Dec. 8, 1936. E. GUSTAFSSON 2,063,600

AMUSEMENT APPARATUS

Filed March 18, 1935

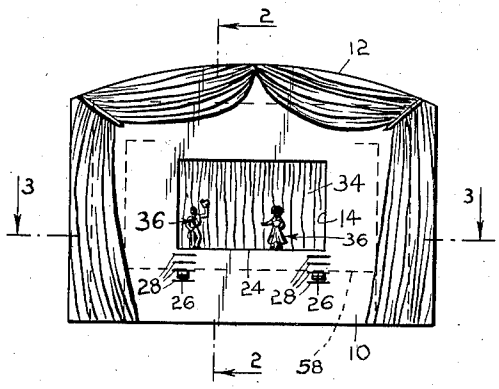


Fig. 1.

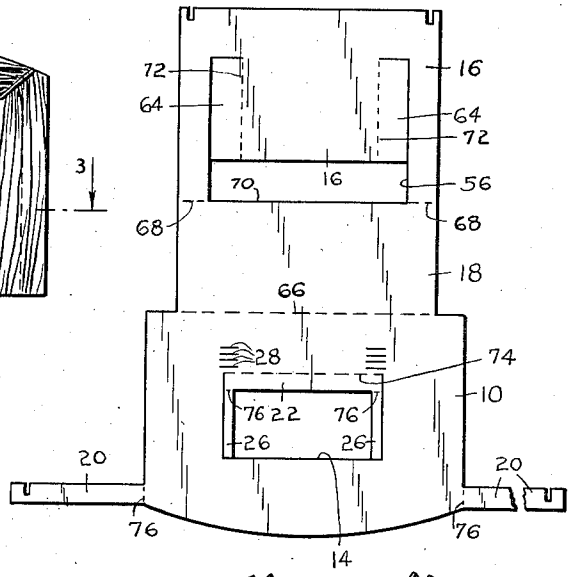


Fig. 4.

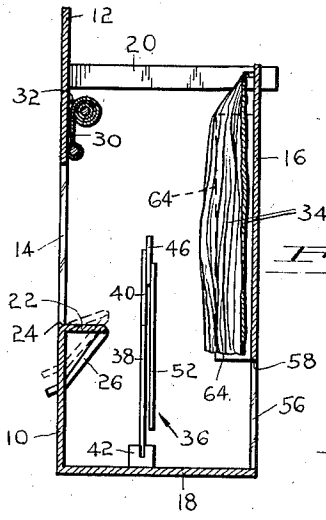


Fig. 2.

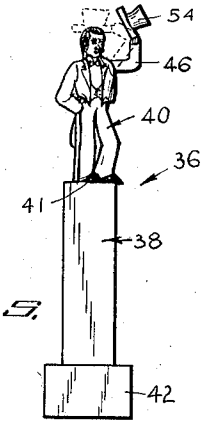


Fig. 5.

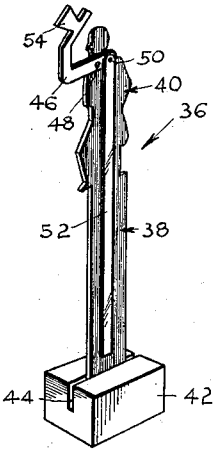


Fig. 6

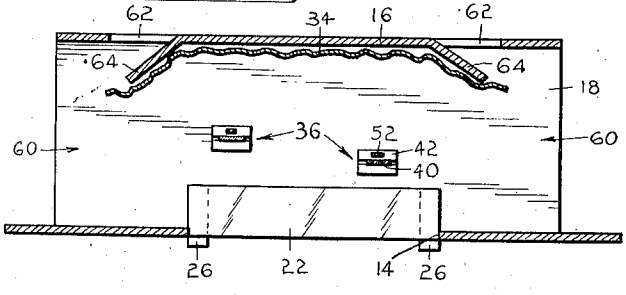


Fig. 3.

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Patented Dec. 8, 1936 2,063,600

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

2,063,600

AMUSEMENT APPARATUS

Evelyn Gustafsson, New York, N. Y.

Application March 18, 1935, Serial No. 11,559

7 Claims. (Cl. 46—13)

The present invention relates to amusement apparatus and more particularly to toy or miniature theatres and animated actor figures therefor.

The miniature or toy theatres of the prior art are so constructed that in order to manipulate the actor figures without revealing the manipulator of such figures, it is necessary to utilize special operating devices, such as wires of the character employed in puppet or marionette shows, or other devices, such as rods connected to the figures, etc. Because of this indirect operation of the actor figures, it is difficult to manipulate the latter and the difficulty is sufficiently serious to necessitate long experience and considerable aptitude on the part of the manipulator in order that a realistic performance may be presented. It is, therefore, an object of the present invention to provide a toy or miniature theatre of such construction as to permit the direct manipulation of the actor figures whereby to enable one of little or no experience to move such figures to simulate the actions of actors in presenting theatrical performances.

Another object of the invention is to provide a toy or miniature theatre of such construction that the manipulator of the actor figures may perform the necessary operations while concealing his manipulations from the audience.

A further object of the invention is to provide a toy or miniature theatre and actor figures therefor in which the theatre and the figures are so constructed and so related to each other that the figures, while actually supported below the stage opening, appear to move on a platform or stage proper at the lower edge of the opening.

A further object of the invention is to provide a toy or miniature theatre which is inexpensive to manufacture and which can be sold at a low price.

A further object of the invention is the provision of a toy or miniature theatre which can be folded into compact form for convenience in storage and shipping.

The above objects of the invention and other objects ancillary thereto will best be understood from the following description considered in connection with the accompanying drawing.

In the drawing:

Fig. 1 is a front view in elevation of a miniature theatre embodying the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a vertical sectional view on the line 2—2 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a horizontal sectional view on the line 3—3 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a plan view of the blank from which the miniature theatre is formed;

Fig. 5 is a front view in elevation of an actor figure; and

Fig. 6 is a rear perspective view of the actor figure shown in Fig. 5.

Referring to the drawing in detail, the miniature theatre illustrating one embodiment of the invention comprises a front wall or proscenium member 10 in which there is provided an arch 12 and the stage opening 14, a rear wall or back drop 16 and a floor 18. The proscenium 10 and the back drop 16 are held in spaced relation at the bottom by the floor 18 and at the top by the transverse struts 20 which, as will hereinafter appear, are attached to or integral with the ends of the proscenium 10 and are releasably connected to the upper edge portion of the back drop 16. A ledge 22 integral with the proscenium 10 and movable with respect thereto, is located at the bottom edge 24 of the stage opening 14. Said ledge is provided with narrow end elements or tabs 26 which may be passed selectively through pairs of aligned slits 28 provided in the proscenium 10 below the stage opening 14. Said tabs 26 are frictionally held in said slits 28 and may be positioned in a selected pair of slits to raise or lower the ledge 22 as illustrated in Fig. 2. By thus adjusting the position of the ledge 22, the lower edge of the stage opening may in effect be raised approximately to the extent corresponding to the width of said ledge. Said ledge may also be utilized for the purpose of supporting footlight elements (not shown). A miniature drop curtain 30 may be carried by the rear of the proscenium and supported above the opening 14 by end brackets 32 of any suitable or conventional construction. An additional drop 34 may be hung on the back drop 16 for the purpose of obtaining the desired stage appearance, and the front of the proscenium 10 may be ornamented in any suitable manner for the same purpose.

The actor figures 36 are so constructed and designed that they may be supported directly on the floor 18 of the theatre and yet, when viewed by the audience, appear to be supported at the level of a horizontal plane substantially at the bottom edge 24 of the stage opening 14. For this purpose, each actor figure 36 comprises a pedestal portion 38 carrying at its upper end, preferably integral therewith, a character portion 40, and supported at its lower end in a base 42 which, as here shown, is constituted by a block having a slot 44 within which the lower edge of the pedestal 38 is frictionally or otherwise re-

tained. The figures 36 may be made of cardboard or any other suitable material and may be of the animated type. As here shown, for the purpose of illustration only, each of said figures comprises a movable arm 46 pivoted intermediate its ends by means of a metal pin 48 to the body of the figure and at one of its free ends pivotally connected by a metal pin 50 to an operating member 52 extending longitudinally of the figure at the rear thereof and terminating at a point adjacent to the base 42. The other free end of the arm is provided with an integral portion 54 which simulates the appearance of a hat, and the arrangement described is such that by manipulating the operating member 52 to move the latter upwardly and downwardly, the figure may be caused to simulate the appearance of putting on and removing the hat 54.

As previously indicated, an important feature of the present invention is the construction of the theatre whereby to permit the direct manipulation of the actor figures by the hands of the manipulator while concealing the manipulator's hands from the view of the audience. This is accomplished in the present construction by the provision of an opening 56 in the bottom of the back drop, with the upper edge 58 of said opening being disposed below the lower edge 24 of the stage opening 14 in the proscenium 10. Said opening 56 extends for substantially the full length of the back drop 16 whereby the manipulator may move the actor figures for the full length of the stage between the side wings 60 thereof. The figures 36 may be introduced through the side wings 60 or may be introduced through vertically extending openings 62 in the back drop 16, said openings being concealed from the view of the audience by the inwardly directed portions 64 on the back drop 16. For the purpose of more effectively concealing the manipulation of the actor figures, the front of the proscenium 10 is substantially wider than the back drop 16, as best shown in Fig. 3, and the height of the proscenium, or the arch portion 12 thereof which extends upwardly beyond the back drop 16, is sufficient to conceal from the view of the audience the head of the manipulator when the latter is observing his manipulations of the actor figures through the open top of the theatre.

The miniature theatre comprising the proscenium 10, the back drop 16 and the floor 18 is preferably made of cardboard, but may be made of any other suitable material, and said elements of the theatre may be made in separate parts suitably connected together or, according to the preferred construction illustrated in Fig. 4, said elements are formed in a single blank of material described above and provided with scored lines to facilitate folding of the parts into the necessary relative positions. Referring to Fig. 4, it will be observed that the several parts of the blank are designated by the same reference characters which designate said parts in the assembled theatre. Thus, the proscenium 10 and the back drop 16 may be folded into upright position with respect to the floor 18 along the lines of scoring 66, 68 and the edge 70 which defines the lower edge of the opening 56. The marginal edge portions 64 of the back drop 16 may be folded along the lines of scoring 72. Similarly, the ledge 22 may be folded along the scored line 74 which will coincide with the lower edge 24 of the opening 14 in the proscenium 10 and the end tabs 26 may be folded about the scored line 76.

In utilizing the miniature theatre and the actor figures of the present invention for the purpose of presenting a theatrical performance for the amusement of an audience, the theatre is placed upon a suitable support, such as a table in the home, at such a level that the lower edge 24 of the opening 14 is approximately on the eye level of the audience. Then the host or other person desiring to present the performance by manipulating the actor figures 36 may introduce such figures through the side wings 60 or through the openings 62 in the back drop. By extending his hands through the opening 56, and grasping said figures at the lower ends of the pedestals 38 or at the bases 42, the manipulator may move said figures about the stage and, when said figures are of the animated type as illustrated herein, the manipulator may likewise actuate the movable parts of said figures to obtain the desired motion of various portions of the figure's body. When the miniature theatre is thus positioned so that the opening 24 is at the eye level of the audience, the feet 41 of the character portion 40 appear to be on the same level as the lower edge 24 of the stage opening thereby creating the illusion that said figures are supported on a stage or platform at said level, whereas said figures are in reality supported considerably below the imaginary stage and hence can be handled directly by the manipulator without his manipulations being seen by the audience. When necessary, for the purpose of raising the level of the imaginary stage, the ledge 22 may be disposed to extend upwardly at variable angles as may be determined by the location of the end elements or tabs 26 in a selective pair of slits 28.

Thus, it is seen that the miniature theatre described above is well adapted to accomplish the several objects of the present invention. It will be understood, however, that while the construction herein shown and described is preferred, said construction may be varied in accordance with changes which will occur to others in view of the present disclosure and the invention may also be embodied in other constructions involving other arrangements of the essential elements of the theatre assembled together according to the present invention. Therefore, I do not wish to be limited to the precise construction herein disclosed except as may be required by the appended claims of the prior art.

What I desire to secure by Letters Patent is:

1. An amusement apparatus comprising a miniature theatre having a front wall provided with a stage opening, a rear wall spaced from said front wall, and a floor between said front and rear walls disposed a substantial distance below said stage opening, said rear wall having a longitudinal opening therein located adjacent said floor behind the portion of said front wall which is below said stage opening.

2. An amusement apparatus comprising a miniature theatre having a front wall provided with a stage opening, a rear wall spaced from said front wall, and a floor between said front and rear walls disposed a substantial distance below said stage opening, said rear wall having a longitudinal opening therein located adjacent said floor behind the portion of said front wall which is below said stage opening, said front wall extending longitudinally beyond both ends of said rear wall.

3. An amusement apparatus comprising a miniature theatre having a front wall provided with a stage opening, a rear wall spaced from said front wall, and a floor between said front and rear walls disposed a substantial distance below said stage opening, said rear wall having a longitudinal opening therein located adjacent said floor behind the portion of said front wall which is below said stage opening, said front wall extending upwardly beyond said rear wall.

4. An amusement apparatus comprising a miniature theatre having a front wall provided with a stage opening and an actor figure comprising a pedestal portion supported a substantial distance below the lower edge of said opening extending to and terminating at a horizontal plane approximately at the said edge and a character portion extending upwardly beyond said plane.

5. An amusement apparatus comprising a miniature theatre having a front wall provided with a stage opening and an actor figure comprising a pedestal portion supported a substantial distance below the lower edge of said opening extending to and terminating at a horizontal plane approximately at said edge and a character portion extending upwardly beyond said plane, and a back wall provided with a longitudinally extending opening at the lower portion thereof to permit direct manipulation of the actor figure by the hands of the manipulator without observation of the hands by the audience.

6. An amusement apparatus comprising a miniature theatre having a front wall provided with a stage opening and an actor figure comprising a pedestal portion supported a substantial distance below the lower edge of said opening extending to and terminating at a horizontal plane approximately at said edge and a character portion extending upwardly beyond said plane, said front wall extending upwardly beyond said rear wall to permit the manipulator to observe the figures from above without being seen by the audience.

7. An amusement apparatus comprising a miniature theatre having a front wall provided with a stage opening and an actor figure comprising a pedestal portion supported a substantial distance below the lower edge of said opening extending to and terminating at a horizontal plane approximately at said edge and a character portion extending upwardly beyond said plane, a back wall provided with a longitudinally extending opening at the lower portion thereof to permit direct manipulation of the actor figure by the hands of the manipulator without observation of the hands by the audience, said front wall extending upwardly beyond said rear wall to permit the manipulator to observe the figures from above without being seen by the audience.

EVELYN GUSTAFSSON.