

City of Leeds School of Music



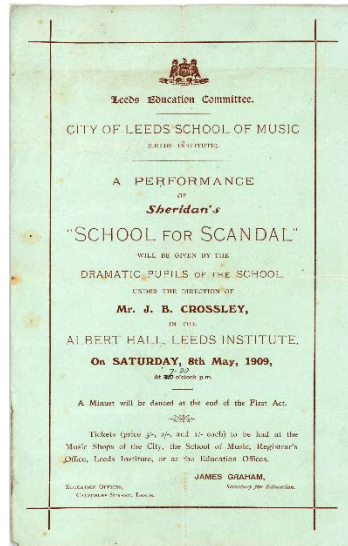
Picture of student Florence Edith Tindall with her violin, circa 1910.

Not to be confused with Leeds College of Music, which was established in 1965, the Leeds School of Music started its life as a department of the Leeds Institute of Science, Art, and Literature in 1898. The Leeds Mercury from December 1902 reports that in its early years the school had between 70-80 students, offering lessons in theory, singing, violin, flute, piano and cello. Potential students could apply for scholarships in piano, violin or singing. The successful applicants were announced in the local newspapers prior to the start of each session. The students and staff of the School of Music performed regular concerts in the Albert Hall at Leeds Institute, and newspaper reviews from these concerts show that they were well attended and highly acclaimed.

The School of Music was transferred to the Education Committee of the City Council in 1906, as part of a wider transfer of the educational work of the Leeds Institute. This does not seem to have raised any concerns for the first 18 months, but a re-launch of the school in 1908 prompted some influential local musicians to raise concerns that the music school would be to the detriment of local music teachers, worried that the Council-run school would take business away from them. Although this debate evoked strong feelings, the City of Leeds School of Music continued, and the reviews of the performances of staff and pupils continued to be favourable.

SOUNDS OF OUR CITY

In May 1909, Florence Tindall played second violin in a performance of Sheridan's "School for Scandal" at the Leeds Institute Albert Hall, and a critic writing for the Leeds Mercury noted that 'some very charming entr'acte music was played by the School String Ensemble Class'.



Pamphlet advertising the City of Leeds School of Music performance of "School for Scandal" at Albert Hall, Leeds Institute, 8th May 1909.

However, by February 1912 the School of Music was reporting a considerable financial loss, and as a result, the Education Committee was asked to approve a motion to close the school. Interestingly, the Yorkshire Evening Post account of this refers back to the opposition that the school experienced from local professional musicians four years earlier, so it seems that this debate lingered until the end. As there are very few further mentions of the school after this report, it appears that the City of Leeds School of Music was closed in July 1912, as proposed by the Education Committee motion.

Thanks to Fran Sharp for her research whilst on placement at Abbey House Museum.