



**Belmont Abbey**  
COLLEGE

*That in all things God  
may be glorified*

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Belmont Abbey College Dedicates The Simon & Debbie Donoghue Theatre**

**Belmont, N.C. (October 5th, 2026)** – Belmont Abbey College has renamed its Haid Theatre as The Simon & Debbie Donoghue Theatre, honoring the legendary director of the Abbey Players and member of the college community for nearly 50 years. The celebration, held in the college's 150th anniversary year on October 3rd, also unveiled the theatre's newly refurbished stage. Alumni, students, faculty, and friends of the college gathered to commemorate the Donoghues' legacy and inaugurate a new era for Belmont Abbey College Performing Arts.

Simon Donoghue served for 48 years as Director of the Abbey Players, one of the longest-running theatre troupes in North Carolina, which has had 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. The theatre's new name also recognizes his wife, Debbie Donoghue, his longtime behind-the-scenes partner, whose support has helped sustain the Abbey Players for decades.

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, minors, and a premier scholarship named for Fr. John Oetgen.

"For nearly half a century, Simon has enriched the artistic and cultural life of this college and served as a mentor, counselor, and director to generations of students," said Abbot Placid Solari, O.S.B., Chancellor of Belmont Abbey College. "As Belmont Abbey celebrates 150 years, it is fitting that the stage where he formed so many young people will carry his name, and Debbie's, for generations to come."

"Simon built the foundation the Performing Arts Department stands on today," said Kristin Hayes, Chair of the Performing Arts Department. "He has impacted the lives of so many Abbey students and people throughout the Gaston community and beyond. Dedicating this theatre to Simon and Debbie, with a renewed stage ready for the next generation, celebrates everything he started."

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/>.