

Teatro alla Scala (in English La Scala), is a world renowned opera house in Milan. The theatre was inaugurated on 3 August 1778 and was originally known as the **New Royal-Ducal Theatre at La Scala**.

Most of Italy's greatest operatic artists, and many of the finest singers from other nations, too, have appeared at La Scala during the past 200 years. Today, the theatre is still recognised as one of the leading opera and ballet theatres in the world and is home to the La Scala Theatre Chorus, La Scala Theatre Ballet and La Scala Theatre Orchestra. The theatre also has an associate school, known as the La Scala Theatre Academy, which offers professional training in music, dance, stage craft and stage management.

La Scala's season traditionally opens on 7 December, Saint Ambrose's Day, the feast day of Milan's patron saint. All performances must end before midnight; long operas start earlier in the evening if need be.

La Scala Theatre Museum, accessible from the theatre's foyer and a part of the house, contains an extraordinary collection of paintings, drafts, statues, costumes, and other documents regarding opera and La Scala's history. La Scala also hosts the Academy for the Performing Arts. Its goal is to train a new generation of young musicians, technical staff, and dancers .

A fire destroyed the previous theatre, the [Teatro Regio Ducale](#), on 25 February 1776, after a [carnival](#) gala. A group of ninety wealthy Milanese, who owned private boxes in the theatre, wrote to Archduke [Ferdinand of Austria-Este](#) asking for a new theatre and a provisional one to be used while completing the new one. The [neoclassical](#) architect [Giuseppe Piermarini](#) produced an initial design but it was rejected by the governor of the then Austrian [Lombardy](#).

A second plan was accepted in 1776 by Empress [Maria Theresa](#). The new theatre was built on the former location of the church of Santa Maria della Scala, from which the theatre gets its name. The church was deconsecrated and demolished, and over a period of two years the theatre was completed by Pietro Marliani, Pietro Nosetti and Antonio and Giuseppe Fe. The theatre had a total over 3,000 thousand seats organized into 678 pit-stalls, arranged in six tiers of boxes above which is the two galleries. Its stage is one of the largest in Italy.

La Scala soon became the prominent meeting place for noble and wealthy Milanese people. In the tradition of the time, the main floor had no chairs and spectators watched the shows standing up. The orchestra was in full sight, as the orchestra pit had not yet been built.

Above the boxes, La Scala has a gallery where the less wealthy can watch the performances. The gallery is typically crowded with the most critical opera aficionados, who can be ecstatic or merciless towards singers' perceived successes or failures. La Scala's gallery is considered a baptism of fire in the opera world, and fiascos are long remembered.

Unfortunately, as is well known, the theatre of La Scala serves, not only as the universal drawing-room for all the society of Milan, but every sort of trading transaction, from horse-dealing to stock-jobbing, is carried on in the pit; so that brief and far between are the snatches of melody one can catch.

La Scala was originally illuminated with 84 oil lamps mounted on the stage and another thousand in the rest of theater. To prevent the risks of fire, several rooms were filled with hundreds of water buckets. In time, oil lamps were replaced by gas lamps, these in turn were replaced by electric lights in 1883.

The original structure was renovated in 1907, when it was given its current layout with 2,800 seats. In 1943, during [World War II](#), La Scala was severely damaged by bombing. It was rebuilt and reopened on 11 May 1946, with a memorable concert conducted by [Arturo Toscanini](#)—twice La Scala's principal conductor and an associate of the composers [Giuseppe Verdi](#) and [Giacomo Puccini](#)—with a soprano solo by [Renata Tebaldi](#), which created a sensation.

La Scala hosted the first production of many famous operas, and had a special relationship with Verdi. For several years, however, Verdi did not allow his work to be played here, as some of his music had been modified by the orchestra.

In 1982, the [Filarmonica della Scala](#) was established, drawing its members from the larger pool of musicians that comprise the Orchestra della Scala.

The theater underwent a major renovation from early 2002 to late 2004. The theatre was closed following the traditional 7 December 2001 season opening performances of *Otello*, which ran through December. From 19 January 2002 to November 2004, the opera company was transferred to the new [Teatro degli Arcimboldi](#), built more than 4 miles from the city centre.

The renovation by renowned [architect Mario Botta](#) proved controversial, as preservationists feared that historic details would be lost. However, the opera company was said to be impressed with improvements to the structure and the sound quality, which was enhanced when the heavy red carpets in the hall were removed. The stage was entirely re-constructed, and an enlarged backstage allows more sets to be stored, permitting more productions. Seats now include monitors for the [electronic libretto system](#), allowing audiences to follow opera libretti in English and Italian in addition to the original language.

The opera house re-opened on 7 December 2004 with a production, conducted by [Riccardo Muti](#), of [Salieri's *Europa riconosciuta*](#), the opera that was performed at La Scala's inauguration in 1778.