

PRESS RELEASE

**STARS OF STAGE AND SCREEN, LED BY HOLLYWOOD AND WEST END STAR
HAYLEY ATWELL, SWITCH ON THE COVENT GARDEN CHRISTMAS LIGHTS
DURING “THE THEATRE OF CHRISTMAS” FESTIVE CELEBRATION**

12TH NOVEMBER 2025



- **Hayley Atwell**, Hollywood and West End star, tonight switched on Covent Garden’s 2025 Christmas Lights, kickstarting the destination’s seven-week festive programme
- Stars from the stage including **Celia Imrie**, **Sir Stephen Fry**, **Sir Derek Jacobi**, **Dame Darcey Bussell**, **Matt Henry MBE**, **Stephen Mangan** took to the stage for the switch on moment
- Other VIP names from the world of theatre joined in on the celebrations including **Dame Arlene Phillips**, **Christina Bianco** and others.
- **Pandora Christie** and **Anna Whitehouse**, from Heart FM, hosted the extravaganza, with spectacular performances from **Disney’s The Lion King** and **Hercules** as well as **Cabaret**, and **London International Gospel Choir**
- This year’s world-famous event raises funds for Covent Garden’s charity partner **Acting for Others**
- A night filled with festive surprises, shopping and dining experiences, the audience in their thousands joined in the spirit of the festive season, in one of the world’s most iconic destinations

Covent Garden officially kicked off its festive season with its annual switch on extravaganza, as Hollywood and West End Actress, **Hayley Atwell**, turned on the Christmas lights, alongside British stars of screen and stage. “**The Theatre of Christmas**” themed celebration played homage to Covent Garden long being the home of theatre in London, with ambassadors for **Acting For Others**, Covent Garden’s charity partner, joining the festivities to support and fundraise for the theatre industry.

Taking place on the balcony of Covent Garden's historic Market Building, this year's Theatre of Christmas celebration began with **Sir Stephen Fry** opening the proceedings. Hosted by **Pandora Christie** and **Anna Whitehouse**, a cast of formidable legends then took to the stage for a show-stopping evening of festive celebrations. **Celia Imrie** spoke about the collaboration with Acting for Others before inviting **Hayley Atwell** to commence the countdown. Dressed in Erdem and L'Atelier Nawbar fine jewellery with shoes from Aquazzura, the famed Hollywood actress was joined by other iconic West End performers, including **Sir Derek Jacobi**, **Dame Darcey Bussell**, **Matt Henry MBE** and more, for the switch on moment to push the all-important button that illuminated Covent Garden's Market Building, the magnificent 55ft Christmas tree and 300,000 LED lights throughout the neighbourhood. The crowd then joined in a spirited rendition of Brenda Lee's 1958 fitting Christmas classic, Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree, marking the official start of Covent Garden's seven-week festive programme and the beginning of holiday season.

Hayley Atwell said: *"As someone whose life has been shaped by the magic of theatre, it's a joy to help switch on Covent Garden's Christmas Lights. I have so many special memories of time spent in the neighbourhood over the years and there's truly nowhere like Covent Garden at Christmas."*

The evening featured spectacular live performances from **Disney's The Lion King and Hercules**, as well as **Cabaret**, captivating the crowds gathered across the Piazza, with **Marina Tavolieri**, performing as Sally Bowles with her rendition of "Maybe This Time". Marking 26 years in the West End this year, **Disney's The Lion King** performed iconic tracks from the award-winning production - including "Circle of Life", "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" and "He Lives in You". They were followed by Disney's new hit musical **Hercules** as the cast performed underworld-rocking tunes "Zero to Hero" and "Go the Distance".

As the heart of London's theatreland, Covent Garden is proud to be raising funds for Acting for Others, paying tribute to the performers, creators, and craftspeople who bring the magic of theatre, and the festive season, to life.

Celia Imrie said: *"As the lights come on tonight, it feels a bit like the curtain rising on the best show in town. And what a joy that we're doing it in support of Acting for Others, helping those who make the magic of theatre possible all year round."*

Sir Stephen Fry commented: *"What an unforgettable evening it was, with live entertainment, surprise performances, and festive magic as the beating heart of London's theatreland, Covent Garden, switched on its iconic Christmas lights. The air was simply brimming and frothing with anticipation as the glittering, twinkling theatre of Christmas came alive."*

The switch-on moment marks Covent Garden's transition into the ultimate Christmas destination. The historic Market Building is illuminated, adorned with 40 gigantic gold bells with bows, 12 giant red baubles and 8 spinning mirror balls, with over 29 miles of gold leaf and 275 kilos of glitter suspended in the air. The famous 55-foot handpicked Christmas Tree sparkles and an additional 150,000 LED lights cascading through the streets of Seven Dials and suspended over beloved Neal's Yard.

Catherine Riccomini, Director of Marketing and Communications at Shaftesbury Capital, shared: *"Covent Garden has always been a place where magic and community come together, and tonight captures both beautifully. We're so proud to support Acting for Others and to celebrate the spirit of giving that makes this season truly special."*

The seven-week festive programme spans live performances, magical events, exclusive pop-ups, world-famous decorations and unforgettable shopping moments, alongside drinking and dining experiences, for an unmatched Christmas line-up, reimagined for today's audience. Throughout the Piazza, Market Building, Seven Dials, and surrounding streets, there's festivities for all, making Covent Garden the place to experience The Theatre of Christmas this season.

-Ends-

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*For all media enquiries, request for interviews or images, please contact The Beacon PR:
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Notes to Editors

About Shaftesbury Capital PLC

Shaftesbury Capital PLC ("Shaftesbury Capital") is the leading central London mixed-use REIT and is a constituent of the FTSE-250 Index. Our property portfolio under management, valued at £5.2 billion, extends to 2.7 million square feet of lettable space across the most vibrant areas of London's West End. With a diverse mix of shops, restaurants, cafés, bars, residential apartments and offices, our destinations include the high footfall, thriving neighbourhoods of Covent Garden, Carnaby, Soho and Chinatown. Our properties are close to the main West End Underground stations and transport hubs for the Elizabeth Line. Shaftesbury Capital shares are listed on the London Stock Exchange ("LSE") (primary) and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange ("JSE") (secondary) and the A2X (secondary).

www.shaftesburycapital.com

Our purpose

Investing to create thriving destinations in London's West End where people enjoy visiting, working, and living.

Our values

We have a set of values that are fundamental to our behaviour, decision making and the delivery both of our purpose and strategy: Act with integrity; Take a creative approach; Listen and collaborate; Take a responsible, long-term view; and Make a difference.

About Covent Garden

Covent Garden is a world-class global destination in the heart of the West End, including the iconic Piazza, Market Building and surrounding streets, together with Seven Dials. The portfolio is home to over 200 retail stores including global flagships, British and independent brands as well as 200 restaurants, bars and cafes.

www.coventgarden.london

About Acting for Others

Founded in the 1960's by Laurence Olivier, Noël Coward and Richard Attenborough, the charity Acting for Others, of which Dame Judi Dench is President, operates a network of 14 member charities that provide financial and emotional support to those in times of need who have contributed to the workings of the theatre and the entertainment professions, whether they are backstage, on stage, front of house, or creatives. This partnership pays tribute to the performers, creators, and craftspeople who bring the magic of theatre, and the festive season, to life. Donation collections will be made on the Covent Garden Christmas lights switch-on night and across the neighbourhood every Thursday.