

# BOYS IN THE BAND

## 12B Orchestra Is Strong Combination

THE 12B Orchestra, as it is presented in the new radio theatre every week night, is a quiet, unobtrusive combination to look at. The players are dressed in grey lounge suits, and apparently orchestra leaders dressed like Ruritanian Admirals belong to the past, for Theo Walters also wears a grey lounge suit, and is distinguished only by his baton and a red flower in his buttonhole.

But dignified and restrained in appearance as it is, the 12B Orchestra is capable of cutting a musical dash with the best and liveliest, and Theo Walters himself is well known as a musical showman. It is not solely a dance band, the people at 12B are careful to point out; it will play all sorts of music, from swing to hill-billy to patriotic tunes to popular classics.

There are 12 musicians in the orchestra, most of them doubling on several instruments, and when the Novachord is added, there are unlimited combinations.

### Experience in Australia

A word about the personnel, who are all well-known players: An Australian, Theo Walters has had some previous experience of the opening of ZB stations, for he attended the entry into the world of both 3ZB and 4ZB, which done, he retired to Australia and a contract with Jimmy Campbell's Music Corporation of Australia, which was importing famous dance band leaders from England and America.

His job was to assemble a band of Australian musicians and train them up to the highest possible pitch in readiness for the visiting band-leaders to take over; then Theo would tour with them as associate conductor. Roy Fox of England and Jay Whidden of America were the first to arrive, and Jimmy Campbell was busily lining up other big names when war broke out. Theo came to New Zealand then. Putting over high-pressure radio theatre shows doesn't alarm him in the least. For six months he presented a regular show from 2GB, Sydney, with Jack Davey, who is nothing if not high-pressure in technique and presentation.

### The Other Players

Among the other members of the orchestra there is first of all Len Hawkins, the pianist, who is English, and has



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played at several English dance places, including the Hammersmith Palais and the Streatham Locarno. The other players are all New Zealanders. Jimmy Watters plays lead tenor saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet and soprano saxophone. He comes from Auckland and played with Theo Walters at the opening of 3ZB and 4ZB. Pat Watters, his brother, plays tenor saxophone, and clarinet, and has played in bands in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada; Norman Egerton plays lead alto and clarinet. He has been with most of the big bands in New Zealand, and toured with the Marcus Show and the Hollywood Honeys.

Gordon Lanigan, who plays alto saxophone, clarinet and fiddle, is an Auckland. He was three years with the first Civic Theatre Orchestra and was a member of the original Peter Pan Band. Phil Campbell, who plays lead trumpet, is a fine solo player, equally at home in "sweet" or "hot," as the swing fans say. He has been with Theo Walters before, and was a member of Manuel Raymond's Orchestra at the Centennial Exhibition in Wellington. Bill Pritchard plays trumpet and trombone. An "old stager," he has been with bands all over New Zealand. Alan Hills also plays trumpet.

The trombonist is Brian Marston, who comes from Dunedin; on the drums is Fred Gedson, of Palmerston North, who has played with Theo Walters before; and the bass and first fiddle is Harry Unwin, recently of the Majestic Cabaret, Wellington. Some special arrangements are being done for the orchestra by Lew Jones, who did the arranging for Albert Coleman's Marcus Show Orchestra, and who is a well-known composer.

The orchestra is featured in half-hour shows at 8.30 every night from Monday to Friday. On Friday Theo Walters has a special half hour, *Band Waggon*, all to himself. This will include novelty numbers designed to show off the band and its capabilities.

A picture of the band appears on page 24.

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*THERE will be no lack of new hit tunes for the 12B Orchestra. The Commercial Broadcasting Service has made arrangements with seven of the leading music publishers in America for all new numbers to be posted out to New Zealand immediately they are published, and numbers which have all the earmarks of "hit" successes will be air-mailed out by Pan-American clipper. Three new tunes are currently featured by the orchestra, "Hi, Neighbour," "The Angels Came Through," and "G'bye Now," which is the orchestra's signing-off tune.*