

Donor Impact Update Real Stories. Real Impact.



“I CAN NO OTHER ANSWER MAKE BUT THANKS,
AND THANKS; AND EVER-OFT GOOD TURNS...”



The Cast of
TWELFTH NIGHT, 2002

Photo not credited



Gregory Jon Phelps as Sir Andrew Aguechee
TWELFTH NIGHT, 2008

Photo by Tommy Thompson



René Thornton Jr. as Malvolio
TWELFTH NIGHT, 2016

Photo by Lindsey Walters



Angelique Archer as Olivia,
& Summer England as Viola
TWELFTH NIGHT, 2026

Photo by Madison Patterson

TWELFTH NIGHT, ACT 3 SCENE 3

To all our donors, sponsors, and foundation partners: Thank you for believing in the American Shakespeare Center — for helping us build a place where art, story, and community thrive.



The Mary Morton
Parsons Foundation



SCAN TO SEE
OUR DONOR
HONOR ROLL

YOU KEEP OUR PLAYHOUSE BRIGHT

For over a decade, I've seen this place grow in so many ways, but what's never changed is the heart: the people. **Friends, like you, whose love for this theatre is overflowing.**

Friends, like Linda and Blake Freeman, whose shared love of Shakespeare has them attending ASC's seasonal Shakespeare performance, returning together year after year, and even coming to our No Kidding Shakespeare Camp.

Campers, like Analise T., an up-and-coming artist and theatermaker who found her voice at ASC's Theatre Camp and made an artistic home here at the Blackfriars, where she can continue to hone her craft and passion for Shakespeare.

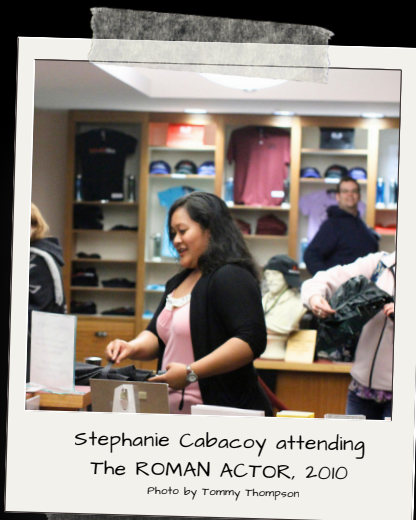
And dreamers, like Preston Manning, the Playhouse's first Board Chair, whose enthusiasm and constant belief in the ASC paved the way to build the Blackfriars Playhouse, his legacy lives on in "the music of the spheres," which combines the things he loved most: Shakespeare and music.

For the past 25 years, the Blackfriars Playhouse has been a communal gathering place not only for the city of Staunton but also for people across the country and even from around the globe. As Celia says in *As You Like It*: **"I like this place, And willingly could waste my time in it."** You've helped us build a community in shared light.

Thank you for helping us keep our Playhouse bright.

Stephanie Cabacoy

Director of Marketing & Development,
Head of Patron Loyalty



FROM 1ST DATE TO 16 YEARS & COUNTING

Blake and I had our **first date** on January 8, 2010, to see ASC's *Twelfth Night*.

Since 2003, I had escorted numerous high school students to the productions in Staunton, and Blake had minored in drama in college, so it made perfect sense that we should **drive from Richmond to see this great comedy by Shakespeare**. That date worked out so well that we were married on June 25, 2011.

However, I had already made plans to attend No Kidding Shakespeare Camp for adults, so on Monday, June 27, I left in the early morning for ASC as Blake waved goodbye to his new wife.

A few years later, both of us enjoyed No Kidding Shakespeare Camp for adults. It has been **an immense pleasure to continue our sixteen-year relationship with ASC** and to introduce friends and family to this invaluable resource that lives in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley.

Linda Freeman

Retired English Teacher & Patron since 2004



Miriam Donald Burrows as Viola in
TWELFTH NIGHT, 2010
Photo by Tommy Thompson



Linda & Blake Freeman at
TWELFTH NIGHT, 2026
Photo by Kathy Kearschner



**Welcomed over 4,671
1st time visitors in 2025**



**Hosted 6,098 students
for matinees in 2025**



**Granted \$22,784 in
aid to students in 2025**



"As always, the energy, depth, creativity, and constantly fresh interpretation of Shakespeare's texts by a team he would have been proud to hire." - ASC Patron

FROM CAMPER TO DRAMATURG



Granted over \$15,000
for ASC Theatre Camp
scholarships in 2025



Hosted 32 campers at
MBU who performed
The War of the Roses

When COVID shut down the rest of the world, it opened up a brand new path in my life. In March of 2020, my field trip to the Alabama Shakespeare Festival was cancelled. I was devastated. Soon after, my mom found the ASC's online education courses.

My first class was on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and I fell in love, soon signing up for that summer's SHX Camp, an online version of ASC Theatre Camp. By the next summer, I was packing up to spend a month in Virginia, 500 miles from my home, working on a **Campers' Renaissance production of *Henry V***.

Those four weeks completely changed the trajectory of my life. Not only was it the remarkable people at the ASC who helped me on this path, it was also the **donors who provided initial scholarships for me to attend camp** in 2020 and 2021, making it impossible to imagine what my life would even look like without the ASC.

Since arriving as a freshman at MBU, I have spent 4 years assisting the ASC's Drama Club, becoming the first undergraduate presenter at the Blackfriars Conference, writing an award-nominated thesis on early modern women playwrights, and **participating in the inaugural dramaturgy fellowship program for *A Bold Stroke for a Husband***.

But it's not only the achievements that the ASC has brought me. I've made lifelong friends, mentors, and collaborators. **The ASC gave me the courage to move far outside of my Alabama bubble.**

With the ASC, I gained the confidence to take on new challenges and opportunities that have come my way.

Analise Toone

Dramaturgy Intern '26 & Former ASC Camper



Analise Toone presenting at the
Blackfriars Conference, 2023
Photo by October Grace Media



Analise Toone as Boy
HENRY V, 2021
Photo by Lindsay Walters

STARS & STRINGS

Every Pre-Show and Intermission features the same group of stars, no matter the season: **the ASC's instruments**. Our stars include wind instruments as small as a harmonica, string instruments like a mandolin, guitar, our mighty Upright Bass (affectionately named Bruce), and our beautiful 1911 Upright Steinway Piano donated by the Mannarino Family.

These instruments **build the world of the play alongside the actors**, establishing tone and atmosphere that transport you to the lyrical city of Illyria, the moors near Baskerville Hall, the Dickensian city of London, or even Windsor Great Park.

Just as our actors warm up, stretch, and take masterclasses, our instruments need to be cared for in the same way, with general upkeep and tuning.

Your generosity helps us keep our **instruments in working order so they can perform 8 shows a week**.

Thank you for keeping these stars singing and strings playing under the warmth of the shared light.

Hailey Pearce

Fundraising & Development Manager



Chris Seiler, Pete Sheldon
& Rohan Melomo in rehearsal for
A CHRISTMAS CAROL, 2025
Photo by Madison Patterson



Isabel Lee Roden as Feste
TWELFTH NIGHT, 2026
Photo by Madison Patterson



Hailey Pearce, Fundraising & Development
Manager with Bruce the bass.
Photo by Madison Patterson



Over 100+ Instruments
in the Blackfriars
Playhouse



Funded over \$4,200
in 2025 for instrument
repairs & services



63 songs in 2025
5,300 minutes of music
across 212 performances

Casting Call:

If you want to sponsor a new star, email us at
development@americanshakespearecenter.com

EVERYONE LOVES PRES

When the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express started raising money toward the construction of a Re-creation of Shakespeare's indoor playhouse, our fundraising consultants urged that we approach Dr. Preston Manning and ask him to be our new board chair because "Everyone in Staunton loves Pres."

How right they were, and I soon found that visiting a potential donor with Pres Manning by my side was the equivalent of bringing to the table a perfect credit score. In less than a year we were able to raise the \$2.7 million required to construct what is now a landmark, not only for the city of Staunton but for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Fittingly, twenty-five years ago this coming September, it was Pres who completed the facade and who cut the ceremonial ribbon, opening up the Blackfriars Playhouse to the world.

Those of you who knew Pres understand why his innate kindness and good humor, his commitment to the community, and his love of the arts made him the perfect ambassador for what we wanted to be.



The Ribbon Cutting of
The Blackfriars Playhouse Opening, 2001

Photo not credited

From Left to Right:

Dudley Flanders, Jim Warren, Preston Manning, Cynthia Tyson, & Ralph Alan Cohen.

For the rest of his life, he stayed engaged with and generous to the ASC. When he passed away in the winter of 2025, his wife, Jane, and his family continued that generosity by asking that gifts in his memory go to the ASC.

In recognition of Pres's special place in the company's history, former Board Chairs have joined me in honoring Pres by making additional donations beyond our usual contributions.

Pres's memory lives on in the Playhouse he helped to build, in the memory of everyone who knew and loved him, and in the impact that those who donated in his honor have made on the place he loved.

We invite you to join us on September 19th to honor both Pres and the 25th anniversary of the Playhouse he helped build.

With Deep Gratitude,



Ralph Alan Cohen

Co-Founder & Senior Advisor



Preston Manning
& Vanessa Morosco, 2024
Photo by October Grace Media



Preston at the
Staunton Groundbreaking, 2000
Photo not credited



Ralph Alan Cohen & Jim Warren at the
groundbreaking of the Playhouse, 2000
Photo not credited



ASC's 30th anniversary celebration Gala
Preston C. Manning Jr. & Jane Manning
at the Blackfriars Playhouse, 2018
Photo by Lisa Mims

25 YEARS OF THE BLACKFRIARS PLAYHOUSE



Thomas K. McLaughlin Jr., architect
for The Blackfriars Playhouse, 2001

Photo by Clement Britt



Dame Judi Dench & Dr. Ralph Alan Cohen
at the Blackfriars Playhouse, 2004

Photo not credited



René Thornton Jr. as Oliver
& Susan Heyward as Celia in
AS YOU LIKE IT, 2006

Photo by Tommy Thompson



Christopher Seiler as Owen Glendower
in HENRY IV PART I, 2009

Photo by Tommy Thompson



Sarah Fallon as Queen Katherine
of Aragon in HENRY VIII, 2013

Photo by Lauren D. Rogers



Ronald Roman-Melendez in
OUR TOWN, 2017

Photo by Tommy Thompson



Kenn Hopkins Jr. as Scrooge
in A CHRISTMAS CAROL, 2023

Photo by October Grace Media



ASC Theatre Camp, 2025
WAR OF THE ROSES

Photo by Lindsey Walters

YOU MAKE THE PLAYHOUSE SHINE

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Blackfriars Playhouse, we are celebrating more than a building or a milestone. We are celebrating the power of people coming together. In shared light, actors and audiences come together. We see one another. We listen to one another. We imagine together. And in that simple act, theatre becomes more than performance; it becomes a connection.

Our theatre holds the memories of past shows, filled with laughter, heartbreak, and joy. Every show has a unique community of people learning and feeling in moments we create together. This collective imagination extends far beyond the Playhouse walls. It creates the groundwork for lasting change within our community: a community that built the Playhouse and laid the foundation for future artists and theatregoers to thrive.

This is a community that continues to grow thanks to our patrons: friends like Ellen Brock and Joe Borzelleca, who provide scholarships for students to experience Shakespeare; dreamers like Lynn Rainville, whose support is expanding our ASL performances and making our theatre more accessible; and partners like the Mary Morton Parsons Foundation, who are helping make the Playhouse safer through added handrails and improved ADA access for wheelchair users.

These friends, dreamers, and community members help the ASC carry Shakespeare and theatre forward for the next generation. As I enter my third year as the Executive Artistic Director here, I feel grateful not only for the shared light of the Playhouse, but for the many people who continue to build this theatre and this community, one candle at a time.

Thank you,

Vanessa Morosco
Executive Artistic Director



Anniversary Celebration



**YEARS OF THE
BLACKFRIARS
PLAYHOUSE**

Save the Date

SEPTEMBER 19, 2026

AMERICAN
SHAKESPEARE
CENTER



20 S. New Street
Fourth Floor
Staunton, VA 24401