

The Shout-Out



The famous offstage trumpet call in Leonora Overture No. 3 had nothing to do with the opera, *Fidelio*, that it introduced. Rather, it was Beethoven's shout-out to the time he served in the French army that invaded Portugal in 1801 (cf. *War of the Oranges*/Pvt. Beethoven). Each day at dawn, a musician roused the bivouacked troops by playing Reveille on a modified bugle that had a range of eight octaves and 90-130 dB. And although many of his comrades begrudged the noisy wake-up call, Ludwig found it utterly soothing, an attribute that he tried to incorporate into the overture. Critics of the day were particularly impressed by the very realistic "emptying of the spit valve" motif that concludes the piece.