

# NEWS

*from Center Church on the Green in New Haven, United Church of Christ*

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## **Center Church on the Green Choir Member Wins National Opera Competition**

**NEW HAVEN, CT** (April 2008) – New Haven’s Center Church on the Green choir member Edward Parks, who is completing his Master of Music at Yale University, was recently named one of five \$15,000 winners in The Metropolitan Opera 2008 National Council Auditions in New York, NY. [*see attached photo of Parks*]

Parks, a 24-year-old baritone from Indiana, PA, has been a member of the Center Church choir for the past two years. Nearly 1,500 singers participated in this year’s National Council Auditions, which take place annually in 45 districts and 15 regions throughout the United States and Canada.

“Edward’s baritone adds a rich, emotional dimension to our choir each Sunday” said Sandra Olsen, pastor of Center Church, which is a registered New Haven Connecticut Landmark, and a congregation of the United Church of Christ. “For more than 370 years, this church has heard its share of exceptional music and we are most pleased and proud to have one of our own choir members recognized in a prestigious, national competition.”

In addition to Parks, the Center Church choir also includes two other Yale students, Adelaide Muir and Emily Righter. From 1895 to 1898, Center Church was the home of famous American composer, Charles Ives. He was the full-time organist of the church during his undergraduate years at Yale. He was mentored and influenced by the choirmaster, John Griggs.

“The audition process was quite involved for the competition but I am blessed because I love what I do so it was a good experience,” said Parks. “I began voice lessons at eight, although I

didn't know what type of singing I wanted to do then. My cousin gave me a CD of Luciano Pavarotti when I was 12 or 13 and I just fell in love with it.”

Hailing from the small town of Indiana, PA, which is known as the hometown of Jimmy Stewart and also the “Christmas Tree Capital of the World,” had its advantages for Parks.

“I did musical theater in high school because there weren't any operas I could do,” said Parks, who also sang for his church children's choir and cantered as well. “I had my first lead as Tevye in “Fiddler on the Roof” when I was a junior in high school. After that, I knew loved singing.”

Parks continued his love of music at Oberlin Conservatory as Count Almaviva in “Le Nozze di Figaro” and Belcore in “L'Elisir d'Amore.” While at Yale, Parks has performed as Marcello in “La Bohème,” Jupiter in “Orphée au Enfers,” and Eisenstein in “Die Fledermaus.” In May, he will sing as the Lieutenant/Judge in Davis's “Amistad” at Charleston's Spoleto Festival and this summer he will sing as Snooks in Bolcom's “A Wedding” at the Music Academy of The West where he has previously been heard as Don Prudenziio in “Il Viaggio a Reims.” After his graduation this spring, Parks will join the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, a program for up to three years that assists talented young singers through training and performance opportunities at the Met.

Center Church on the Green, a congregation of the United Church of Christ (UCC), has been located on the New Haven Green for the past 370 years and is a registered New Haven Connecticut Landmark. The Church is well known for its crypt, which is built over a small portion of the town's burial ground and includes 137 famous gravestones of New Haven 's founders and earliest citizens dating back to 1687. The Church is actively involved in its community, offering space and assistance to the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen, as well as involved in Columbus House, Hill Health Center's The Baby's Closet, and Christian Community Action & AIDS Interfaith Network. For more information about the church or services, visit [NewHavenCenterChurch.org](http://NewHavenCenterChurch.org) or call 203-787-0121.