Putting the Devil in Hell
for narrator, oboe, DX7, piano and computer

Music by: Matthew Malsky
Text by: Giovanni Boccacio
from Tales from The Decameron
Translated by: Richard Aldington
Key:

The pacing of the narration should serve as a guide for instrumental cues. In one sense, the narrator is the conductor; the instruments should be responsive to the dramatic nature of the text. The text should be recited dramatically.

Symbols:

Standard notation can be played rubato but more or less in tempo ($\downarrow = 60$).

Noteheads without stems can be freely sustained

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gradually getting faster

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significant break

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Timing in boxes refer to section lengths

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Timing in parentheses refer to individual gestures
Dioneo had listened closely to the queen's story, and when it was over and only he remained to tell a story, he did not wait to be commanded, but smilingly began as follows:
Most gracious ladies, perhaps you have never heard how the devil is put into hell; and so, without departing far from the theme upon which you have all spoken today, I shall tell you about it. Perhaps when you have learned it, you also will be able to save your souls.
and you may also discover that although love prefers to dwell in gay palaces and lovely rooms rather than poor huts, yet he sometimes makes his power felt among thick woods and rugged mountains and desert caves. Whereby we may well perceive that all of us are subject to his power.
Now, to come to my story - in the city of Capsa in Barbary there lived a very rich man who possessed among other children a pretty and charming daughter, named Alibech. She was not a Christian, but she heard many Christians in her native town crying up the Christian Faith and service to God, and one day she asked one of them how a person could most effectively serve God.
The reply was that those best served God who fly furthest from the things of this world, like the hermits who had departed to the solitudes of the Thebaid Desert.
The girl was about fourteen and very simple minded. Urged by a mere childish enthusiasm and not by a well ordered desire, she secretly set out next morning quite alone, without saying a word to anyone, to find the Thebaid Desert.
Her enthusiasm lasted several days and enabled her with great fatigue to reach those solitudes. In the distance she saw a little hut with a holy man standing at its entrance. He was amazed to see her there, and asked her what she was seeking. She replied that by God's inspiration she was seeking to serve Him, and begged the hermit to show her the right way to do so.
But the holy man saw that she was young and pretty, and feared that if he kept her with him he might be tempted of the devil. So he praised her good intentions, gave her some roots and wild apples to eat and so water to drink and said:

"Daughter, not far from here dwells a holy man who is a far greater master of what you are seeking than I am: go to him."
And so he put her on the way. When she reached him, she was received with much the same words, and passing further on came to the cell of a young hermit named Rustico, to whom she made the same request as to the others. To test his spiritual strength, Rustico did not send her away, but took her into his cell. And when night came, he made her a bed of palm leaves and told her to sleep there.
Almost immediately after this, temptation began the struggle with spiritual strength, and the hermit found that he had greatly over-estimated his powers of resistance. After a few assaults of the demon he shrugged his shoulders and surrendered. Putting aside holy thoughts and prayers and macerations, he began to think of her beauty and youth, and then ponder how he should proceed with her like a dissolute man.
First of all he sounded her by certain questions, and discovered that she had never lain with a man and appears to be very simple minded. He then saw how he could bring her to his desire under the pretext of serving God. He began by eloquently showing how the devil is the enemy of the Lord God, and then gave her to understand that the service most pleasing to God is to put the devil back into hell, to which the Lord God has condemned him.
The girl asked how this was done, and Rustico replied:

"You shall soon know. Do what you see me do."

He then threw off the few clothes he had and remained stark naked, and the girl imitated him.
He kneeled down as if to pray and made her kneel exactly opposite him. As he gazed at her beauty, Rustico’s desire became so great that the resurrection of the flesh occurred. Alibech looked at it with amazement and said:

"Rustico, what is that thing I see sticking out in front of you which I haven’t got?"

"My daughter," said Rustico, "that is the devil I spoke of. Do you see him? He gives me so much trouble at this moment that I can scarcely endure him."
More Emphatically
"Praise be God! I see I am better off than you are, since I haven't such a devil."

"You speak truly," said Rustico, "but instead of this devil you have something else which I haven't."

Quietly
"What's that?" said Alibech.     

Loudly
"You've got hell,"
replied Rustico, "and I believe God sent you here for the salvation of my soul, because this devil gives me great trouble, and if you will take pity upon me and let me place this hood upon him and put him into hell, you will give me the greatest comfort and at the same time serve God and please Him, since, as you say, you came here for that purpose."

In all good faith the girl replied: "Father, since I have hell in me, let it be whenever you please."

Said Rustico: "Blessings upon you, my daughter. Let us put him in now so that he will afterwards depart from me."
So saying, he took the girl to one of their beds, and showed her how to lie so as to imprison the thing accursed of God.
The girl had never before put any devil into her hell and at first felt a little pain, and exclaimed to Rustico:

"O father! This devil must certainly be wicked and the enemy of God; for even when he is put back in hell he hurts it."

"Daughter," said Rustico, "it will not always be so."
To prevent this from happening, Rustico put it into hell six times, before he got off the bed, and so purged the devil's pride that he was glad to rest a little. Thereafter he returned often and the obedient girl was always glad to take him in; and the game began to give her pleasure, and she said to Rustico:

"I see that the good men of Capsa spoke the truth when they told me how sweet a thing is the service of God. I certainly do not remember that I ever did anything which gave me so much delight as I get from putting the devil into hell. I think that everyone is a fool who does anything but serve God."
Thus it happened that she would often go to Rustico, and say:

"Father, I came here to serve God and not to remain in idleness. Let us put the devil in hell."

And once as they were doing it, she said:

"Rustico, I don't know why the devil ever goes out of hell. If he liked to remain there as much as hell likes to receive and hold him, he would never leave it."

The girl's frequent invitations to Rustico and their mutual pleasures in the service of God so took the stuffing out of his doublet that he now felt chilly where another man would have been in a sweat. So he told the girl that the devil must not be chastened or put into hell except when pride made him lift his head. "And we," he said, "have so quelled his rage that he prays God to be left in peace."
And in this way he silenced the girl for a time. But when she found that Rustico no longer asked her to put the devil in hell, she said one day:

"Rustico, your devil may be chastened and give you no more trouble, but my hell is not. You should therefore quench the raging of my hell with your devil, as I helped you to quell the pride of your devil with my hell."

Rustico, who lived on nothing but roots and water, made a poor response to this invitation. He told her that many devils would be needed to soothe her hell, but that he would do what he could. In this way he satisfied her hell a few times, but so seldom that it was like throwing a bean in a lion's mouth. And the girl, who thought they were not serving God as much as she wanted, kept murmuring.
Now, while there was this debate between the excess of desire in Alibech's hell and the lack of potency in Rustico's devil, a fire broke out in Capsa, and burned Alibech's father with all his children and servants. So Alibech became heir to all his property. A young man named Neerbale, who had spent all his money in riotous living, heard that she was still alive and set out to find her, which he succeeded in doing before the Court took over her father's property as that of a man who had died without heirs.
To Rustico's great relief, but against her will, Neerbale brought her back to Capsa and married her, and together they inherited her large patrimony.

But before Neerbale had lain with her, certain ladies one day asked her how she had served God in the desert. She replied that her service was to put the devil in hell, and that Neerbale had committed a great sin by taking her away from such service. The ladies asked:

"And how do you put the devil in hell?"

Partly in words and partly by gestures, the girl told them. At this they laughed so much that they are still laughing, and said:

"Be not cast down, my child, they know how to do that here, and Neerbale will serve the Lord God with you in that way."

22a,
As they told it up and down the city, it passed into a proverb that the service most pleasing to God is to put the devil into hell. And this proverb crossed the seas and remains until this day.