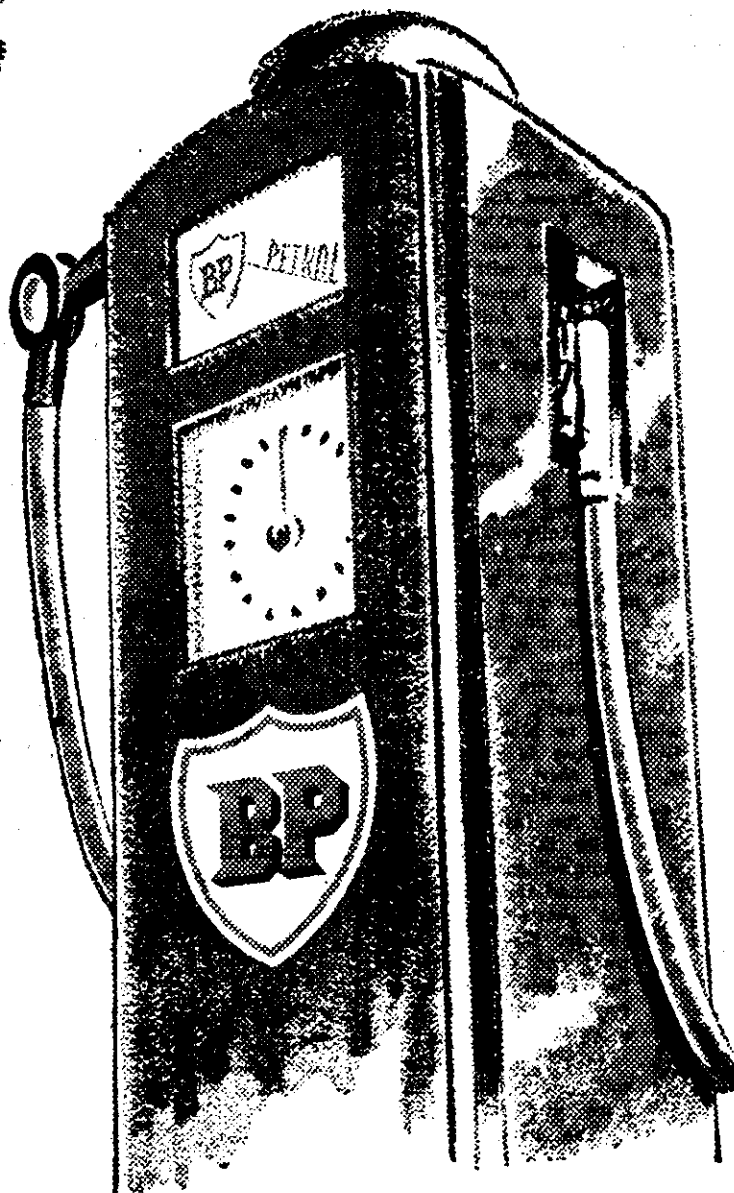


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THE BRITISH PETROLEUM COMPANY OF NEW ZEALAND LIMITED

BP71

## Schoenberg's Last Work

IT was said of Arnold Schoenberg, who died at Los Angeles last July, that probably no other composer had such a far-reaching influence on modern music. There is no doubt that such a pervasive influence must have reached even to New Zealand, but this country has had a somewhat closer link with the composer and his work during the last years of his life, in the person of a young Auckland student of music, Richard Hoffmann.

Richard Hoffmann, who was born in Vienna, came to New Zealand with his parents as a small boy and subsequently studied music at Auckland University College, where he was regarded as a most gifted student, both as a violinist and as a potential composer. While still in his teens he won the University Centennial Music Scholarship and at 20 gained his Mus. Bac. His principal interest was composition, and in 1947 he sent some of his manuscripts to Schoenberg, then holding the chair of composition at the University of California. Schoenberg offered to make the young man one of his private pupils, and from that time until Schoenberg's death, Mr. Hoffmann worked with the composer not only as a pupil, but as a collaborator in the preparation of work for publication.

Schoenberg's death ended the master-and-pupil relationship, but Mr. Hoffmann is still involved with the manuscripts, the music and the correspondence which Schoenberg left. *The Listener* recently wrote to him and asked if he could tell us something about the work Schoenberg had been engaged on at the time of his death, and last week a letter arrived from him.

### Unfinished Works

Schoenberg, he wrote, left only two major works unfinished. The first of these is an oratorio, *Die Jakobsleiter*, which is based on Schoenberg's own text and was set to music in 1917.

"It employs orchestra, chorus and soloists," says Mr. Hoffmann, "much in the manner of the *Gurrelieder*. However, the harmonic concept of the work is entirely different. It must be remembered that at this time Schoenberg had already sketched a scherzo movement (planned as the middle movement of a gigantic Trilogy—the last movement being the *Jakobsleiter*), which consisted of a theme constructed from the 12 different tones of the chromatic scale. Shortly before his death I came across a large piece of manuscript paper which contained the theme (and several Variants) of this scherzo, and I remember how enthused Schoenberg was when he saw these sketches—he had thought them lost.

"To return to the texture of this work: bearing in mind the fact that Schoenberg had already conceived a theme which may be termed 'atonal' at the time he was composing the Oratorio,