

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
Cansu Yersal

## Rosenkavalier (1926)

Robert Wiene (1873-1938)

### OVERVIEW

**Auteur:** Robert Wiene (b. 1873- d. 1938) was a writer and film director of the silent film era of German cinema. He is particularly known for *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) which is considered to be one of the finest examples of German expressionism. He is also famous for *Raskolnikow* (1923), an adaptation of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*; *The Hands of Orlac* (1924), a silent horror film; *One Night in Venice* (1934), an operetta film. He was born in Breslau as the elder son of the successful theater actor Carl Wiene. Following the rise of the Nazis to power, he fled Germany as he was of Jewish descent. Wiene died of cancer at the age of 65.

**Film:** *Der Rosenkavalier* is a 1926 silent film from Austria based on the opera of the same name by Richard Strauss (music) and Hugo von Hofmannsthal (libretto). Ludwig Nerz and Robert Wiene contributed to the writing of the film. The producer is Robert Wiene. The film stars Michael Bohnen, Huguette Duflos, Paul Hartmann, Jaque Catelain, Elly Felicie Berger, Carmen Cartellieri, Karl Forest, and Friedrich Feher. The cinematography is by Hans Androschin, Ludwig Schascheki, and Hans Theyer. The film's plot revolves around the aristocratic Marschallin; her 17-year-old lover, Count Octavian Rofrano; her coarse cousin Baron Ochs; and Ochs's intended fiancée, Sophie von Faninal, the daughter of a wealthy bourgeois. At the Marschallin's suggestion, Octavian serves as Ochs's Rosenkavalier, presenting a ceremonial silver rose to Sophie. However, Octavian and Sophie fall in love instantly and soon plot a humorous scheme to free Sophie from her engagement, with assistance from the Marschallin, who ultimately gives Octavian up to Sophie. The film addresses significant themes, particularly through the Marschallin, including infidelity, fading youth, and selflessness in love.

**Historical background:** *Der Rosenkavalier* is adapted from the opera of the same name by Richard Strauss. Richard Georg Strauss (1864 – 1949) was a German composer and conductor renowned for his tone poems and operas. Regarded as a prominent figure in the late Romantic and early modern periods, he is often considered a successor to Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt. Alongside Gustav Mahler, Strauss exemplifies the late development of German Romanticism. *Der Rosenkavalier* was shot at the Schönbrunn Studios in Vienna. It premiered on January 10, 1926, at the Dresden Semperoper, the same venue that hosted the original opera's debut 15 years earlier. At the premiere, Richard Strauss conducted the orchestra himself. Strauss also conducted the Vienna and London premieres. A planned tour of the United States in 1927 by Strauss and his orchestra failed to go ahead because of the emergence of sound films.

### CHARACTERS

**Marschallin:** An aristocratic lady who feels neglected by her husband and has an affair with young Octavian

**Octavian:** Marschallin's 17-year-old lover who later falls in love with Sophie

**Sophie:** The daughter of wealthy Herr von Faninal, expected to marry Baron von Ochs, but falls in love with Octavian

**Baron von Lerchenau:** A rude and greedy aristocratic person who plans to marry Sophie to increase his wealth

**Marschall:** Husband of Marschallin who goes to wars with the Imperial Army and thus rarely sees his wife

**Annina:** A person who loves intrigues at court and exposes Marschallin's infidelity

**Herr von Faninal:** Father of Sophie who is recently raised to nobility, wishes his daughter to marry Baron von Ochs

**Valzacchi:** A schemer person, similar in terms of character to Annina

## SYNOPSIS

Marschallin and her young lover Octavian meet at night in Marschallin's room. Marschallin's cousin Baron von Lerchenau receives a letter informing him of a match called Sophie whose wealthy father was recently raised to nobility. Baron decides to leave for Vienna. Meanwhile, Marschallin tells Octavian about her youth and how she got married to Marschall. She also tells him how her husband neglects her as he is always on military duty. In the morning, Baron von Ochs and many others wait in front of Marschallin's door for reception. Octavian hides behind the curtain to avoid being caught. Baron von Ochs asks Marschallin to help him find a Rosenkavalier. During the reception, Octavian drops an object to the ground behind the curtain. When Baron pulls up the curtain, we see Octavian dressed as a maid named Mariandel. While Baron makes lewd advances toward Mariandel, Marschallin announces that she has chosen Octavian as Rosenkavalier. Later, Mariandel kisses Annina (a schemer and lover of intrigue) during which she takes a cavalier's cuff from the maid. Annina goes to the high commission to report her doubts about Marschallin's infidelity. Later, in a celebration in the beer garden, Octavian sees Sophie and shows a lot of interest in her. Marschallin becomes devastated when she sees the two together. The next day, Octavian presents the silver rose to Sophie and they fall in love with each other. Octavian tells the Baron that Sophie does not want to marry him and wounds him in a duel. However, the Baron has already got the document signed by Herr von Faninal that guarantees that Sophie will marry him. Meanwhile, Marschall receives a mail from the high commission and finds out about his wife's infidelity. Later, Marschall becomes victorious in war and returns home. Marschallin organizes a masked party to confirm her doubts and learns that Octavian and Sophie are in love. Octavian prepares a plot to outdo Baron von Ochs where he is in disguise as Mariandel once again. Baron von Ochs becomes the ridicule of the people when he is caught with Mariandel. Thus, Herr von Faninal breaks off Baron's engagement to Sophie. Marschall finds out that Marschallin's lover is Octavian and challenges him to a duel when he sees a masked woman throwing herself into Octavian's arms—as Marschall supposes the woman to be Marschallin. However, it turns out the masked woman is Sophie. Later, Marschallin comes to the scene and Marschall lets go of Octavian. Finally, Octavian and Sophie can get together. Marschallin and Marschall also get back together. Only Baron von Ochs leaves without having achieved anything.

## SCENES

**Marschallin and Octavian secretly meet each other** The story takes place during Maria Theresa's reign in Vienna. The park is still asleep. The statues dream in their leafy niches. The city in the distance has come to rest. Only those who love are awake and the Marschall's wife can't sleep. We see Marschallin lying restlessly on her bed. Octavian, the Count of Rofrano, the young man from a noble family, is also still awake. Marschallin gets up and goes near the open window. When she looks outside, she and Octavian see each other. Octavian goes up the stairs and enters her room through the open window. At first, Marschallin tries to resist the allure of her young lover but soon they embrace each other since they are both infatuated with one another.



**A cavalryman brings a letter to Baron von Lerchenau**

One fine morning in 1750, a cavalryman rides in great haste to the castle of Baron von Lerchenau. The cavalryman asks the servants he encounters about where he can find Baron von Lerchenau. The servants quickly inform the Baron who is sleeping. Baron Ochs von Lerchenau is from an old, venerable family, but nowadays completely impoverished. Baron Ochs gets excited about the arrival of a letter from Vienna. He rudely demands that the messenger be presented to him by his servants.



**Baron von Lerchenau reads the letter and later leaves for Vienna**

He enthusiastically proceeds to read the letter delivered to him by the messenger. In the letter, it is written: 'We would like to confidentially inform His Highness of a very worthwhile match. The girl is a true angel, just out of the monastery, and the sole heiress of the rich army supplier, Lord of Faninal. Her father was recently raised to the nobility, but he owns twelve houses in Vienna, as well as a palace in the city and a large estate in the country. By the way, his health is not going well. Greetings to your Highness.' After reading the letter, the Baron laughs enthusiastically. Later, the Baron informs his servants—once again in a rude fashion—: 'Prepare my traveling carriage! I have to leave for Vienna early tomorrow morning.'



**Octavian and Marschallin talk about their feelings toward each other**

Octavian talks to Marschallin: 'If only you knew what you mean to me? You are the embodiment of all love in the world.' Marschallin replies: 'And does he know what he means to me? Youth that I lost...a little sunshine that every person needs.' Octavian asks Marschallin to talk about her life. Marschallin begins to recount the tale of her life: 'Like every girl, I dreamed that one day a prince would come riding to the castle and carry me away...'



**Marschallin talks about her past and how she married Marschall**

At this point, we are presented with a flashback to Marschallin's youth. While she plays with other girls in the monastery, a nun comes and takes her to her parents. Her parents say to the young girl: 'Prince Werdenberg has done us the honor of asking for your hand in marriage. He is a great military leader who has twice defeated the Prussian king in the field.' The young girl seems unwilling and unenthusiastic. However, she accepts her parents' wish: 'So I was married to a man I barely knew, who had only seen me once or twice.' However, on their wedding day, the young girl understands that her marriage is going to be a lonely one as Marschall explains to her: 'I lay everything I own at your feet. The house and servants are at your disposal. I have orders to go to war with the Imperial Army immediately.' Marschallin says to young Octavian: 'So I was left alone, without hope of happiness, until you stole through that window and into my heart.'



**Octavian has to hide behind a curtain to avoid being seen with Marschallin**

We see people waiting in front of the chamber of Marschallin. In particular, Baron von Lerchenau who has come to Vienna after a long night journey, is in a hurry to see his cousin. However, in the chamber, Marschallin and Octavian are still together. Realizing the danger in the situation, Octavian hides behind the curtains in the room.



**Baron von Lerchenau asks Marschallin to help him choose the Rosenkavalier**

Baron von Lerchenau enters Marschallin's room. After courtly greetings, Baron explains his situation: 'Dear cousin; I came to the city to woo a lady. I am determined to trade my venerable title and blue blood for her father's commonwealth. Of course, Herr von Faninal was only recently raised to the nobility, but he looks after the entire army, and in addition to a palace and houses in Vienna, he owns several country estates- and his health is failing. That's why I'm rushing to you to ask you to help me choose the Rosenkavalier (English: Knight of the Rose).'



**Marschallin tends to the guests as the reception begins** At that moment, a servant comes into the room to inform Marschallin: 'The ladies-in-waiting, hairdressers, sellers of all kinds of goods, the cook and the poor relatives, wait reverently to be received— and, I may say, the usual time has already expired.' So, the reception begins. Marschallin tends to the guests.



**We meet Annina and Valzacchi, Annina guesses that Marschallin may have a secret** We meet another character called Annina. We learn that she is always happy about intrigues at court and doesn't care whether she uncovers scandals or invents them. Yet, there is only one thing more worthless than a schemer woman—a schemer man. Valzacchi and Annina would make a splendid couple. While the reception continues, Octavian drops an object to the ground behind the curtain. Everybody hears the sound and suspects that Marschallin's lover is hiding behind the curtain. Annina, who stands near the curtain, says to the Baron: 'If the gentleman wants to see the princess's lover, he should pull the curtain.'



**Baron von Lerchenau makes advances toward Mariandel, and Marschallin chooses Octavian as the Rosenkavalier** When the curtain is pulled, we see Octavian disguised as a maid, arranging Marschallin's bed. Baron starts making advances toward the maid. He asks her: 'Have you ever dined with a man of noble birth, my beautiful?' After these advances, Marschallin calls to the disguised maid 'Mariandel': 'Go immediately to the Palais Rofrano and let them know that we are expecting Count Octavian tomorrow morning.' Marschallin lets the Baron know that she chose Count Octavian as the Rosenkavalier.



**The maid Mariandel kisses Annina** As the maid 'Mariandel' runs through the corridors, she encounters Annina and kisses her. Meanwhile, Annina takes from the maid a cavalier cuff.



**Annina goes to the high commission to report her doubts** The high commission appointed by Her Apostolic Majesty, the Empress Maria Theresia, and endowed with all powers has to watch over virtue and good morals. We see Annina among the members of the high commission and we also see the shot of the cavalier cuff which Annina took from the maid. She asks the members of the commission thus: 'Since when does Mrs. Marschallin's chambermaid wear cavalier cuffs?' Annina says to herself that only a man can kiss like that (referring to the maid in disguise). The commission members talk among each other and finally announce their judgment to Annina: 'The high commission appointed by Her Majesty the Empress authorizes you to carry out the most thorough investigation.'



**Marschall who is fighting for victory does not receive any mail from his wife Marschallin** Many miles away the prince is fighting for final victory. Then he could finally return to Vienna, to the woman he loves. We see Marschall speaking to commanders of the army. He says the following order: 'The army is only allowed to rest for two days, not longer...' Later, an attendant



informs Marschall that mail has arrived from Vienna. It seems that every soldier has received letters except Marschall who seems to be frustrated at his condition. Even the humblest of his soldiers receives mail from a loving hand, but for him not a single line from the Princess is present. Marschall orders thus to his soldiers: 'The trumpet player should start immediately.' Next, the trumpet is played and all the soldiers come to gather.

**We see the world of Vienna come together and meet Sophie, the daughter of Herr von Faninal** Spring brings together the elegant world of Vienna in a small beer garden, where country fun is the latest fashionable pastime. We see men and women playing and dancing together. We also see Sophie, daughter of Herr von Faninal, sitting on her own, watching the dance. There are two men, one of them Octavian, who look at Sophie. Octavian mentions what a beautiful lady she is. The other man responds: 'This is the daughter of a rich, newly minted nobleman...' Octavian asks why she is not participating in the game. The other man jokes that their nobility is too young and she'll have to wait a while...at least a hundred or two hundred years. Octavian rushes to ask the young lady to join them. Sophie enthusiastically joins them.



**Marschallin comes to visit the garden** Marschallin comes to visit the garden. When people notice her, they all stop playing and bow down reverentially. She asks Octavian whether he already registered with Baron Ochs as a Rosenkavalier. Octavian responds: 'Tomorrow, I will take the liberty of presenting Lady Faninal with a silver rose.' After this, Sophie leaves the garden in a carriage. Marschallin, looking at the carriage as it goes away, asks who that lady in the carriage is. A man responds that she is Sophie, the daughter of Herr Faninal.



**Herr von Faninal leaves the house for the Rosenkavalier to present the silver rose** The day finally comes when the silver rose is to be presented. There is great excitement everywhere in the house of Herr von Faninal. Herr von Faninal speaks to his servant: 'Etiquette dictates that the bride's father must be out of the house when the cavalier with the silver rose approaches. Exactly eleven minutes after the cavalier enters, the father has to return to introduce the bridegroom to the bride.'



**Count Octavian gives the silver rose to Sophie** The Rosenkavalier comes in a carriage. Everybody in the town witnesses the coming of the Rosenkavalier. We see Sophie nervously waiting for the arrival of the Rosenkavalier. Finally, Count Octavian enters the hall holding the silver rose. When he sees Sophie, he becomes utterly shocked. Sophie is also happy when she recognizes him. However, Count Octavian realizes that giving the silver rose to Sophie means that she will marry someone else and we witness the downhearted expression on his face. Sophie says to Octavian: 'I had imagined the Rosenkavalier to be completely different. I thought he would be an old man, as old as Santa Claus.'



**Baron von Lerchenau is greedy after dowry** Soon, Baron von Lerchenau arrives. When Sophie sees the Baron, she has a disappointed look on her face. The Baron, on the other hand, looks enthusiastic and lively. He asks whether the notaries are present. We learn that Baron von Lerchenau expects one hundred thousand taler from Sophie: 'One hundred thousand is the least! A real lady brings almost as much dowry with her.' Herr von Faninal tries to make a



compromise with the Baron as paying one hundred thousand taler would ruin him but the Baron does not accept anything less than his proposed amount.

### **Sophie does not want to marry the rude and greedy Baron**

Hearing this conversation, Octavian asks Sophie: 'This monster wants to marry you?' Sophie responds: 'No, never...even if the color of his blood surpassed the blue of the sky, and his title was older than Methuselah.' After hearing this response, Octavian becomes exuberant. Meanwhile, the Baron fights with the notaries over Sophie's dowry.



**Octavian and Sophie confess their love for each other** Octavian says to Sophie: 'Allow me to tell him that you are not marrying him because I adore you and you love me.' Sophie says: 'I want to hide with you and not care what the world says.' Then the two lovers kiss each other. Meanwhile, Baron von Ochs continues to quarrel with Herr von Faninal. In the end, Herr von Faninal gives in and accepts to pay the dowry Baron von Ochs demands.



**Octavian tells Baron von Ochs that Sophie does not want to marry him** When Baron von Ochs comes back to the room, he is shocked to see Octavian and Sophie kissing each other. Octavian tries to protect Sophie and speaks up to the Baron: 'The lady doesn't want you... she can't love you and refuses to become yours.' Baron von Ochs responds sarcastically: 'Oh, look what a mouth the boy has.' Octavian repeats himself angrily that Sophie does not want to marry the Baron. Baron von Ochs starts laughing and shows the young Octavian the document that Herr von Faninal has recently signed.



**Baron von Ochs gets wounded in the duel against Octavian** Next, Octavian gets furious and takes out his sword. So does Baron von Ochs and a duel starts between the two. Baron von Ochs' arm gets wounded during the duel. He seems to be in great agony and is carried to another room. Meanwhile, Octavian tells Sophie to be calm and trust him that everything will be all right. Herr von Faninal asks Octavian to leave.



**Baron von Ochs searches for the document of Sophie's dowry** It is nighttime. Baron von Ochs wakes up with a worried look on his face. He starts searching frantically for something all over his room and the main room. When he finally finds the document previously signed by Herr von Faninal, he starts dancing with joy.



**Marschall finds out about his wife's betrayal** We see Marschall sitting alone with a hopeless look on his face. It turns out he had received a mail in which it is written: '...and she tore away the man's cuff from the supposed girl. There is reasonable suspicion that there was a man in the bedroom of Mrs. Marschallin, His Grace's wife. We consider it our duty...' Thus, Marschall realizes that his wife has been cheating on him.



**Marschall gives orders to attack the enemy** Soon, a man on a horse comes to deliver a message. Soldiers come to notify Marschall. They say to him: 'Excellency, the enemy is surrounded! If we attack them as quickly as possible, we will surely crush them!' Marschall says: 'I'm in the right mood right now, we're attacking!' After the soldiers leave, Marschall looks at the man's cuff thoughtfully.



**Marschall and his army are victorious** We see a battlefield and soldiers running under the command of Marschall. They ultimately seize, defeat their enemies, and are victorious. However, even if Marschall is victorious, he still thinks about his wife's betrayal of him which we witness when he holds the man's cuff in his hands after the battle. After the battle is over, Marschall decides to return to Vienna.



**Marschallin reflects on the possibility of losing Octavian to Sophie** Marschallin sits alone in her bedroom, reflecting on her memories when she saw Octavian and Sophie together in the beer garden. She has a depressed, hopeless, and weary look on her face. She thinks to herself: 'Today or tomorrow—or at the latest any day, he's going to go away and leave me for someone else.' Then a child enters the room and sees her crying on the sofa.



**Herr von Faninal tries to convince Sophie to marry Baron von Ochs, to no avail** Herr von Faninal talks to her daughter to persuade her to marry Baron von Ochs: 'I gave the Baron my word! The marriage certificate has been signed and he has already received a partial payment.' Sophie looks unresponsive and stubborn. Her father says to her: 'I hope you don't think the Count is asking for your hand in marriage? He is only playing with you, then he will turn his back on you. But if you were to marry the Lord von Lerchenau...Look! You would be a baroness straight away!' However, Sophie does not listen to her father. Herr von Faninal gets angry and leaves the room. He also locks up the room afterward and says to his servant: 'Caution! Fools in love are capable of anything!'



**Baron von Ochs wants to take revenge on Octavian, and a new play is presented in the town** Baron von Ochs sits by himself, thinking about taking revenge on Octavian. On the streets, there is great enthusiasm and someone announces: 'The dear audience is invited to today's comedians' event at the Flour Market. Kasper—the joker and the stupid Bajazzo invite your Grace to the new stall on the flour market at four o'clock... children and soldiers pay half the price.' With the gracious permission of the high authorities, the highly mischievous and deeply touching play '*Love of Princess Labuntia or the Proud Father and his Humiliation*' is performed in the booth on the Flour Market.



**The actor starts recounting the tale of the play** The play begins. The first actor on the scene says to the audience: 'Dear audience, if our piece seems too simple to you, please don't be stingy with applause. *Life plays comedy, we all know this well—often a stupid one.*' We see Octavian and Marschallin in the audience, too. Also, Baron von Ochs and Sophie are among the audience. The actor starts recounting the tale: 'The father had a daughter, a little angel, and he was looking for a bridegroom for her...a stupid, fat bastard—you'll see what happened next.'



**The play resembles what happens between Octavian and Sophie** The play begins and we see one actor presenting a rose to an actress, reminiscent of Octavian presenting the silver rose to Sophie. Then a fat actor enters the scene, resembling Baron von Ochs. When the fat actor tries to take hold of the young actress, the actor reminiscent of Octavian starts to fight with the fat man. He defeats him, similar to how Octavian wounded Baron von Ochs. The narrator comments on the story: 'Although the right nobleman gives his hand to your child—you, father—donkey, would prefer



to give it to this animal.'

### **Herr von Faninal doesn't want Octavian as her son-in-law**

After the play is over, Octavian talks to Herr von Faninal. Herr von Faninal says to the young man: 'My son-in-law will be Baron von Ochs. He has my word and also my signature.'



### **Marschallin is depressed because of her realization that Octavian will leave her for Sophie**

Octavian comes to visit Marschallin who looks depressed and melancholic. Marschallin says to him: 'Just go where your heart takes you - I'm not angry with you.' Octavian tries to deny the truth about Sophie and him: 'Just don't cry, my cousin...I can't see it...I love you so much...' However, Marschallin knows the truth and is in utter melancholy.



### **Marschallin decides to organize a garden party to confirm her doubts**

The following day, the princess retreats to the solitude of her country estate to hide her grief from prying eyes. We see her sitting on a bank, thinking to herself: 'First I convince myself with my own eyes...First I convince myself—only then do I want to believe it.' She decides to organize a garden party in costume and mask on 11 May.



### **Marschallin's fears come true**

The garden party begins. A servant brings to Marschallin the list of participants and their costumes. A woman in disguise (Marschallin) tells Octavian who is also in disguise that a lady is awaiting him in Diana's pavilion. Marschallin plans to see what Octavian and Sophie will do when they encounter each other. When they see each other, Octavian says to Sophie: 'I love you, Sophie, and I will love you forever—but I am not free...a certain heart would burst with grief.' At this point, Marschallin is devastated as her fears are confirmed. Sophie is hopeless as she expects to be married to Baron von Ochs within that week. As she leaves, Octavian follows after her.



### **Marschall searches for Marschallin**

Marschall arrives at the garden party. He asks the servants which mask Marschallin wears. He orders his servants to find it out immediately. Soon, a servant comes to inform Marschall that he has found a list where the masks of each guest are written but the mask of the princess is not written on the list.



### **Octavian prepares a plot to outdo Baron von Ochs**

Octavian listens to the voice of his heart and feels that he cannot leave Sophie to anyone else. With the help of Cupid's arrows, he prepares a plot to outdo the Baron. He secretly gives Sophie a letter in which it is written: 'Come to the Diana Pavilion in an hour and bring Father with you. Then you will see that you don't have to marry the Ochs.' Meanwhile, Baron von Ochs also receives a letter. In the letter, it is written: 'Has your Grace completely forgotten Mariandel, Frau Marschallin's maid? At the Diana Pavilion it is already dark and no one will be there.' So, Baron von Ochs decides to see Mariandel.



### **Baron von Ochs becomes the ridicule of the people when he is caught with 'Mariandel'**

We see Baron von Ochs trying to catch Mariandel in Diana's pavilion. Diana's pavilion becomes a trap for Ochs. As Baron von Ochs embraces Mariandel, Sophie and his father witness this scandalous event. Caught in the act of love, Ochs finds himself exposed to the ridicule of the party. Ochs, to whom Faninal has broken off his engagement to his daughter, flees into the garden.





**Octavian talks to Marschallin about his love for Sophie** Octavian confesses his love for Sophie to Marschallin. Annina tells Marschallin that Marschall has arrived and knows everything. Marschallin sets out to warn Octavian about Marschall and runs into a crowd of masked people. Valzacchi reveals to Marschall that Marschallin in the striped domino is rushing to Octavian in the pavilion.



**Marschall challenges Octavian to a duel as he believes that the masked woman with Octavian is Marschallin** Annina devises a plan to save Octavian from Marschall's anger with the help of Sophie. A masked woman enters the pavilion in Marschallin's domino and throws herself into Octavian's arms. The jealous Marschall discovers the two and challenges Octavian to a duel. The masked woman throws herself between the crossed blades and reveals her face. It turns out the masked woman is Sophie.



**Marschallin appears and Marschall realizes his mistake** When Marschallin appears in the pavilion, Marschall realizes his mistake and lets go of Octavian. Finally, Octavian and Sophie can get together.



**Valzacchi and Annina get together** Annina has mixed feelings about the reconciliation that she brought about at the last moment. Valzacchi approaches Annina and offers her his hand.



**In the end, there are three happy couples while Baron von Ochs leaves with nothing** In the moonlight, three avenues accommodate three happy couples: Annina and Valzacchi, Sophie and Octavian, Marschall and Marschallin. Baron von Ochs leaves without having accomplished anything.



## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### Marschallin

Marschallin is the main character of the film. She is an aristocratic lady who feels neglected by her husband and thus has an affair with young Octavian. She represents in the film the themes of unhappiness, infidelity, waning youth, and selflessness in love.

*Unhappy:* Marschallin is unhappy in her marriage. As she recounts to Octavian, the reason why she married Marschall was her parents' wish. Even though Marschall provides her with every comfort and luxury, he does not stay with her as he is always on military duty. Therefore, Marschallin feels isolated, weary, and unhappy.

*Disloyal:* The unhappiness of Marschallin and her infidelity to her husband are deeply connected factors. The unhappiness and isolation she experiences in her marriage cause her to look for happiness elsewhere, namely in Octavian. She does not regret her affair with Octavian in any part of the film. Moreover, she is disturbed and devastated when she discovers that Octavian loves Sophie, indicating the profound love she has for him.

*Selfless:* Even though Marschallin grapples with disappointment and devastation as a result of Octavian falling in love with Sophie, she ultimately gives up Octavian to Sophie. Her selflessness can be seen in this utterance to Octavian: 'Just go where your heart takes you—I'm not angry with you.'

## **Octavian**

Count Octavian Rofrano is Marschallin's cousin and young lover. At the beginning of the film, he seems to be infatuated with Marschallin. However, when he sees Sophie, his feelings change and he falls in love with her. Observing his behavior and nature, we can see that he is immature and fickle.

*Fickle:* Fickleness of Octavian can be seen in the way his emotions and feelings change course. At the beginning of the film, Octavian talks to Marschallin: 'If only you knew what you mean to me? You are the embodiment of all love in the world.' However, after he meets Sophie, his feelings for Marschallin come to an end. Octavian says to Sophie at the garden party: 'I love you, Sophie, and I will love you forever.' This utterance is also heard by Marschallin which devastates her.

*Clever:* Octavian is also a clever individual. His cleverness can be seen on two occasions. One of these occasions is when he disguises himself as the maid 'Mariandel' to avoid being caught as Marschallin's lover. Another occasion is when he organizes a plan to outdo the Baron and calls the Baron to Diana's pavilion. He disguises himself once again as Mariandel to expose the Baron's shameful behavior to Herr von Faninal. Judging by these two scenes, we can infer that Octavian possesses a sort of ingenuity or cleverness.

## **Sophie**

Sophie is Herr von Faninal's daughter who was recently raised to nobility. She has a shy appearance when we first see her in the beer garden as she watches people playing and dancing from the sidelines. Later, she also falls in love with Octavian and shows a determination to marry him.

*Determined:* Sophie's determination to marry Octavian can be observed in her stubbornness when her father tries to convince her to marry Baron von Ochs. Her father tells her that the marriage certificate is already signed. However, Sophie looks unresponsive, and stubborn, and chooses not to listen to her father. In another scene, Sophie as a masked woman comes in between the dueling Marschall and Octavian in order to save Octavian from Marschall's anger. All these scenes show us her determination to be with Octavian.

## **Baron von Lerchenau**

Baron von Lerchenau is a nobleman, from an old, venerable family, but at the time of the events completely impoverished. He is Marschallin's coarse cousin. He is generally a greedy and rude person who wishes to marry Sophie for her father's wealth. However, his plans do not work out and he ends up not having achieved anything at the end of the film.

*Greedy:* The Baron is a greedy person. Part of his greed might be seen in his appearance too as he is overweight, indicating a tendency to consume more food than necessary (for various reasons). However, his greed is most conspicuous when it comes to wealth. He does not love Sophie but only sees his possible marriage with her as a trade where he can increase his now-lost wealth. His greed can be observed in particular when he fights with the notaries and Herr von Faninal about the dowry.

*Rude:* Baron von Lerchenau is a rude person in addition to being greedy. His rudeness can be seen in his interactions with his servants where he rudely orders people around. Other scenes where his rudeness and vulgarness are expressed are seen in the way he approaches the maid Mariandel. Even though he plans to marry Sophie, he does not hesitate to make advances toward Mariandel as well.

## **Marschall**

Marschall is Marschallin's husband. He is a disciplined and courageous person who spends most of his time engaged in military duty. Therefore, he neglects his wife even though he loves her.

*Courageous:* Marschall is a disciplined military man. He goes on wars with the Imperial Army and becomes victorious. However, his interest in military affairs causes him to overlook the fact that Marschallin is feeling neglected by his absence.

*Jealous:* Marschall becomes deeply disturbed when he finds out about his wife's infidelity. When Valzacchi reveals to Marschall that a masked woman is rushing to Octavian in the pavilion, he becomes extremely jealous and thus challenges Octavian to a duel. It is only after Sophie reveals her mask and Marschallin comes to the scene that Marschall lets go of Octavian.

### **Annina**

Annina is someone from the palace circle who loves scheming and intrigues. She likes causing drama and trouble among people. However, she also helps Octavian at the end of the film to save him from the fury of Marschall.

*Scheming:* Annina's love for scheming can be witnessed when she first recognizes that Marschallin's lover might be hiding behind the curtain in Marschallin's chamber. Afterward, when the maid Mariandel kisses her, she cleverly pulls out the cavalier's cuff which serves as evidence of the fact that Mariandel is in actuality a man in disguise. Interestingly, Annina deviates from her trouble-causing tendencies when she decides to help Octavian with Sophie. At the end of the film, she has mixed feelings about the reconciliation that she brought about at the last moment and perhaps she is surprised at herself for creating harmony rather than chaos for the first time.

### **Herr von Faninal**

Herr von Faninal is Sophie's father who was recently raised to nobility. He is a wealthy figure, a rich army supplier, and owns twelve houses in Vienna, as well as a palace in the city and a large estate in the country. He wishes her daughter to marry Baron von Ochs so that she can get the title of the Baroness. To that end, he yields to pay the high amount of dowry the Baron demands from him.

*Caring:* Herr von Faninal is a caring father who ultimately wishes for the well-being and happiness of his daughter, believing that Sophie's marrying the Baron will provide her with a better life. Therefore, he tries to persuade his daughter to let go of her stubbornness to marry Octavian. Herr von Faninal believes that Octavian is not serious about his intentions to marry Sophie.

### **Valzacchi**

Valzacchi is a minor character in the film. He is similar to Annina in that he is a scheming person.

*Scheming:* Valzacchi's scheming can be seen when he tells the angry Marschall that Marschallin in the striped domino is rushing to Octavian in the pavilion. Thus, he contributes to the culmination of events and Marschall's challenging Octavian to a duel. At the end of the film, after people are reconciled and things are settled, he offers Annina his hand. Thus, the film ends on a harmonious note.

## **THEMES**

### **PSYCHOLOGY**

**Sadness** Sadness is one of the emotions that we viewers witness in the film, in particular through the character of Marschallin. Marschallin is truly unhappy in her marriage as she feels neglected, isolated, and weary. That is why she turns to Octavian to find some happiness or 'a little sunshine'. Unfortunately, she cannot find lasting happiness in Octavian either. When she sees Octavian and Sophie together at the beer garden, she understands that sooner or later she will lose Octavian to someone else. Thus, another feeling gets added to her feelings of loneliness: the fear of eventually losing someone she loves. So, she becomes even more hopeless and depressed about the future.

**Illustrative moment:** Marschallin is despondent because of her realization that Octavian will leave her for Sophie. Octavian comes to visit Marschallin who looks melancholic. Marschallin says to him: 'Just go where your heart takes you - I'm not angry with you.' Octavian tries to deny the truth about Sophie and him: 'Just don't cry, my cousin...I can't see it...I love you so much...' However, Marschallin knows the truth and is in utter melancholy. Thus, Marschallin experiences many negative emotions throughout the film because of her loneliness, waning youth, and fear of losing Octavian. However, at the end of the film, we see a restoration of harmony nonetheless. The three couples (Marschall and Marschallin; Octavian and Sophie; Annina and Valzacchi) come together which ends the film in a quite positive tone.

**Anger** We see anger displayed in three characters in the film. These characters are Baron von Ochs, Octavian, and Marschall. Baron von Ochs displays anger when he talks to the notaries and Herr von Faninal about Sophie's dowry. He expects to be paid a large amount of money even though Herr von Faninal tries to explain that the amount the Baron demands from him is too much. However, Baron von Ochs is desperately greedy for money and does not refrain from fighting with others to get what he wants. In the end, he makes Herr von Faninal conform to his demands. Another character who becomes angry in a particular scene is Octavian. When Octavian presents the silver rose to Sophie, they fall in love with each other. However, Octavian is well aware that Baron von Ochs is determined to marry Sophie. So, Octavian gathers his courage and speaks up to the Baron: 'The lady doesn't want you... she can't love you and refuses to become yours.' When Baron von Ochs responds sarcastically and shows him the marriage certificate, Octavian gets furious. Thus, he fights the Baron in a duel and wounds him. We can thus see that while the motivation for the Baron's anger is greed, Octavian's motivation is to protect the well-being of Sophie. A third character expressing anger is Marschall. When he finds out about the affair between Octavian and his wife, he becomes furious and jealous. As a result, he challenges Octavian to a duel.

**Illustrative moment:** Valzacchi reveals to Marschall that Marschallin in the striped domino is rushing to Octavian in the pavilion. Annina devises a plan to save Octavian from Marschall's anger with the help of Sophie. A masked woman enters the pavilion in Marschallin's domino and throws herself into Octavian's arms. The jealous Marschall challenges Octavian to a duel as he believes that the masked woman with Octavian is Marschallin. Fortunately, this duel does not result in any injury or death as the masked Sophie throws herself between the crossed blades and reveals her face. In the end, Marschall realizes his mistake and lets go of Octavian. To conclude, we can say that Marschall's anger stems from his jealousy of his wife and his sadness about his wife's betrayal.



**Jealousy** Jealousy in the context of *Rosenkavalier* can be defined as feeling or showing a resentful suspicion that one's partner is attracted to or involved with someone else. The two characters who show jealousy are Marschallin and Marschall. Marschallin becomes jealous when she first sees Octavian and Sophie together at the beer garden. Her suspicions grow in the following days as she reflects on the time when she saw them together. Ultimately, she decides to organize a garden party to confirm her doubts. She secretly brings together Sophie and Octavian and hears when Octavian confesses his love for Sophie. The other character who exhibits jealousy is Marschall. He receives a mail from the high commission which informs him that his wife has not been loyal toward him and has an affair with another person. After finding out about this and gaining a victory on the battlefield, he swiftly returns home and challenges Octavian in a duel. Thus, we see that while both Marschall and Marschallin exhibit jealousy, the forms their jealousy takes differ from one another. Marschallin becomes hopeless, melancholic, and resigned whereas Marschall becomes angry and revengeful.

**Illustrative moment:** Marschallin reflects on the possibility of losing Octavian to Sophie. She sits alone in her bedroom, reflecting on her memories when she saw Octavian and Sophie together in the beer garden. She has a depressed, hopeless, and weary look on her face. She thinks to herself: 'Today or tomorrow—or at the latest any day, he's going to go away and leave me for someone else.' Then a child enters the room and sees her crying on the sofa. In this scene, we can



observe how jealousy has a close connection with other negative emotions like sadness and depression and also results in rumination and suspicion.

**Loss** In *Rosenkavalier*, there is no physical death of any character. However, there is emotional loss experienced by Marschallin. Emotional loss refers to the feelings of grief, sadness, or emptiness that arise from losing someone who holds emotional significance. This can normally include relationships, dreams, or aspects of one's identity. In the film, Marschallin fills the void in her life with Octavian who she perceives as 'a little sunshine'. However, Octavian's love for her is not stable and everlasting. Thus, when he meets Sophie, he develops stronger feelings for her and leaves Marschallin. This loss causes a deep depression and grief in Marschallin. Nevertheless, at the end of the film, we see Marschallin coming to terms with her reality. She even steps into the scene where Marschall and Octavian are fighting and puts an end to the duel. All in all, we can observe that Marschallin goes through various stages of suspicion, worry, sadness, and grief caused by Octavian's behavior. However, she manages to deal with these emotions and reestablish her relationship with Marschall at the end of the film.

*Illustrative moment:* Marschallin is depressed because she knows that she will lose Octavian to Sophie. Octavian comes to visit Marschallin who looks despondent and melancholic. Marschallin says to him: 'Just go where your heart takes you - I'm not angry with you.' Octavian tries to deny the truth about Sophie and him: 'Just don't cry, my cousin...I can't see it...I love you so much...' However, Marschallin knows the truth and is in utter melancholy. In this scene, we can see that Marschallin is experiencing emotional loss and grief. However, she is handling the situation maturely as she does not cling to Octavian and lets him go wherever his heart wishes to go. This shows us her maturity despite being in utter grief and despondency.



## FLAW

**Greed** Baron von Ochs is the character whose flaw is greed. In the first scene we meet the Baron, and we observe how he is greedy for wealth. He becomes exuberant after receiving the mail informing him of a possible match with Sophie because he knows that Sophie's wealthy father can bring the Baron back to his golden days. Thus, he tries to take as much dowry as he can from Herr von Faninal by pressuring and coercing him and the notaries. Baron von Ochs is not only greedy after money. He also shows lewd behavior, in particular toward the disguised maid Mariandel. Even though he is planning to marry Sophie, he does not refrain from rudely making advances toward Mariandel. However, his lechery brings his downfall as he is caught with Mariandel in Diana's pavilion and becomes the subject of ridicule in the eyes of society. Thus, his lechery causes him to lose Sophie and the possibility of greater wealth.

*Illustrative moment:* Baron von Lerchenau is greedy after Sophie's dowry. When Baron von Lerchenau arrives, Sophie has a disappointed look on her face. The Baron, on the other hand, looks enthusiastic and lively. He asks whether the notaries are present. We learn that Baron von Lerchenau expects one hundred thousand taler from Sophie: 'One hundred thousand is the least! A real lady brings almost as much dowry with her.' Herr von Faninal tries to make a compromise with the Baron as paying one hundred thousand taler would ruin him but the Baron does not accept anything less than his proposed amount. In the end, after fighting with the notaries and through intimidation, the Baron makes Herr von Faninal conform to his demands. This scene shows us how the Baron's greed manifests in his actions and rude behavior toward people.



## QUEST

**Explore** We can observe the theme of exploration exemplified through the character of Octavian. At the beginning of the film, we see him secretly entering Marschallin's room. His courage to be with Marschallin despite knowing that she is married shows us Octavian's adventurous personality. Later on, he disguises as a maid to avoid revealing his secret that he is Marschallin's lover. The idea of disguising

as a maid shows us his ingenuity and willingness to take risks. Moreover, he also gets chosen as Rosenkavalier by Marschallin which results in him falling in love with Sophie. Later, he stands up to the Baron to protect Sophie and challenges him to a duel. Approaching the end of the film, he prepares a plot to outdo the Baron where he disguises himself as Mariandel once again. At the end of the film, he enters another duel with Marschall. In all these scenes, we observe how Octavian engages with his environment and the people around him, and does whatever his heart desires. As a young person, he is not afraid to take risks and explore life in various ways.

*Illustrative moment:* Marschallin and Octavian secretly meet each other. We see Marschallin lying restlessly on her bed. Octavian, the Count of Rofrano, the young man from a noble family, is also still awake. Marschallin gets up and goes near the open window. When she looks outside, she and Octavian see each other. Octavian goes up the stairs and enters her room through the open window. At first, Marschallin tries to resist the allure of her young lover but soon they embrace each other since they are both infatuated with one another. In this scene, we witness Octavian's adventurous personality and courage to take risks in order to see Marschallin.



**Investigation** Annina, the lover of intrigue, leads an informal investigation into Marschallin's secret life. During Marschallin's reception, Octavian accidentally drops an object to the ground while hiding behind the curtain. Annina makes a clever guess that Marschallin's lover might be hiding behind the curtain. Later, when the maid Mariandel kisses Annina, she pulls out the cavalier cuff which confirms her suspicion that the maid is a man after all. Thus, she goes to the high commission to report her findings which gives her full authority to investigate the issue further. In the end, Marschall is informed by the high commission and learns about his wife's betrayal.

*Illustrative moment:* Annina goes to the high commission to report her doubts. The high commission appointed by Her Apostolic Majesty, the Empress Maria Theresia, and endowed with all powers has to watch over virtue and good morals. We see Annina among the members of the high commission and we also see the shot of the cavalier cuff which Annina took from the maid. She asks the members of the commission thus: 'Since when does Mrs. Marschallin's chambermaid wear cavalier cuffs?' Annina says to herself that only a man can kiss like that (referring to the maid in disguise). The commission members talk among each other and finally announce their judgment to Annina: 'The high commission appointed by Her Majesty the Empress authorizes you to carry out the most thorough investigation.' This scene shows us Annina's interest in people's secrets and investigative nature. She is a person who enjoys creating drama and chaos among people but surprisingly, she helps Octavian at the end of the film to save him from Marschall's righteous fury.



## RELATIONSHIP

**Marriage** Marriage is a crucial theme of the film. Marschall and Marschallin are a married couple in *Rosenkavalier*. However, their marriage is an unhappy and problematic one. Marschall spends most of his time on military duty, fighting against enemies of the country. Therefore, he barely sees his wife. Marschallin feels neglected, isolated, and lonely due to her husband's absence. However, she does not communicate her feelings and thoughts to Marschall. On the contrary, she withdraws, looks for outside sources of happiness, and betrays her husband. When every soldier receives mail from their beloved ones, it is only Marschall who does not get any letter from his wife. At the end of the film, their marriage is saved as Marschallin lets go of Octavian graciously and gets back together with Marschall.

*Illustrative moment:* Marschallin talks about her past and how she married Marschall. We are presented with a flashback to Marschallin's youth. While she plays with other girls in the monastery, a nun comes and takes her to her parents. Her parents say to the young girl: 'Prince Werdenberg has done us the honor of asking for your hand in marriage. He is a great military leader who has twice defeated the Prussian king in the field.' The young girl seems unwilling and unenthusiastic. However, she accepts her parents' wish: 'So I was married to a man I barely knew, who had only seen me once or twice.' However, on their wedding day, the young girl understands that her marriage is going to be a lonely one as Marschall explains to her: 'I lay everything I own at your feet. The house and servants are at your disposal. I have orders to go to war with the Imperial Army immediately.' Marschallin says to young Octavian: 'So I was left alone, without hope of happiness, until you stole through that window and into my heart.' Here, we see Marschallin's disappointment with her marriage and the feelings of loneliness that accompany her throughout her relationship with Marschall.



**Loyalty/Betrayal** Loyalty and betrayal are the main themes of *Rosenkavalier*. Throughout the film, we see how people's loyalties and feelings fluctuate which makes the viewers question whether people can be depended on at all. Marschallin is not loyal to her husband because she feels unhappy in her marriage and finds happiness and consolation in Octavian's love for her. However, Octavian is not stable in his feelings. When he meets Sophie, he sets aside his previous love for Marschallin and decides to marry Sophie. Thus, Octavian cannot be said to be a loyal person either. On the other hand, we see various virtues exemplified in the character of Marschall. Alongside being courageous and disciplined, Marschall is also a very loyal person in his marriage with Marschallin. We can infer from the film that he may not be fully aware of how his absence creates feelings of being neglected and unhappiness in Marschallin. Thus, his lack of awareness and inability to understand his wife's emotions constitute his personality weaknesses. Nevertheless, he is determined to protect their marriage as can be seen when he challenges Octavian to a duel to eliminate him as a rival.

*Illustrative moment:* Octavian and Marschallin talk about their feelings toward each other. Octavian talks to Marschallin: 'If only you knew what you mean to me? You are the embodiment of all love in the world.' Marschallin replies: 'And does he know what he means to me? Youth that I lost...a little sunshine that every person needs.' Octavian asks Marschallin to talk about her life. Marschallin begins to recount the tale of her life: 'Like every girl, I dreamed that one day a prince would come riding to the castle and carry me away...' In this scene, we witness the act of Marschallin's betrayal as she spends the night with Octavian. She does not seem to feel guilty about her act at all as she thinks of Octavian as providing 'a little sunshine' into her life.



**Love** In *Rosenkavalier*, the form of love we witness is romantic love. Romantic love is a complex emotional experience characterized by deep affection, passion, and attachment toward another person. It often involves a combination of emotional, physical, and psychological elements. Firstly, we see romantic love exemplified in the relationship between Marschallin and Octavian. Secondly, we see the love between Octavian and Sophie. These two examples of romantic love are similar to each other in terms of the attachment the involved persons feel toward one another. However, it must be noted that Octavian's feelings fluctuate as he sets aside his love for Marschallin and starts to pursue Sophie. This behavior makes us viewers question Octavian's stability and trustworthiness. Moreover, we see selfless love exemplified in the character of Marschallin. Selflessness in love refers to the ability to prioritize the needs, desires, and well-being of a loved one above one's own. In selfless love, there is a willingness to give up personal desires or comforts for the happiness of the loved one. In the film, even though Marschallin grieves for her lost love, she accepts the state of affairs eventually and lets Octavian go. Her ability to let go of Octavian thus shows us her maturity and selflessness. Another character who exemplifies love is Marschall as he is determined to protect his marriage despite being aware of Marschallin's disloyalty.

*Illustrative moment:* Octavian and Sophie confess their love for each other. Octavian says to Sophie: 'Allow me to tell him that you are not marrying him because I adore you and you love me.' Sophie says: 'I want to hide with you and not care what the world says.' Then the two lovers kiss each other. In this scene, we see romantic love exemplified between Sophie and Octavian.



## APPEARANCE

**Secrets** Marschallin's secret constitutes an important part of the film. She has a secret affair with young Octavian and tries to hide this from others. However, she cannot keep her secret for long as intrigue-lover Annina investigates the case further. Eventually, Marschallin's husband also learns about his wife's love affair, and all the secrets are brought into daylight.

*Illustrative moment:* Octavian has to hide behind a curtain to avoid being seen with Marschallin. We see people waiting in front of the chamber of Marschallin. In particular, Baron von Lerchenau who has come to Vienna after a long night journey, is in a hurry to see his cousin. However, in the chamber, Marschallin and Octavian are still together. Realizing the danger in the situation, Octavian hides behind the curtains in the room. In this scene, we see how both Marschallin and Octavian try to hide their secrets from people.



## PAST

**Transience** The theme of transience, referring to concepts like ephemerality and impermanence, constitutes the background of *Rosenkavalier*. The character who is most affected by the transience of earthly or material/physical existence is Marschallin herself. As she is isolated and unhappy in her marriage, she has time to reflect on her waning youth and getting older. Another event that reminds us of transience is seen in the changing feelings and emotions of Octavian. At first, he seems to be in love with Marschallin. However, his feelings change when he meets Sophie. This not only shows us Octavian's fickleness but also the transitory nature of human feelings.

*Illustrative moment:* Octavian and Marschallin talk about their feelings toward each other. Octavian talks to Marschallin: 'If only you knew what you mean to me? You are the embodiment of all love in the world.' Marschallin replies: 'And does he know what he means to me? Youth that I lost...a little sunshine that every person needs.' Octavian asks Marschallin to talk about her life. Marschallin begins to recount the tale of her life: 'Like every girl, I dreamed that one day a prince would come riding to the castle and carry me away...' In this scene, we see how Marschallin feels sadness about the youth she lost. Later, she tells Octavian about her past and how she married Marschall. As she looks through her memories, she is filled with melancholy about how she has not been able to live a fulfilling life despite living in comfort and luxury.



## REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS TO THE READERS AND VIEWERS

- 1) How do the characters of Marschallin and Octavian develop throughout the film given the circumstances they find themselves in and the evolving relations they have with the people around them such as Sophie and Marschall?
- 2) Do you think infidelity and betrayal in marriage or a relationship can ever be justified? If yes, under what circumstances? If not, why?
- 3) What is the importance of the theme of transience and waning youth? Why does Marschallin feel sadness and melancholy about her aging?
- 4) Do the female characters in *Rosenkavalier* challenge or conform to the expectations of their society?
- 5) How does Marschallin in *Rosenkavalier* show selflessness in her affection for Octavian, and how does her readiness to put his happiness before her own desires and attachment challenge conventional ideas of love and sacrifice?



- 6) How do your personal experiences with and/or views about love and relationships influence your understanding of the characters' journeys?
- 7) In what ways does Marschallin's focus on her relationships reveal the societal constraints placed on women in her time given that women cannot focus on other pursuits like studying, arts, and sciences which could potentially give them alternative opportunities to be fulfilled?