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Conductor

Lon R. Young

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Conductor

I am Moses with this baton, dividing seas and urging fountains from stone.
Legions march and charge and halt at my command
and I have bruised the night with battle blast.

It is a slight thing to claim as scepter, this ash wood loosely held,
yet at its merest tapping the hosts fall silent.
A straight branch, staff of power, to stave off insurrection, to beat into submission
the proud, the lofty, the stiff-necked.

Power, too, is in my grasp to soothe, to coax, to quell the flames.
Sweet salve of milk and honey, manna for our ears.
It is true I've lashed with hot rebuke, though I would weep.
One must hold to strict conformity these children to their parts,
no countenance for the least rebellion. Eternity hangs on the point of this baton.

I lead my people through a score of trials, through cloud and fire.
I trace in air the raging flight of locusts, the thrash and flail of sea-pitched limbs,
the meanderings of Israel's erring sons.

A single step and I have climbed the mount, a vision before me,
I perceive the stretch of time, anticipate its changes.
One eternal round, past, present, future, *da capo, al fine* and back again.

Hear me. You have each his part, but through me flows part and whole, immutable:
Children, let yourselves be mastered.
Our fugue is not the flight of feet across a wilderness,
nor our hymn the idle thrumming through two scores.

Canaan is a pleasing sound, a concord of will and desire.

—Lon R. Young

This poem won third place in the BYU Studies 2011 poetry contest.