

***Rosenkavalier Suite, Op. 59***  
**Richard Strauss (1864–1949)**

Written: 1910 and 1944

Movements: One

Style: Romantic

Duration: 22 minutes

At the end of World War II, an American officer pulled up to a large house in the village of Garmisch to requisition it for the occupying troops. An old man of 80 came out. "I am Richard Strauss," he said. "I am the composer of *Der Rosenkavalier*. Please leave me alone." That one statement protected the old man and his house. An officer posted an "Off Limits" sign. But he certainly wasn't left alone, as many ordinary G.I.'s wanted to meet the famous composer.

Strauss composed many other works besides *Der Rosenkavalier*. There are his numerous tone poems that are an essential part of the orchestral repertoire: *Don Juan*; *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*; *Thus spake Zarathustra*; *A Hero's Life*. When Strauss exhausted all of the possibilities of the tone poem (and orchestral musicians!) he turned to opera, producing *Salome* and *Electra* within the space of just five years. Here, too, he stretched the limits of opera, shocking audiences with his audacious subjects and harmonies. After years of pushing the boundaries of music, Strauss made a sudden turn and produced an Opera modeled after Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*. In *Der Rosenkavalier*, Strauss's opulent writing and lilting waltz melodies have captivated audiences, from upper crust opera-goers to everyday G.I.s.

The plot of the opera involves an aging field marshal's wife, the Marschallin, who is carrying on an affair with a young count, Octavian. He is somehow drafted into the service of a Baron who is trying to woo a young woman, Sophie. Octavian's job is to present Sophie with the Baron's love-token, a silver rose. Of course, the two young people fall in love, leaving the two older characters bereft.

*Der Rosenkavalier* was a huge hit. In 1944, Strauss, with the help of the Polish conductor Artur Rodzinski, compiled several waltzes from the opera into a suite.

The suite begins with the orchestral introduction to the opera. The music then moves to the love scene between Octavian and the Marschallin. Octavian's "Rosenkavalier" music is presented, and then the duet between Sophie and Octavian. You will hear several waltzes associated with the Baron and then the touching music accompanying the Marschallin's realization that she has lost Octavian. Another love duet between Octavian and Sophie precedes more Baronial waltzes. The suite ends as it began.

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