

# **Bridge Across the River**

**Communications from the life after death  
by a young artist killed in the First World War**

**In 4 Parts**

**Botho Sigwart Earl of Eulenburg**

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## Foreword to the New Edition, 2008

The present new edition of the book “Bridge Over the River” has been published for two main reasons.

For one, it seems in keeping with the times to reveal Sigwart’s “family secret”, since it has long since been possible to research Sigwart’s roots in today’s age of modern media. In order to avoid errors and misinterpretations, then, this information is being provided from the authentic source of his family itself and supplemented by a number of photographs from the family legacy.

Moreover, numerous alterations and mistakes were detected and corrected when the original documents still in the family’s possession were compared against the 1970/72 and 1985 editions. In addition, communications with no contemporary relevancy and most of the ones from Dagmar (Sigwart’s cousin) were removed and replaced by communications from Sigwart made between 1938 and 1949 that were unpublished to date and seemed important to us.

These communications are an event that began nearly simultaneously with the catastrophe of the First World War. In a time when first all of Europe and then large parts of the rest of the world were caught in the suction of unspeakable suffering exerted by a raging war, something happened within the quiet shelter of a family that was barely understandable, hard to accept and unique in kind: “A spiritual world checked in”, from which Sigwart spoke to his sisters and his sister-in-law. (You can read about this in the introduction by W. von Engelhardt.)

Entirely unprepared and unannounced, the family found itself in contact with a sphere that is a real component of our existence and the content of all religions.

At approximately the same time, that is, during WWI, Dr. Rudolf Steiner (the founder of Anthroposophy) began lecturing about how humanity ought to, even *must* seek contact with the deceased; that the latter “stand at the ready and are waiting to help us”. His admonitions became more and more urgent that we need such contact, so that we can approach the spirit world once again and contemplate on the meaning of our existence, which is to take our own development in hand and to serve the divine.

Sigwart’s communications not only confirm these admonitions; they lend them urgent emphasis.

When the communications were published in book form as “Bridge Over the River”, there was an abundance of feedback from many people who had derived comfort, hope, confidence and new perspectives for their lives. The book has been published in several languages.

All the communications included in the present edition have been rendered word for word and left unchanged. The reader to whom the book’s language sounds unfamiliar is asked to bear in mind that these words were originally intended strictly for use within the family, and that in a number of ways the language use of nearly a century ago differed quite a bit from ours today. We do not feel entitled to “modernize” Sigwart’s language.

*Wuppertal, spring of 2008  
Peter Gutland*

## Sigwart, His Family, and How It All Began

Botho Sigwart Philipp August, Count of Eulenburg was born on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1884. He was the second son of Philipp, Count of Eulenburg and Augusta née Countess of Sandels. The family's home was the castle and estate of Liebenberg in the March Brandenburg, 50 km. northeast of Berlin.

Art, especially music, played a central role in the family.

The father, who was ennobled in 1900 by Emperor Wilhelm II, was himself highly artistic, made music, sang, wrote poetry and composed (the famous Rosenlieder and the Skaldengesänge). He was a friend and confidant of Emperor Wilhelm II, who himself was a regular guest at Liebenberg estate.

Sigwart inherited his father's musical talent, as did his younger sister Viktoria. Tora, as she was called, became a professional pianist. As early as age seven, Sigwart could transcribe songs he heard into musical notation; beginning at age eight he received music lessons in Munich and Vienna, composed music himself, and could improvise on the piano, oftentimes in the presence of the Emperor during His Majesty's stays at Liebenberg. Emperor Wilhelm's interest in Sigwart was so great that he commissioned the eleven-year-old boy to compose variations on the Dessauer March. This composition for orchestra was subsequently performed in the large music salon in Vienna with Sigwart himself conducting, and in other places.

In 1898 Sigwart was enrolled in the grammar school in Bunzlau (Silesia). He rapidly learned to play the organ under the municipal choirmaster and organist Wagner. In 1899 he switched to the Luitpold Grammar School in Munich and in 1900 to the Friedrich Wilhelm Humanistic Grammar School in Berlin, where in 1902 at the age of 18 he completed his college entry exam. He spent his vacations and later his semester breaks in Liebenberg. In 1901 he was invited by Cosima Wagner, the widow of Richard Wagner, to take part in the rehearsals for the Bayreuth Festival, where he often filled in as a conductor.

Starting in 1902, he majored in history and philosophy in Munich, where he completed a doctoral dissertation on the 17<sup>th</sup> century German composer Erasmus Widmann and earned his Ph. D. in 1907. At the same time, he studied music under Professor Thuille and court conductor Zumpe, and completed his music studies under Max Reger in Leipzig in 1909. There followed a whole series of compositions, the scores of which are still available today.\*

An extended study tour to Greece awakened his love of Ancient Greek art. Sigwart was so enthralled by Greek music in particular, that he set Ernst von Wildenbruch's "Songs of Euripides" ("Lieder des Euripides") to music as an opera. On account of the outbreak of the First World War, this work's first performance, given at the Court Theater in Stuttgart, could not take place until December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1915. The premiere was huge success. Sigwart had departed from the Earth five months before.

In 1909, he married the acclaimed concert soprano Helene Staegemann, the daughter of Privy Counsel Staegemann. The happily married couple had a son, Friedrich, who was born in 1914 and died in 1936 during a reserve duty training exercise.

Sigwart finished his organ studies in 1911 under Albert Schweitzer, to whom he dedicated a grand organ concerto.

Among the large circle of friends of this well-loved young artist were Wilhelm Furtwangler and Professor Arthur Nikisch.

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Apart from his widely diverse social life, the young artist was also keenly devoted to the study of the great philosophers and the different world religions.

It was due to the family's acquaintance with Dr. Rudolf Steiner, who was an occasional guest at Liebenberg, that Sigwart encountered Anthroposophy, which increasingly became the center of his life. In addition to studying the basic works of Anthroposophy, he also observed every possible opportunity to hear Steiner's lectures. He shared his devotion to Anthroposophy with his sisters Lycki and Tora, his brother Karl, and his sister-in-law Marie. This formed the foundation for the communication ensued place after his step into the spiritual world.

At the outbreak of World War I, Sigwart was 30 years old. He enlisted in September of the same year. In April of 1915, he was commissioned as a lieutenant and his battalion deployed in Galicia (Poland). There he was wounded on May 9<sup>th</sup>. On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1915 in a military hospital in Jaslo he succumbed to complications arising from his wound. Against all standard procedure, his friends and family managed to have his corpse transferred to Liebenberg. There he was buried in the place he had wished under the large oak tree in the park of Liebenberg Castle.

It may have been the special affinity of soul between Sigwart and Marie that caused her to experience his wounding and death along with him in an intensely jarring way.

Lycki, the sister who received the first of his communications, describes her experience in the following words:

In the remoteness and stillness of these days I realized what it was that Sigwart expected of me – not to let him guide my hand and influence me from the outside; rather, I must open a door inside of me, and then I would hear his words, which in turn I should write down.

Lycki, then Tora\*, and later Marie\*\* began writing down the communications, which became more and more frequent. The increasing frequency, however, could not dispel the doubt and unbelief of this event entirely. Was this really possible? Despite all of Sigwart's reassurance and assertions, doubt still remained. The family sent Marie with the communications accumulated to that point to Dr. Rudolf Steiner, for him to inspect them. Marie writes:

I was entrusted with this mission, and so one dreary December afternoon, with our sacred documents clasped under my arm (by that time they had reached quite some volume), I went to Motz Street in Berlin. Dr. Steiner received me most cordially and asked if he might keep the manuscripts for a few days, and then talk to me about them.

The day came, and I must admit it was one of the most apprehensive ones of this whole phase. What would he say? This question stood in large letters before me; after all, the edifice of faith in Sigwart's identity had grown a lot within me.

For fully an hour and three-quarters Dr. Steiner went through the communications with me page by page, setting straight some things we hadn't understood, explaining how Sigwart had meant this or that, and asking questions of me. Often he nodded his head while reading and said approvingly: "Very well depicted", "Well put!", "A striking designation!" "Yes, the musical performances, they are a reality!"

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\* Another sister of Sigwart's

\*\* Sigwart's sister-in-law

In vain I waited for a rejection of a single one of the communications, but none came! At the end, as I was preparing to leave, he said "Yes, these are extraordinarily clear, absolutely authentic transmissions from the spiritual worlds. I see no reason to advise you against going on listening to them..." Even as we bade each other farewell he stressed how communications of this kind are extremely rare. I sensed that it was genuine joy that he felt and that he shared our joy with us.

In the ensuing 35 years there flowed a huge quantity of communications, which were collected and guarded by the family. A small circle of friends was granted access to them and lived with Sigwart's texts and verses.

The following communication on April 25, 1932 imported a new thought into the work:

The time has come in which the divine gifts we permitted our brother to give may now make its way out into wider circles. What he was allowed to say to you must now be passed on, so that blessing can be bestowed, suffering soothed, and people helped and shown the way to the light.

The time has come!

As a preface to the communications, the words of Marie and Lycki follow, in order to attune the reader to the extraordinary situation within this family.

