Dec. 1, 1942. C. E. TOMPKINS 2,303,669

STAGE SETTING APPARATUS

Filed April 24, 1942 3 Sheets-Sheet 1

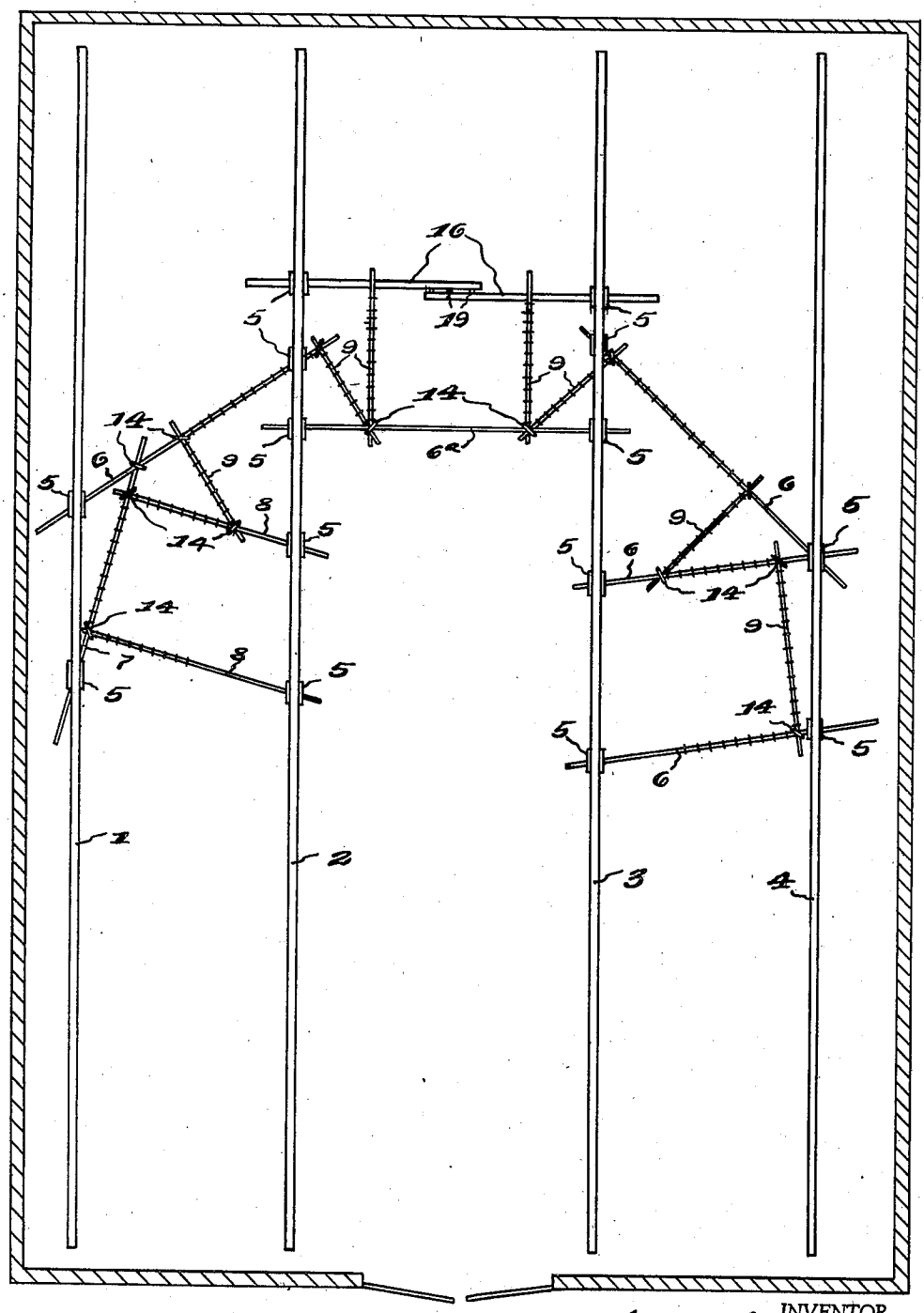

Fig-1-

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STAGE SETTING APPARATUS

Filed April 24, 1942 3 Sheets-Sheet 2

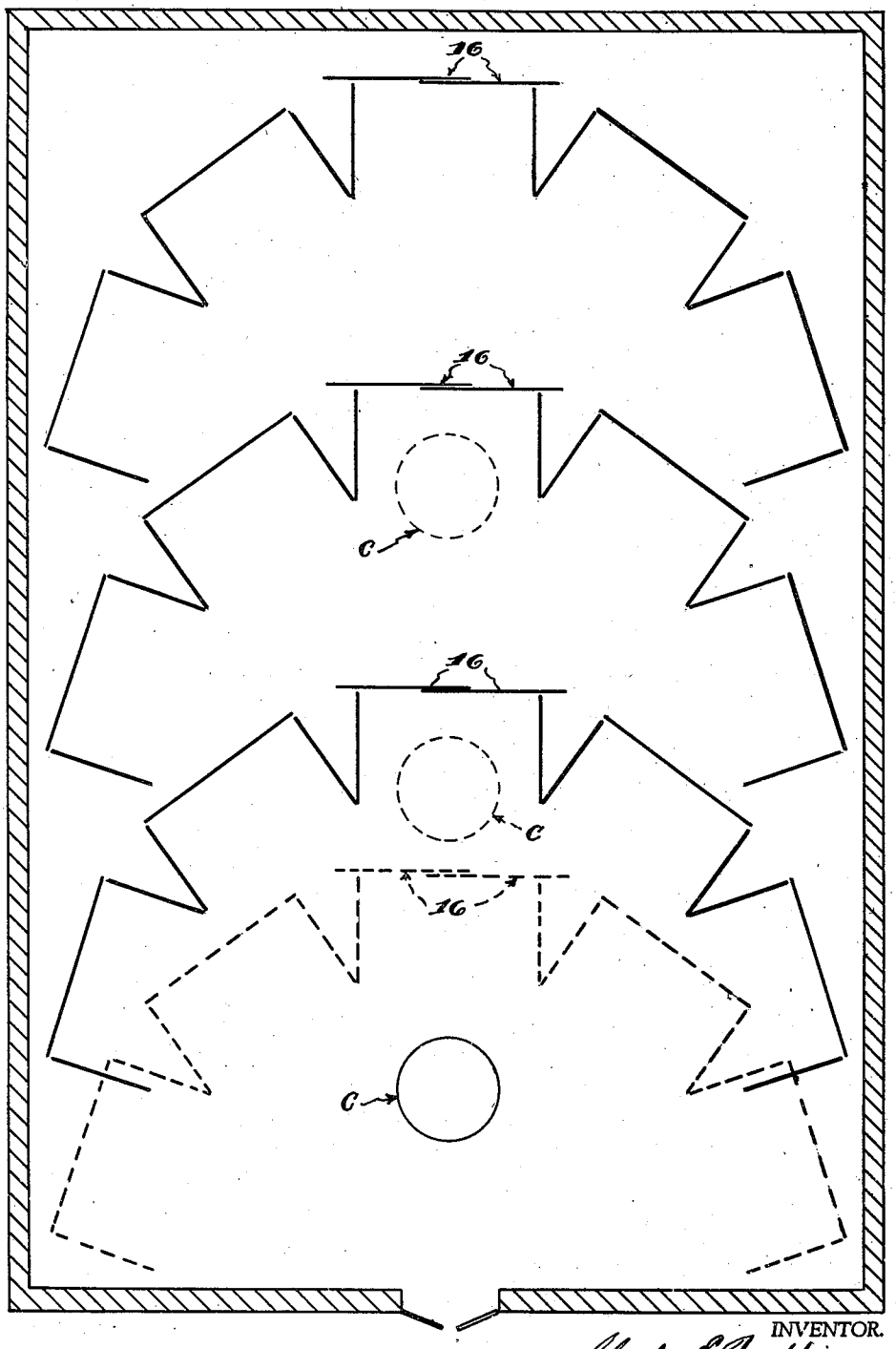

Fig. 2.

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STAGE SETTING APPARATUS

Filed April 24, 1942 3 Sheets-Sheet 3

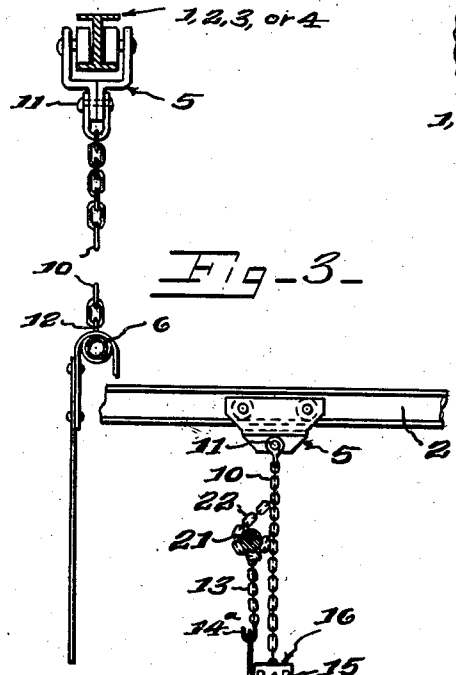

Fig-3-

Fig-6-

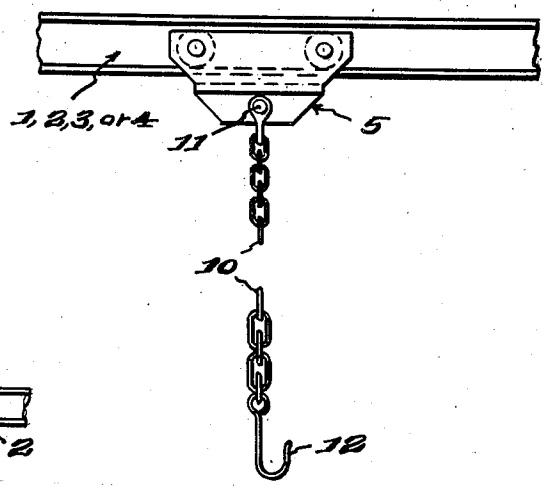

Fig-4-

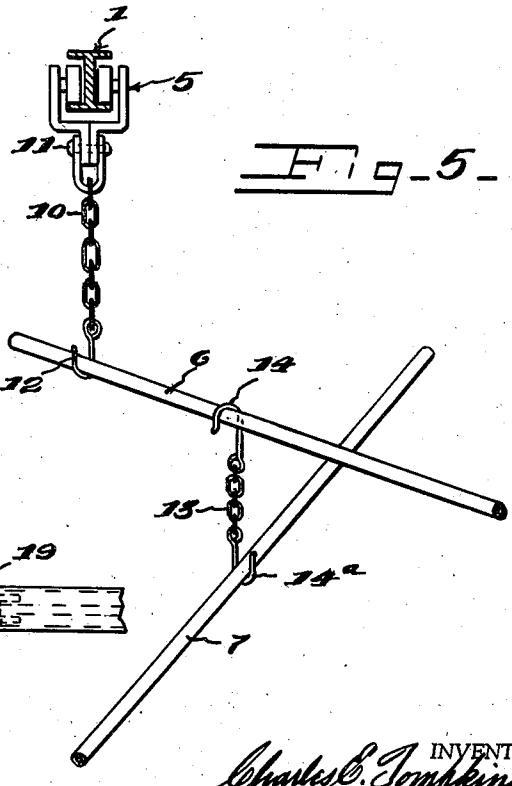

Fig-5-

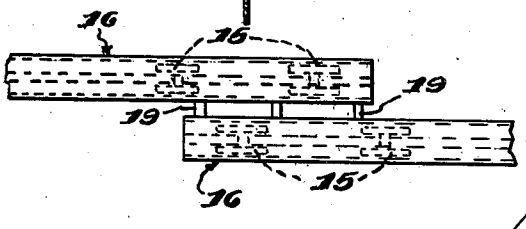

Fig-7-

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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

2,303,669

STAGE SETTING APPARATUS

Charles E. Tompkins, Syracuse, N. Y.

Application April 24, 1942, Serial No. 440,306

5 Claims. (Cl. 272—22)

This invention has for its object a method and apparatus by which in a single studio or stage, any desired number of scenery units or stage settings may be readily hung, arranged or adjusted separately or in series, and at any desired angle or angles, so that the mobile camera and microphone apparatus may be focused in quick succession on the various scenes with little or no interruption, and hence with no long or short time periods between scene changes.

It further has for its object a stage scenery apparatus consisting of overhead tracks, carriages movable to different points along the tracks, battens supported from the carriages on the same tracks or by the carriages on different tracks, painted drops or curtains suspended from the battens, all whereby the scenes of different acts may be set up on the studio floor and photographed and televised successively.

The invention consists in the novel features and in the combinations and constructions hereinafter set forth and claimed.

In describing this invention, reference is had to the accompanying drawings in which like characters designate corresponding parts in all the views.

Figure 1 is a diagrammatic plan view of this apparatus showing an illustrative arrangement of one series of scenes.

Figure 2 is a view similar to Figure 1 showing a plurality of series of scenes.

Figure 3 is a detail view of one of the tracks with the carriages thereon and with a batten suspended from the carriage, the track being shown in cross-section.

Figure 4 is a detail view of one of the carriages and the contiguous portion of the track.

Figure 5 is a fragmentary view showing the suspension of the battens from the carriages and other battens from the former battens.

Figure 6 is a fragmentary view illustrating the suspension of the back curtain for the central scene and the suspension of the valance.

Figure 7 is an enlarged fragmentary plan view of the track for the back curtain of the central scene.

To maintain the interest of a television audience in a program, the program must be continuous for instance for successive quarter hour, half hour or other periods, which have come to be the accepted time division in radio. To televise a program for more than a few minutes without a change of scenery or background would become monotonous and thus fail to hold the audience. Thus, in broadcasting a television program, it is necessary that the scenes follow in continuity without intervening periods. The exigencies of television require that all action be continuous and perfectly timed without lost motion within a single program period. Hence, it is necessary because of this timing element to confine a television program to a single studio, at least for each program. It is possible to switch from one studio to another, as is done in radio, but it involves the introduction of new characters, as it is impossible for performers to go from one studio to another within a single program period. It is only by changing scenery that variety may be accomplished. Hence, the object of this invention is an apparatus by which the series or plurality of series of successive scenes may be set up in one studio before the program is broadcast, and by means of a mobile camera and microphone apparatus, the different scenes taken and broadcast successively without loss of time between the scenes, or in other words, the invention has for its object to provide a practical apparatus whereby it is possible to hang or arrange within a studio any desired number of backdrops, curtains or scenery units in any position and at various angles before which the mobile camera and microphone apparatus may be focused in constant succession.

1, 2, 3 and 4 designate a plurality of overhead parallel tracks suitably supported in the studio or over the stage floor. 5 are carriages movable along the tracks and from which are supported a set of battens or rods 6 by means having a flexible universal joint action. Each rod 6 extends between carriages on different tracks.

7 designates a second set of rods or battens suspended from a carriage 5 on one track and from one of the former battens 6. 8 designates a third set of rods or battens, each supported at one end by a carriage and at its other end by a batten or rod 7 by means having a flexible or universal joint action. 9 designates a fourth set supported from the rods 6 and 8 by means having a flexible universal joint action. The curtains or backdrops and other stage paraphernalia are hung from the battens or rods 6, 7, 8 and 9.

It may be stated that the rods 6, 7, 8 and 9 are provided in different lengths, as part of the stage paraphernalia, and the rods of desired length selected in setting up a series of scenes, or the rods may be formed in sections connected together by a joint, as a fish-pole joint, the sections being for instance, two and/or four feet in length, so that sections may be fitted

together to provide a rod or batten of any desired length. The rods 6, 7, 8 and 9 may be suspended in any suitable manner, and as here shown, the rods 6 extending between two carriages 5 and the rods 7 suspended at one end from a carriage 5 are so suspended in any suitable manner, as by a hanger 10 (see Figures 3 and 4). These hangers, which may be called main hangers, are here illustrated as chains pivoted at their upper ends at 11 to the carriages, and having means for attachment to the battens, as hooks 12. Each batten or rod 7 is suspended at one end from a car 5 by a hanger as 10 and at its other end from one of the rods 6, as by a hanger 13 having hooks 14, 14a at its opposite ends for hooking over a batten or rod 6 and under the batten or rod 7. The battens or rods 8 are similar to the rods 7, that is, they are supported at like ends from a car 5 and at their other ends by means of hangers 13 from rods 7. Each batten or rod 9 is suspended at its opposite ends from a rod 8 and a rod 6 by means of hangers, as 13. These hangers may be of any suitable form, size and construction and have a flexible or universal joint action, so that by reason of the carriages 5, battens or rods 6, 7, 8 and 9 and the hangers, the rods and hence the scenery provding three walls of a scene, may be arranged at different angles.

As illustrated in Figure 1, these angles are all shown as right angles, but obviously the relative angular arrangement of rods 6, 7, 8 and 9 may be at any angle to conform to lay-outs or plans for the scenes. Also, if desired, a front curtain that opens and closes may be suspended from a batten 6a supported at its opposite ends from carriages 5 on different tracks. It is thus seen that a series of scenes may be arranged on the stage by properly locating the carriages 5 according to a plan and suspending the rods therefrom, and the entire series of scenes may be shifted intact if desired.

A mobile camera and television unit C may be shifted to be located at any one scene and hence when one scene is completed, the shift may be made to the next without loss of time.

In Figure 2 is shown diagrammatically a plurality of series of scenes arranged one behind the other, those in the first series are taken first, and this first series shifted forwardly, as into the dotted line position (Figure 2), and the camera and television unit passed behind the first series of scenes and the second series taken, etc., and these operations repeated until the scenes of all the series are broadcast. In this arrangement, the back curtain of the center of each series of scenes, which is supported on one of the rods of battens 6 is divided so that it may be separated or drawn back to permit the mobile camera unit C to be passed through to the next series of scenes, or after one series or row of scenes or act has been televised, shifted out of the way along the tracks 5, and the camera and television unit shifted into juxtaposition to the next series of scenes, the former series of scenes may be dismantled and set up into another form for new acts or series of scenes. Thus the series or rows of scenes or acts may be taken by the camera and television unit, say starting with the series or row or acts at the front of the stage and progressing toward the rear series, and then the unit turned around and new series or rows or acts taken progressively as from the back toward the front of the stage. Thus, by reason of the plurality of series of scenes, a continuity of scenes may be kept up indefinitely without appreciable interval between the scenes or series of scenes or acts.

In the arrangement here illustrated, the rods 6 suspended from carriages on the tracks 1, 2, and 3, 4, respectively, are common to the first and second and the fourth and fifth series respectively.

The back wall or curtain of the central scene may be supported on a rod 6 extending between two cars or tracks 2, 3, but preferably the back curtain of the central scene is divided and capable of being withdrawn or opened for the purpose of permitting a mobile camera and microphone apparatus to be shifted therethrough from the first series of scenes to the second series and from the second series to the third, etc. The sections or right and left halves of the divided back curtain for the central scene are suspended from carriages 15 movable along tracks 16, which are suspended at their outer ends by means of hangers 10 from carriages 5 on the tracks 2, 3. The halves of the curtain 17 are suspended from the carriages by means of hangers 18 having hooks 18a in their lower ends hooking through eyes in the upper edges of the curtain 17. The halves of the curtain separate in opposite directions from the center and are operated by suitable apparatus. While being opened and closed, the cars 15 move along the track 16. The track 16 is in two sections, which are out of alinement, as seen in Figures 1 and 7, but which are rigidly held together, as by studs or posts 19. The carriages 15 for one half of the curtain move along one section of the track section 16 and the carriages supporting the other half move along the other section. The track 16 is here shown as boxlike in general form in cross-section, and the carriages move along the interior of the boxlike formation. The hangers 18 extend from the carriages through a central lengthwise slot in the lower side of the boxlike formation.

The valance curtain 20 is suspended from battens or rods 21, which are in turn suspended from the hangers 10 between the carriages 5 on the tracks 2, 3 and the track 16 by means of hangers or chains 22, each attached at its ends to the hanger 10 with its intermediate portion looped around the rod 21.

By this apparatus, the entire series of scenes may be shifted at will without raising and lowering, and without the use of pulleys, ropes, counterweights, or the overhead paraphernalia ordinarily used for handling of scenery on a theatrical, studio or auditorium stage. Although the apparatus may be erected in any studio room now used for radio broadcasting, it is particularly suited for use in studios designed for television purposes.

What I claim is:

1. In a television stage setting apparatus, the combination of a plurality of overhead tracks, carriages adjustable along the tracks, a series of scenery curtain supporting rods flexibly suspended from the carriages and from each other, and curtains supported by the rods to provide a transverse series of consecutive scenes.

2. In a television stage setting apparatus, the combination of a plurality of overhead tracks, a plurality of series of carriages on the tracks, one series behind another, the carriages being adjustable along the tracks, scenery curtain sup-

porting rods flexibly suspended from the carriages and from each other, curtains supported by the rods, thereby providing a plurality of series of scenes one behind the other, the back curtain of one scene of each series being separable for permitting a television camera unit to be shifted from in front of one series of scenes to a position in front of the next series of scenes.

3. In a stage setting apparatus, the combination of a plurality of overhead tracks, carriages adjustable along the tracks independently of each other, a set of scenery supporting rods, each supported by carriages on different tracks, a second set of rods, each of which is supported by another carriage on one track and by one of the rods of the first set, a third set of scenery supporting rods, each supported at one end on one of the rods of the second set and at its other end on another carriage, and a fourth set of rods, each supported at one end from one of the third set and at its other end from one of the rods of the first set.

4. In a stage setting apparatus, the combination of a plurality of overhead tracks, carriages adjustable along the tracks independently of each other, a set of scenery supporting rods, each supported by carriages on different tracks, a second set of rods, each of which is supported by another carriage on one track and by one of the rods of the first set, a third set of scenery supporting rods, each supported at one end on one of the rods of the second set and at its other end on another carriage, and a fourth set of rods, each supported at one end from one of the third set and at its other end from one of the rods of the first set, the rods being connected to the parts to which they are connected by means having a flexible, universal joint action.

5. In a stage setting apparatus, the combination of a plurality of overhead tracks, carriages adjustable along the tracks independently of each other, scenery supporting rods, each supported by carriages on different tracks, other scenery supporting rods flexibly supported partly by carriages on the tracks and partly by the former rods, and additional scenery supporting rods flexibly supported partly by the rods supported entirely by the carriages and partly by the carriages, all whereby the carriages are locatable at various points along the tracks and the rods arranged at various angles to support scenery constituting the back and side walls of the scenes of a series of scenes.

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