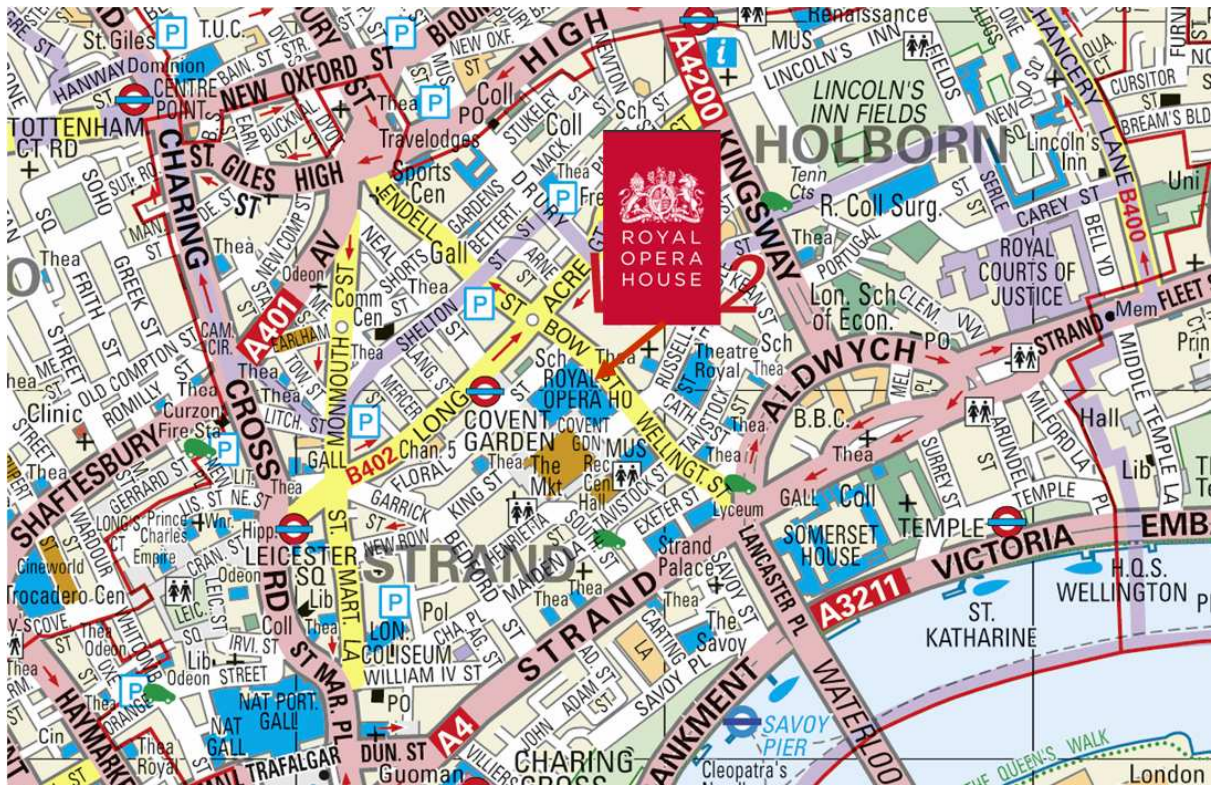




# City of Westminster

## Royal Opera House



The **Royal Opera House** is an opera house and major performing arts venue in Covent Garden, central London. The large building is often referred to as simply "Covent Garden", after a previous use of the site of the opera house's original construction in 1732. It is the home of The Royal Opera, The Royal Ballet, and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House. Originally called the Theatre Royal, it served primarily as a playhouse for the first hundred years of its history. In 1734, the first ballet was presented. A year later, Handel's first season of operas began. Many of his operas and oratorios were specifically written for Covent Garden and had their premieres there.



The current building is the third theatre on the site following disastrous fires in 1808 and 1857. The façade, foyer, and auditorium date from 1858, but almost every other element of the present complex dates from an extensive reconstruction in the 1990s. The Royal Opera House seats 2,256 people and consists of four tiers of boxes and balconies and the amphitheatre gallery. The proscenium is 12.20 m wide and 14.80 m high.

## **Paul Hamlyn Hall**

The Paul Hamlyn Hall is a large iron and glass structure adjacent to, and with direct access to, the main opera house building. Historically, it formed part of the old Covent Garden flower market, and is still commonly known as the 'floral hall', but it was absorbed into the Royal Opera House complex during the 90s redevelopment. The hall now acts as the atrium and main public area of the opera house, with a champagne bar, restaurant and other hospitality services, and also providing access to the main auditorium at all levels.



The redevelopment of the Floral Hall was originally made possible with a pledge of £10m from the philanthropist Alberto Vilar and for a number of years, it was known as the Vilar Floral Hall; however Vilar failed to make good his pledge. As a result, the name was changed in September 2005 to the Paul Hamlyn Hall, after the opera house received a donation of £10m from the estate of Paul Hamlyn, towards its education and development programmes.

As well as acting as a main public area for performances in the main auditorium, the Paul Hamlyn Hall is also used for hosting a number of events, including private functions, dances, exhibitions, concerts, and workshops

Royal Opera House public areas are generally open 10am–3.30pm.