became musical director to Ashton and Mitchell's Royal Agency, supplying bands for social functions. At this time he played for the then Prince of Wales and made several appearances at Buckingham Palace.

For more experience Mr. Wilbur went to Germany, France, Belgium, and Norway with a dance band, always on the look-out for special arrangements, and later he visited the United States to study modern musical trends. Following his travels he went into the gramophone recording field and for 18 years this was his main work.