

Overture (from [French](#) *ouverture*, lit. "opening") is a [music instrumental](#) introduction to a [ballet](#), [opera](#), or [oratorio](#) in the 17th century.^[1] During the early [Romantic era](#), composers such as [Beethoven](#) and [Mendelssohn](#) composed overtures which were independent, self-existing, instrumental, programmatic works that foreshadowed genres such as the [symphonic poem](#). These were "at first undoubtedly intended to be played at the head of a programme".^[2]

L'Arlésienne is [incidental](#) [music](#) composed by [Georges Bizet](#) for [Alphonse Daudet's](#) [drama of the same name](#), usually translated as *The Girl from Arles*. It was first performed on 30 September 1872 at the [Théâtre du Vaudeville](#) in Paris.^[1] Bizet's original incidental music consists of 27 numbers for chorus and small orchestra, ranging from pieces of background music (mélodrames) only a few measures long, to [entr'actes](#).^[1] The score achieves powerful dramatic ends with the most economic of means.^[2] Still, the work received poor reviews in the wake of the unsuccessful premiere and is not often performed now in its original form, although recordings are available. However, key pieces of the incidental music, most often heard in the form of two [suites](#) for full orchestra, have become some of Bizet's most popular compositions.

Georges Bizet^[n 1] ([né](#) **Alexandre César Léopold Bizet**; 25 October 1838 – 3 June 1875) was a French composer of the [Romantic era](#). Best known for his operas in a career cut short by his early death, Bizet achieved few successes before his final work, *[Carmen](#)*, which has become one of the most popular and frequently performed works in the entire opera repertoire.