

SOUNDS OF OUR CITY

The Great Padtoeski



Poster advertising Padtoeski performance

The Great Padtoeski was a variety performer who embodied musical, theatrical and gymnastic talents within one eccentric act. Also known as “The Marvellous Toe Piano Player” he would sit on a high stool so that his bare toes could reach the piano keyboard, his hands being free to perform on a violin and sometimes he sang a ballad at the same time. A variation on this act playing the piano, concertina and cornet simultaneously. He appeared frequently on the bill at the Stoll Moss Empire theatres, including the Leeds Empire, throughout the 1920s.



A photograph of Mark Vincent Dearlove



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Padtoeski was a member of the large musical Dearlove dynasty of Leeds. His real name seems to have been Mark William Dearlove (1873-1946) although he also used the name Mark Vincent Dearlove (possibly in memory of an older brother who died in infancy). He was the 3rd son of Richard Dearlove (born 1831) and a grandson of Mark William Dearlove (1802-1880) whose music shop on Briggate was lovingly reconstructed at Abbey House Museum for many years.

The Dearlove collection forms a major part of the museum's musical instrument collection and archive. The descendents of Mark William Dearlove all seem to have inherited musical talent and learnt a wide variety of instruments, so that they were able to form orchestras and bands almost entirely from within the family. On the family tree Mark Vincent is listed as "conductor, piano and violin", with no reference to his unique speciality!