

## COVENT GARDEN CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF THE ROYAL BALLET SCHOOL WITH A SUMMER-LONG CULTURAL TAKEOVER

21<sup>st</sup> May 2026

- Covent Garden partners with The Royal Ballet School this summer to honour the institution's centenary year, through a Piazza-wide cultural takeover inspired by 100 years of ballet
- Launching from 22<sup>nd</sup> June, the programme will transform Covent Garden with **live participation, screenings and large-scale installations**
- **For the very first time, The Royal Ballet School will open full-length ballet classes and performance excerpts to the public**, screened free to watch on the Piazza, no booking required
- A major ballet inspired aerial installation will be unveiled within Covent Garden's historic Market building later this summer as part of the centenary celebrations
- The collaboration celebrates Covent Garden's long-standing connection to ballet and performance, home to generations of The Royal Ballet School students alongside the Royal Opera House, home of The Royal Ballet and Opera

Covent Garden and The Royal Ballet School will come together this summer for a landmark Piazza takeover marking the School's centenary year, transforming one of London's most iconic public spaces into an open-air celebration of ballet, performance and creativity.

### An open-air celebration of ballet in Covent Garden

Launching from 22<sup>nd</sup> June, the six-day activation will transform the iconic Piazza into an immersive hub of dance and creativity. Inspired by the School's 100-year legacy, the takeover will feature daily screenings of students in class, on stage and in student choreography showcases, live public participation, open-air film screenings and interactive experiences. For the very first time, The Royal Ballet School will give public access to full length classes, all screened for free on Covent Garden's Big Screen.

Founded in 1926 by Dame Ninette de Valois, The Royal Ballet School has shaped generations of world class dancers and remains at the forefront of shaping the next century of classical ballet. With the Upper School located in the heart of Covent Garden alongside the **Royal Opera House**, home of The Royal Ballet and Opera, the School has been a cornerstone of the wider Covent Garden community for the last 23 years, playing a defining role in the neighbourhood's cultural identity and artistic heritage.

Alongside the live programme, visitors will be able to enjoy a curated series of dance-inspired films screened across the Piazza, including Billy Elliot the Musical, Center Stage, An American in Paris, Save the Last Dance, Step Up and Ballerina.

### Landmark installations in Covent Garden

The celebration will feature a new sculpture created by former English National Ballet dancer and artist Amber Hunt. The 'Strength and Grace Butterfly', crafted from pointe shoes previously worn by Amber and students from the School, will be unveiled on Covent Garden's North Piazza, creating a striking visual tribute to ballet heritage. Positioned with sight lines towards the Royal Opera House, the sculpture will create a symbolic connection between The Royal Ballet School's past, present and future.

The celebration will also extend above the Piazza with a major ballet-inspired aerial installation suspended within Covent Garden's historic Market Building, set to be unveiled later this summer as part of The Royal Ballet School centenary celebrations.

#### **A Piazza-wide Summer experience**

As part of the wider Piazza experience, running from 20<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> June, **Chapel Down** will partner with Covent Garden as the drinks partner, offering a picnic-style setting for guests to stay, sip and enjoy the programme of activities. Coinciding with **English Wine Week**, drinks will be available alongside a curated menu from **Courtyard Wine Cellars**, featuring a selection of afternoon tea treats and charcuterie, expertly paired with Chapel Down wines.

Spanning the Piazza, the celebration will also feature a line-up of food, drink and lifestyle pop-ups. Highlights will include a "Black (sesame) Swan Matcha" from **TOKKIA**, inspired by legendary ballet Swan Lake and featuring a feather-like black-and-white design, while **Blondies Kitchen** pink strawberry shortcake "Sugar Plum Fairy" cookie will be available exclusively to Covent Garden. Alternatively, take a break from the activities and indulge in a theatre-style interval ice cream.

Throughout the celebration, visitors will also be able to shop official Royal Ballet School merchandise and have the chance to win a range of ballet and performance-inspired prizes.

#### **Celebrating culture in the heart of the West End**

Covent Garden's connection to ballet and performance extends beyond the Piazza itself, with a number of landmarks tied to the history of dance across the area. Stroll through the neighbourhood's streets to discover Enzo Plazzotta's life size bronze sculpture, "The Young Dancer" on Broad Court, or head to Long Acre to see a historical blue plaque honouring Dame Margot Fonteyn, one of the School's alumni who is widely regarded as the greatest ballet dancer of her generation. Elsewhere in Covent Garden, suspended above Floral Street is the striking "Bridge of Aspiration", the architectural landmark connecting The Royal Ballet School with the Royal Ballet Opera House, symbolising the journey from student to professional dancer.

Alongside the activation and the wider cultural setting, visitors will be able to explore everything Covent Garden has to offer, from world-class shopping and dining to cultural and entertainment experiences across the Piazza, Market Building and surrounding streets.

#### **A centenary celebration for London**

Bringing together performance, storytelling and immersive public experiences, Covent Garden's celebration of The Royal Ballet School's centenary will honour 100 years of dance excellence while inviting visitors to experience ballet in a new and accessible way in the heart of London.

For more information on Covent Garden and the summer programme of events, visit the official Covent Garden website or email [coventgarden@thebeaconuk.com](mailto:coventgarden@thebeaconuk.com)

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Notes to Editors

### About Shaftesbury Capital

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 £5.4 billion, extends to 2.8 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.

In April 2025, Shaftesbury Capital and Norges Bank Investment Management ("NBIM") formed a long-term partnership, in respect of the Covent Garden estate. Shaftesbury Capital retains 75 per cent ownership and management control over the estate. The partnership brings together two long-term investors with a shared confidence in and ambitions for the growth prospects of the Covent Garden estate and the West End.

Shaftesbury Capital shares are listed on the London Stock Exchange ("LSE") (primary) and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange ("JSE") (secondary) and the A2X (secondary).

### 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](http://www.coventgarden.london) [@coventgardenldn](https://www.instagram.com/coventgardenldn)

### The Royal Ballet School

- The Royal Ballet School was founded by Dame Ninette de Valois in 1926 and began as The Academy of Choreographic Art.
- The Royal Ballet School is one of the world's most celebrated centres for classical ballet training. It is the leading classical ballet school in the UK and an international institution, attracting dancers with exceptional potential from the UK and worldwide.
- Students are selected based on talent and potential, regardless of academic ability or financial means. Over 90% of students receive financial support, with around 25% on full support. The work of the School is only possible through generous support from donors.
- The School trains more than 200 full-time students across its two sites: White Lodge in Richmond Park and Upper School in Covent Garden.
- Graduates of the School go on to professional careers with The Royal Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet, and other leading UK and international companies. 80% of The Royal Ballet dancers trained at The Royal Ballet School.

- For nearly a century, the School has produced dancers and choreographers of international renown. Notable alumni include Margot Fonteyn, Kenneth MacMillan, Darcey Bussell, Lauren Cuthbertson, Marianela Nuñez, Marcelino Sambé and Christopher Wheeldon.
- Throughout their time at the School, students are supported in exploring the art of choreography through the Ninette de Valois Choreographic Programme, in honour of the founder's commitment to nurturing the creative impulse in emerging young artists.
- The School is committed to widening access to classical ballet through its national Associate Programme, which offers high-quality ballet training to students aged 8 to 18 at nine centres UK-wide. More than 1,000 students will train through the Associate Programme in 2026/27.
- The School sets the standard for the future of classical ballet training with its extensive teacher training programmes for the vocational or recreational sector.
- In 2026, The Royal Ballet School celebrates its centenary with a year-long programme of performances, events and partnerships, opening up its work to wider audiences.
- With a legacy built on excellence and a future focused on expanding opportunity and access, the School continues to shape the next century of classical ballet.