

**PRESS CONTACTS**

Gabriel Sakakeeny 415.503.6265, [gsakakeeny@sfc.edu](mailto:gsakakeeny@sfc.edu)  
Terry Fiala 415.503.6211, [tfiala@sfc.edu](mailto:tfiala@sfc.edu)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**San Francisco Conservatory of Music Announces  
2009 Highsmith Composition Competition Winner**

Conservatory alumnus Jeffrey Parola (M.M. composition, '05) has been named the winner of the 2009 Highsmith Composition Competition. His winning piece, *The Long Valley*, will be performed by the Conservatory Orchestra at its final concert on April 25, 2009

**SAN FRANCISCO, March 18, 2009**

Each year, Conservatory composition students and alumni are invited to submit orchestral works to a competition endowed by Jim Highsmith. The San Francisco Conservatory Orchestra then performs the winning composition.

James (Jim) Milton Highsmith was born and raised in Robersonville, North Carolina, where he developed a lifelong passion for drama, music and literature. Mr. Highsmith came to San Francisco in 1971 to teach English at Lone Mountain College, where he eventually served as department chair. Mr. Highsmith's interest in the Conservatory stemmed not only from his love of music, but also from his friendship with former Conservatory President Milton Salkind.

**EVENT INFORMATION:**

**WHO:** Jeffrey Parola, winner of the 2009 Highsmith Composition Competition of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

**WHAT:** Conservatory Orchestra concert, featuring a performance of Parola's winning composition, *The Long Valley*. Other programmed works are Previn *Sally Chisum Remembers Billy the Kid* with Erica Schuller, soprano; and Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique*.

**WHEN:** Saturday, April 25, 2009, 8:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concert Hall  
50 Oak Street, San Francisco

**TICKETS:** \$20 general admission; \$15 seniors, students, and *Friends of the Conservatory*

**INFO:** 415.503.6275 or <http://www.sfc.edu/calendar/calendar.aspx?performanceID=1950>  
[www.sfc.edu](http://www.sfc.edu)

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### About Jeffrey Parola

The music of California-based composer, Jeffrey Parola, draws inspiration from the Western classical canon, contemporary art music, jazz, and popular music. Parola's compositions communicate in a diversity of styles and musical syntaxes, and seek to speak to the ever-sophisticated ear of the modern listener.

His works have achieved success and garnered several awards throughout his youth, undergraduate, and graduate years. He received his B.A. in composition from the University of California, Los Angeles, and M.M. in composition from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he studied with David Conte.

Several of Parola's works have been performed and read by many individuals and ensembles, including: conductors - Peter Rutenberg, John Koza, Nicole Paiment, David Conte, Joseph Gregorio, Jonathan Velsaco, Vance George; choirs - Hartnell College Chamber Choir, Los Angeles Chamber Singers, Camerata Singers, SF Conservatory Chorus, Long Beach Poly High School Chamber Choir, Schola Cantorum San Francisco, Ateneo Chamber Singers, San Francisco State Chamber Singers; instrumental ensembles - Bay Brass, SFCM New Music Ensemble, Long Beach Poly High School Orchestra, SFCM Orchestra, SFCM Brass Players, Fireworks Ensemble; soloists - William Vendice and Christina Borgioli.

Parola has recently been appointed composer-in-residence for the New York City-based vocal ensemble, Choral Chameleon (Vince Peterson, director), for the 2009-10 season.



*High resolution photo available upon request*

### Program Notes

*The Long Valley* (2008)

by Jeffrey Parola

*"I remember my childhood names for grasses and secret flowers. I remember where a toad may live and what time the birds awaken in the summer – and what trees and seasons smelled like – how people looked and walked and smelled even. The memory of odors is very rich."*

In 1952, John Steinbeck penned the above passage within the first page of the monumental novel, *East of Eden*. Though the plotline runs parallel to the Genesis story, Steinbeck's ultimate intention for writing the novel was to paint a detailed image of California's Salinas Valley, Steinbeck's homeland, for his two young sons.

Just a couple of years ago, I stumbled across an attractive edition of the book at a bookstore, bought it, and read it for the very first time. Because I was born and raised in Salinas, I was immediately drawn in by the first chapter, where Steinbeck colorfully describes the sights, sounds, and smells of the Salinas Valley.

I experienced all of the things of which he spoke, the goods and the bads, the beautiful and the ugly; and my heart immediately welled up with nostalgia of memories sweet and sorrowful, conjured by images sketched by Steinbeck's unrestrained and poetic honesty.

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Consequently, the novel inspired a very personal, nostalgic orchestral work, entitled *The Long Valley*. This title, drawn from another literary work by Steinbeck, was chosen to keep focus on my perception of the Salinas Valley as inspired by *East of Eden*, while avoiding the titular literary weight of the work.

*The Long Valley* attempts to place at the center of Steinbeck's raw reflection my personal memories of the Salinas Valley. I dedicate *The Long Valley* to my mother and father, in gratitude

### **About the Conservatory**

The San Francisco Conservatory of Music is one of the world's most distinguished schools of Western musical culture. It is the oldest college of music in the American West and has earned an international reputation for producing musicians of the very highest caliber. Its better known graduates include Yehudi Menuhin, Isaac Stern, Jeffrey Kahane, Aaron Jay Kernis, among others.

The Conservatory offers its nearly 400 collegiate and graduate students fully accredited Bachelor's and Master's degree programs in all areas of study related to the creation and performance of music. Its Preparatory Division provides over 400 younger students the finest pre-collegiate music education available in the United States. The Conservatory's faculty and students give more than 400 public performances each year, most of which are offered free to the public.

Formerly located at 19th Avenue and Ortega Street in San Francisco's Sunset District, the Conservatory moved to its new home in the very heart of San Francisco's Civic Center in 2006. The new school is an architectural and acoustical masterwork for the Conservatory's second century. For more information or to view a schedule of concerts, please visit [www.sfcm.edu](http://www.sfcm.edu).

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