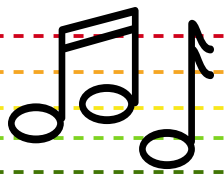


The Overture



Overture Noun (MUSIC)

1. a piece of music that is an introduction to a longer piece, especially an opera:
the overture to "The Magic Flute"
2. an introduction to something more substantial

The Overture in music was originally the instrumental introduction to a ballet, opera or oratorio in the 17th Century.

During the early Romantic era, composers such as Beethoven and Mendelssohn composed overtures which were independent, self-existing instrumental, programmatic works that came before genres such as the symphonic poem.

France, Italy, Germany & the UK were all involved in how the Overture developed over time



Elements from the opera are foreshadowed in the overture, following the reform ideology that the music and every other element on stage serves to enhance the plot.

17th Century

The idea of an instrumental opening to opera existed during the 17th century. More important, however, was the prologue, which was sung dialogue between characters which introduced the themes of the opera.

As a musical form, the French overture first appears in the court ballet and operatic overtures of Jean-Baptiste Lully.

In Italy, a distinct form called "overture" arose in the 1680s, and became established particularly through the operas of Alessandro Scarlatti, and spread throughout Europe.

Early 19th Century

In 19th-century opera the overture, *Vorspiel*, *Einleitung*, Introduction, or whatever else it may be called, is generally nothing more definite than that portion of the music which takes place before the curtain rises.

Late 19th century

In the 1850s the concert overture began to be supplanted by the symphonic poem, a form devised by Franz Liszt in several works that began as dramatic overtures. The distinction between the two genres was the freedom to mould the musical form according to external programmatic requirements

18th Century

Prior to the 18th century, the symphony and the overture were almost interchangeable, with overtures being extracted from operas to be stand-alone instrumental works, and symphonies were played before operas as overtures

With the reform of opera seria, the overture began to distinguish itself from the symphony, and composers began to link the content of overtures to their operas.



Concert Overture

Although by the end of the eighteenth century opera overtures were already beginning to be performed as separate items in the concert hall, the "concert overture", intended specifically as an individual concert piece without reference to stage performance and generally based on some literary theme, began to appear early in the Romantic era.