



Belmont Abbey
COLLEGE
*That in all things God
may be glorified*

For Immediate Release

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Belmont Abbey College Awards Simon Donoghue Lifetime Achievement Award

Belmont, N.C. (May 1, 2026) – During its third annual Celebration of the Arts Dinner and Reception, Belmont Abbey College awarded Simon Donoghue a Lifetime Achievement Award for his decades of dedication and service to the college and the broader performing arts community.

Simon Donoghue served for 48 years as Director of the Abbey Players, one of the longest-running theatre troupes in North Carolina, with 143 consecutive seasons. In addition to his considerable gifts as playwright, actor, and director, Simon is an exceptional teacher and mentor, and his impact on the last fifty years of Abbey Players and Belmont Abbey students cannot be overstated.

Throughout his tenure, Simon built a substantial and thriving campus community and developed collaborative relationships with the local performing arts. Under his faithful leadership, the Abbey Players brought together not only students, faculty, staff, and monks, but also local professionals, enriching the student experience and expanding the network of community theatre in the Carolinas. He also played a vital role in both the full renovation of the Haid Theatre in 1987 and the establishment of the performing arts as a recognized academic department, with majors, minors, and a premier scholarship named for Fr. John Oetgen.

As Christopher Donoghue, Simon's son and current Director of the Abbey Players, notes, "For almost one third of the existence of the Abbey Players, he was at the helm. My father is the reason the Performing Arts Department exists at Belmont Abbey. We all benefit from his legacy."

Kristin Hayes, Chair of the Performing Arts Department, adds, "We are thrilled to honor Simon Donoghue with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Through his dedication and hard work, the Performing Arts Department at Belmont Abbey College was born. He has impacted the lives of so many Abbey students, and people throughout the Gaston community and beyond. I am so grateful we get the chance to honor his legacy!"

"In Simon's amazing forty-eight years as Director of the Abbey Players," writes Abbot Placid Solari, OSB, "he not only enriched the artistic and cultural life of our college, but equally as important he served as mentor, counselor and director to generations of Abbey players whose college careers were immeasurably enriched by his guidance."

The performing arts have been a vital part of Belmont Abbey culture since Abbot Leo Haid, himself an accomplished playwright, formed the Abbey Players in 1883. Mindful of this legacy and of the ways that art and theatre bring our campus together, the college is profoundly grateful for Simon Donoghue's years of selfless dedication and arts leadership, through which the Abbey Players and the Performing Arts Department have grown and flourished.

To learn more about the Abbey Players and the performing arts at Belmont Abbey College, visit <https://belmontabbeycollege.edu/campus-life/performing-arts/>.

About Belmont Abbey College: Founded in 1876, Belmont Abbey College is a private, Catholic baccalaureate and liberal arts institution. Our mission is to educate students in the liberal arts and sciences so that in all things God may be glorified. Guided by the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Benedictine spirit of prayer and learning, we welcome a diverse body of students and provide them with an education that will enable them to lead lives of integrity, to succeed professionally, to become responsible citizens, and to be a blessing to themselves and to others. Our beautiful and historic campus is conveniently located just 10 miles west of Charlotte, N.C., and is currently home to more than 1500 students. For more information, visit <https://belmontabbeycollege.edu/>.