Dec. 16, 1952 F. J. STONE 2,621,440

HAND-OPERATED STAGE DEVICE

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Fig. 1

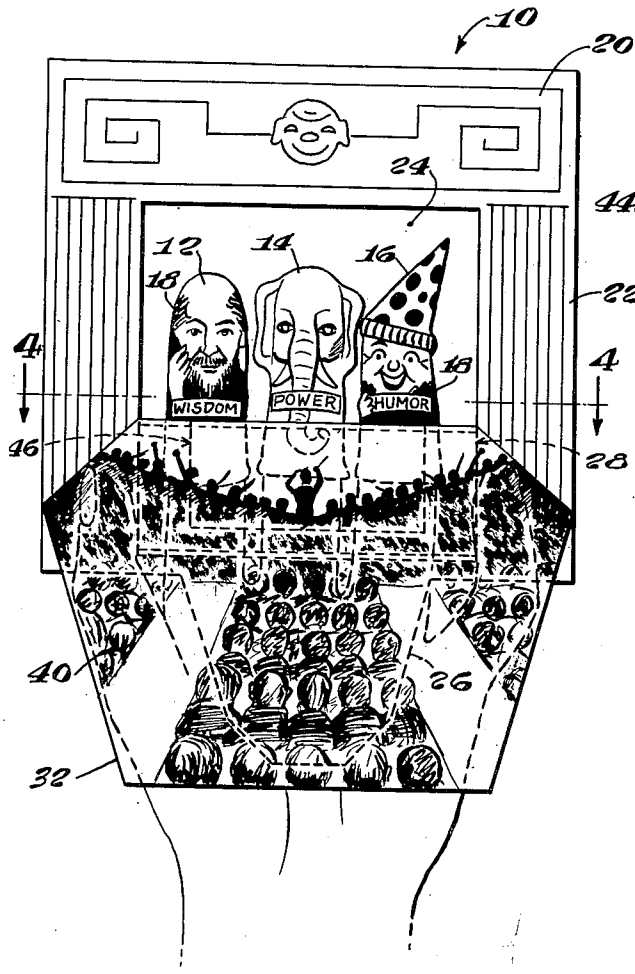


Fig. 2

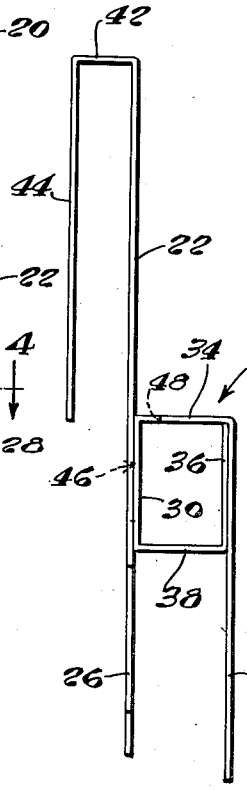


Fig. 3

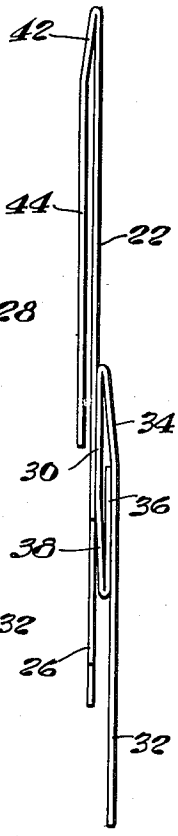
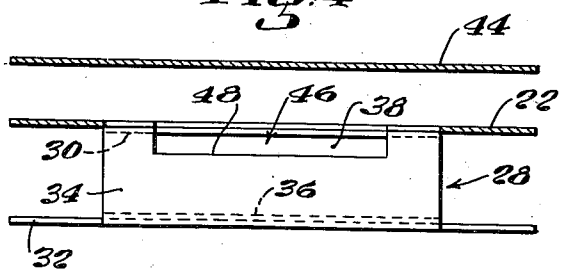


Fig. 4



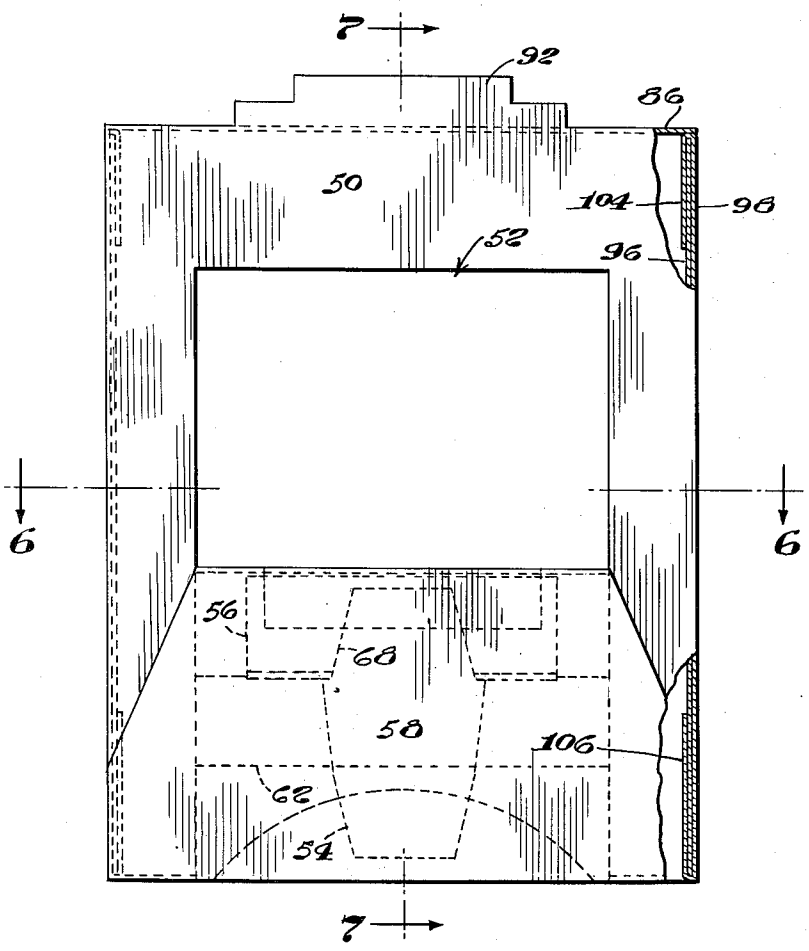
INVENTOR.
Frank J. Stone
BY
J. Stanley Churchill.
ATTORNEY

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Fig. 5



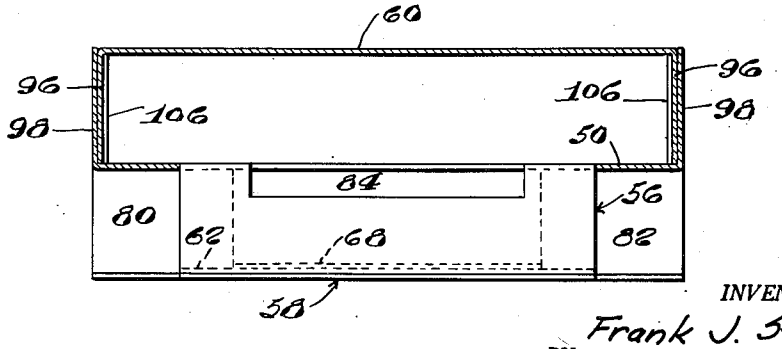


Fig. 6

INVENTOR.
Frank J. Stone
BY
J. Stanley Churchill
ATTORNEY

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Fig. 8

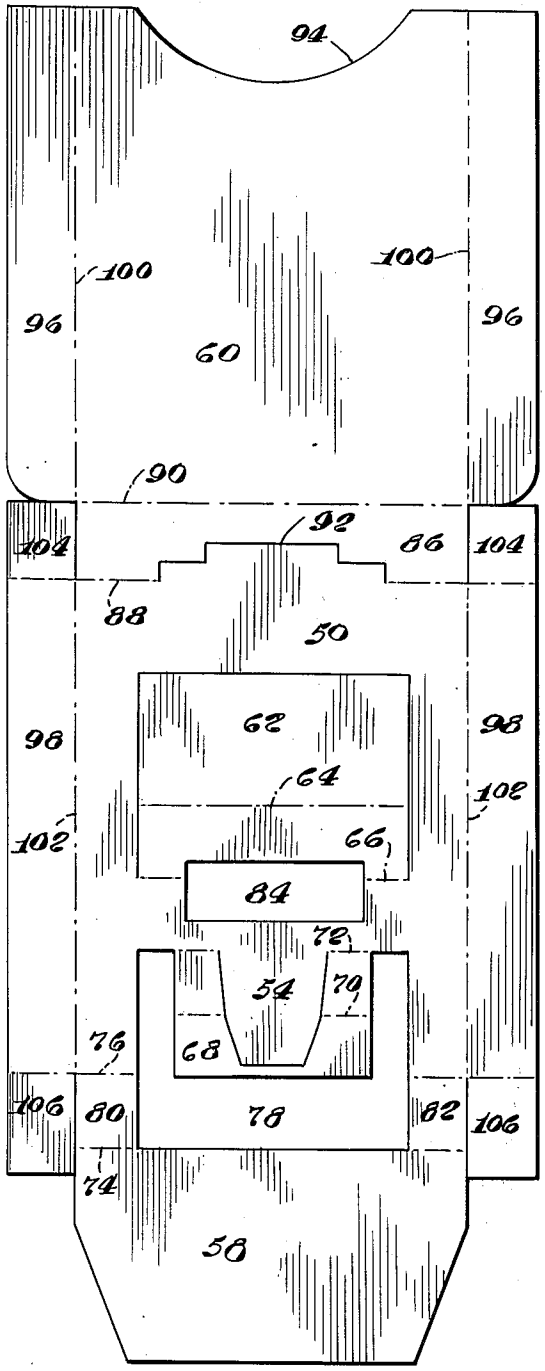
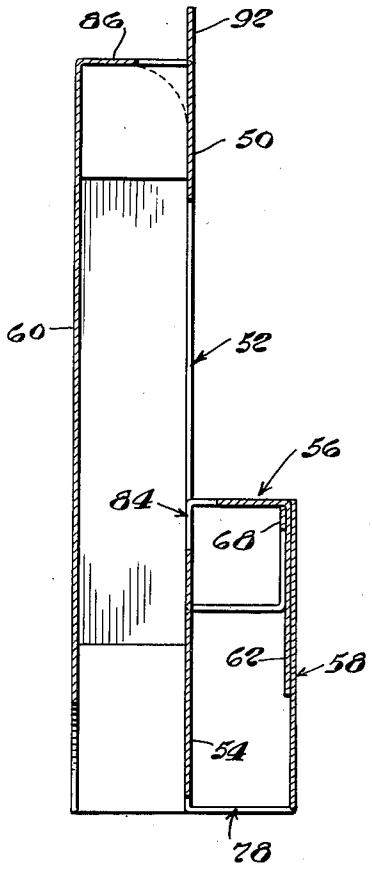


Fig. 7



INVENTOR.
Frank J. Stone
BY
J. Stanley Churchill
ATTORNEY

Patented Dec. 16, 1952

2,621,440

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

2,621,440

HAND-OPERATED STAGE DEVICE

Frank J. Stone, Arlington, Mass.

Application January 26, 1949, Serial No. 72,881

2 Claims. (Cl. 46—13)

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This invention relates to an amusement device.

The invention has for an object to provide a novel and improved amusement device of the type shown in applicant's Patent No. 2,187,407, issued January 16, 1940 embodying a stage and finger actuated characters and which is characterized by novel stage structure enabling the same to be conveniently held in the hand free of attaching means and which is further adapted to conceal the hand from the view of the audience.

With this general object in view and such others as may hereinafter appear, the invention consists in the amusement device hereinafter described and particularly defined in the claims at the end of this specification.

In the drawings illustrating the preferred embodiment of the invention, Fig. 1 is a front elevation illustrating the amusement device in position to be operated; Fig. 2 is a side elevation of the stage; Fig. 3 is a view similar to Fig. 2 showing the stage collapsed for packaging or shipment; Fig. 4 is a plan view, partly in cross-section, as seen from the line 4—4 of Fig. 1; Fig. 5 is a front elevation of a modified form of the present amusement device; Figs. 6 and 7 are cross-sectional views taken on the lines 6—6 and 7—7 respectively of Fig. 5, and Fig. 8 is a plan view of a developed blank from which the amusement device shown in Fig. 5 may be formed.

In general, the invention contemplates an amusement device of the character illustrated and described in my United States Patent No. 2,187,407, issued January 16, 1940, and which embodies a stage adapted to be held in the hand and finger actuated characters adapted to imitate animated figures on the stage while the latter is held in the hand, to provide entertainment particularly for children. The present invention comprises an improvement in the amusement device illustrated in the patent and embodies novel structure permitting the device to be conveniently supported in the palm of the hand and between the thumb and little finger whereby to enable the operator to imitate animated characters upon the stage by movement of the middle fingers of the same hand and without auxiliary means for attaching the stage to the hand. The present amusement device further provides structure arranged to effectively conceal the hand from the view of the audience and another portion of the stage provides a backdrop adapted to conceal the fingers from the back of the stage.

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Referring now to the drawings, 10 represents the stage which may be made of cardboard or other inexpensive material and which is adapted to be supported in the palm of the hand and gripped between the thumb and little finger, free of auxiliary fastening means, and leaving the middle fingers free to be manipulated on the stage in imitation of animated figures. The numerals 12, 14, 16 respectively illustrate, by way of example, various figures or characters, herein shown as a man representing Wisdom, an elephant representing Power, and a clown representing Humor. The characters may be printed or otherwise affixed to thin rubber thimbles or cots 18 designed to be slipped over the fingers of the operator.

The stage 10 comprises a setting for the characters and may have appropriate designs 20 printed on the face thereof, and as herein shown, the illustrated stage structure is preferably made in two sections, one section including an intermediate portion 22 provided with an opening 24 cut out of the cardboard and through which the characters appear, and having a lower extended portion 26 suitably shaped to fit the palm of the hand. The second section includes a transversely extended and substantially rectangular hollow gripping portion 28 formed by bending a piece of cardboard in the manner illustrated, the gripping portion being attached to the portion 22 by adhesively or mechanically securing the rear wall 30 to the face of the intermediate portion, as shown. The front wall is formed by a depending extension 32 from the upper wall 34, the front wall being secured to a tab portion 36 extended upwardly from the bottom wall 38. In practice, the ends or edges of the bottom wall 38 provide gripping portions for the thumb and little finger, as illustrated, and the depending front wall 32, spaced from the intermediate section 22, is suitably shaped and proportioned relatively to the gripping portion such as to conceal the thumb and little finger and also a major portion of the lower part of the hand from the view of the audience when in use. The downwardly extended front portion 32 may have a suitable design 40, such as of an orchestra and part of an audience printed on the face thereof, as illustrated. In addition to serving as a shield for concealing the gripping portions of the hand, the rear face of the portion 32 may serve as an additional supporting surface against which portions of the thumb, little finger and the lower portion of the hand may bear to assist the operator in maintaining a firm and steady grip.

The intermediate portion 22 of the stage is also provided at its upper end with a rearwardly extended portion 42 and a downwardly extended portion 44 to provide a backdrop adapted to conceal the fingers from the rear of the stage, and which may also have suitable background scenery printed thereon, if desired. Although the depending extension 32 for concealing the hand from the front and the backdrop portion 44 for concealing the fingers from the rear of the stage are herein illustrated as comprising integral parts of the cardboard structure, it is contemplated that either or both of these concealing portions may comprise separate pieces of flexible sheet material such as cloth suitably shaped and attached to the front and rear portions of the stage respectively to effect the same purposes.

As best shown in Fig. 4 in order to provide additional clearance and to permit more freedom of movement for the middle fingers, an opening 46 may be provided in the rear wall 30 of the transversely extended gripping portion 28 and the adjacent portion of the member 22, the opening being extended a short distance across the top wall 34, as illustrated. Such opening also provides an edge portion 48 along the upper wall 34 and spaced forwardly from the face of the intermediate member 22 and against which the middle fingers may engage to further assist in supporting the stage in the hand. The hollow transversely extended gripping portion 28 with the opening 46 in the rear may also serve as a place of concealment for one or more of the characters when desired and from which they may appear and reappear in accordance with the sketch being portrayed, the fingers being bent down and extended through the opening and into the hollow concealed space when not required in the action being portrayed.

From the above description it will be seen that in use the device may be conveniently supported in the hand without any auxiliary means of attachment by fitting the extended portion 26 in the palm of the hand and grasping the ends of the transversely extended member at the ends of the bottom wall 38 between the thumb and little finger, and that the middle fingers to which the characters are attached may extend upwardly in back of the stage between the backdrop 44 and the intermediate member 22 to appear through the opening 24. It will also be observed that the the present stage structure provides a backdrop for concealing the fingers from the back of the stage and also a depending front portion or apron for concealing the thumb and little finger and adjacent portions of the hand from the view of the audience.

In the operation of the device, it will be seen that by manipulating the fingers the characters will appear to be animated and that many amusing scenes may be depicted, providing entertainment, particularly for children. The thimbles bearing the characters may be quickly and easily exchanged and the action varied over wide fields. When using the device, the operator may simulate the voices of the different characters and by twisting and moving the figures at the same time, in the manner of a ventriloquist, may add greatly to the amusement afforded. It will, of course, be apparent that a wide variety of stage settings may be provided to suit the different characters represented and in practice it is also contemplated to use the device in imitation of plays and skits in which the characters may represent well-known figures of history, literature, art and the like, whereby the toy may be employed as an educational device as well as for the purpose of entertainment.

The device may be easily and economically manufactured from cardboard or other inexpensive material by suitable blanking and scoring dies and then bent along the scored lines to the form illustrated. The two sections may be secured together by adhesive or by mechanical means such as by riveting or stapling. It will also be observed, as illustrated in Fig. 3, that the bent construction of the assembled stage device readily lends itself to being folded or collapsed to a flat form for convenience in packaging and shipment of the device.

Referring now to Figs. 5 to 8 inclusive, illustrating a modified form of the invention, the stage therein shown comprises a unitary one piece structure made up from a scored and slit blank, see Fig. 8, adapted to be folded and adhesively or otherwise secured together in a manner analogous to a carton or cardboard box structure to form the assembled stage shown in Fig. 5. As illustrated in Fig. 5, the assembled stage is provided with an intermediate portion 50 having an opening 52 therein through which the characters appear, and having a lower extended portion 54 suitably shaped to fit the palm of the hand. The stage is further provided with a substantially rectangular hollow and transversely extended gripping portion 56 and a depending front wall portion or hand concealing apron 58. The intermediate portion 50 of the one piece structure is further provided at its upper end with a rearwardly and downwardly extended portion 60 forming a backdrop adapted to conceal the fingers and the hand from the rear of the stage.

The modified structure is made up from a one piece blank, shown in Fig. 8, having a slit or cut out portion 62 provided with scored lines 64, 66 and arranged to be bent forwardly and downwardly to expose the opening 52 in the stage and which is arranged to cooperate with a cut out portion 68 having score lines 70, 72 arranged to be bent forwardly and upwardly and adhesively secured to the inner face of the downwardly bent portion 62, as illustrated, to form the transversely extended hollow gripping portion 56. The concealing apron 58 is formed by a depending portion of the blank having score lines 74, 76 and which is arranged to be bent forwardly and upwardly and adhesively secured to the outer face of the downwardly bent portion 62. The cut out portion 76 forms an opening in the lower front portion of the stage through which the thumb and little finger are extended to grasp the ends of transversely extended portion 56, the portions 50 and 58 being connected by the sections 80, 82 on each side of the opening to provide an integral structure. In its assembled form, the palm engaging portion 54 remains in its extended position, as shown, and a cut out portion 84 forms an opening in the rear of the hollow gripping portion 56 into which the fingers may be extended when not required in the action being portrayed.

In the modified form of the invention, the backdrop portion 60 is connected to the intermediate portion 50 by an upper wall or top section 86 and the sections are bent on the score lines 88, 90 into a rectangular form as shown in Fig. 7. A slitted portion 92 in the top section forms an extension of the portion 50 for decorative purposes, and a semicircular cut out 94 in the lower end of the assembled backdrop 60 pro-

vides clearance for the back of the hand when operating the device. In order to retain the sections in their rectangularly bent and folded condition and to form in effect a carton or box-like structure, the backdrop section **60** is provided with laterally extended end wall portions **96**, and the intermediate section **50** is provided with similar end wall portions **98** arranged to be bent into overlapping relation on score lines **100**, **102** respectively, to form the closed ends of the assembled device. The end wall portions **98** are further provided with upper extensions or flaps **104** comprising locking flaps and in the assembly of the device, the flaps **104** are first folded down against their end wall portions **98** and the end wall portions **96** are then inserted or tucked in between the portions **98** and the flaps **104** to be frictionally engaged and retained therebetween. The corners at the upper ends of the end wall portions **96** may be rounded off as shown to facilitate insertion of the portions between the folded portions **98**, **104**. The end wall portions **98** are further provided with downwardly extended flaps **106** which may be folded upwardly and adhesively secured to the inner face of the end wall portion **96**, as illustrated, to lock the end walls together at their lower ends and to complete the assembly of the one piece structure.

The modified form of the stage is used in a manner similar to that previously described, the hand being inserted through the open bottom of the device between the walls **50**, **60** with the extension **54** resting in the palm, the thumb and little finger extended forwardly and grasping the ends of the gripping portion **56**, and the remaining fingers depicting characters being exposed through the opening **52** of the stage.

While the preferred embodiment of the invention has been herein illustrated and described, it will be understood that the invention may be embodied in other forms within the scope of the following claims.

Having thus described the invention, what is claimed is:

1. An amusement device of the character described comprising a stage capable of being held in one hand with the central fingers depicting characters disposed in back of and appearing through an opening in the stage, said stage comprising a one-piece structure formed from a scored and slit blank of sheet material provided with sections arranged to be bent and folded into a substantially rectangular box-like structure having a front wall, the upper section of said front wall being slitted to define a stage opening, and the lower section of said front wall including a bendable portion slitted to define a palm-engaging portion, a portion of said upper section being bent and secured to said lower section to form a transversely extended hollow gripping portion disposed below the stage opening, and an upwardly bent extension from said front wall secured to said gripping portion and forming a hand-concealing portion, the rear wall of said structure forming a back drop for the stage.

2. An amusement device of the character described comprising a stage capable of being held in one hand with the central fingers depicting characters disposed in back of and appearing through an opening in the stage, said stage comprising a one-piece structure formed from a scored and slit blank of sheet material provided with sections arranged to be bent and folded into a substantially rectangular box-like structure having a front wall, the upper section of said front wall being slitted to define a stage opening, and the lower section of said front wall including a bendable portion slitted to define a palm-engaging portion, a portion of said upper section being bent and secured to said lower section to form a transversely extended hollow gripping portion disposed below the stage opening, and an upwardly bent extension from said front wall secured to said gripping portion and forming a hand-concealing portion, the rear wall of said structure forming a back drop for the stage, said front and rear walls having lateral extensions folded into overlapping relation to form end walls, the front-wall extensions having flaps cooperating with said overlapping end-wall extensions for retaining the structure in assembled relation.

FRANK J. STONE.

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The following references are of record in the file of this patent:

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