S. WALKER.

THEATRICAL STAGE AND EQUIPMENT.

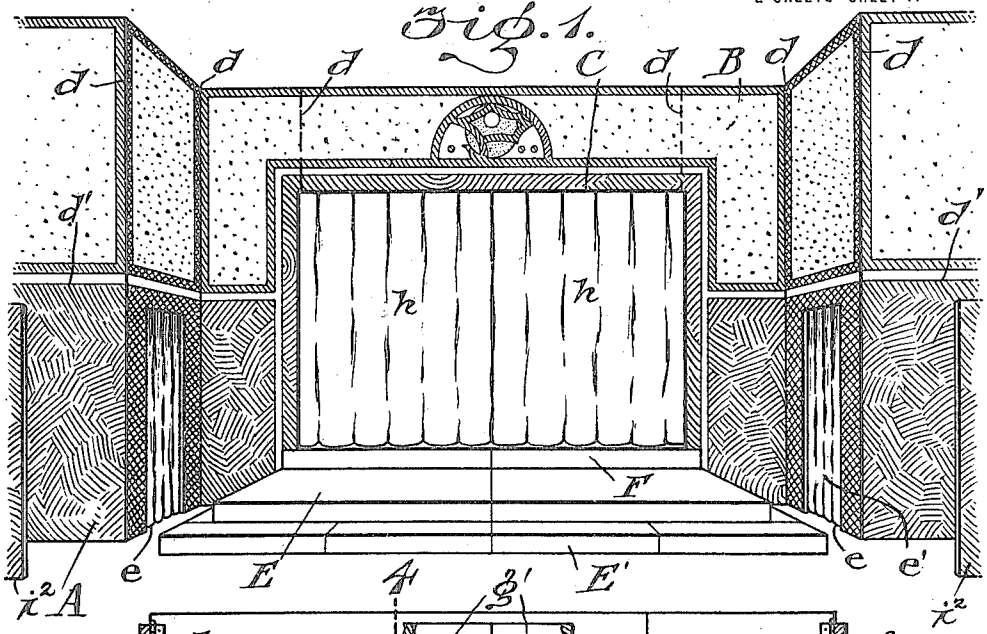
APPLICATION FILED MAY 27, 1916.

1,208,245.

Patented Dec. 12, 1916.

2 SHEETS—SHEET 1.

Fig. 1.



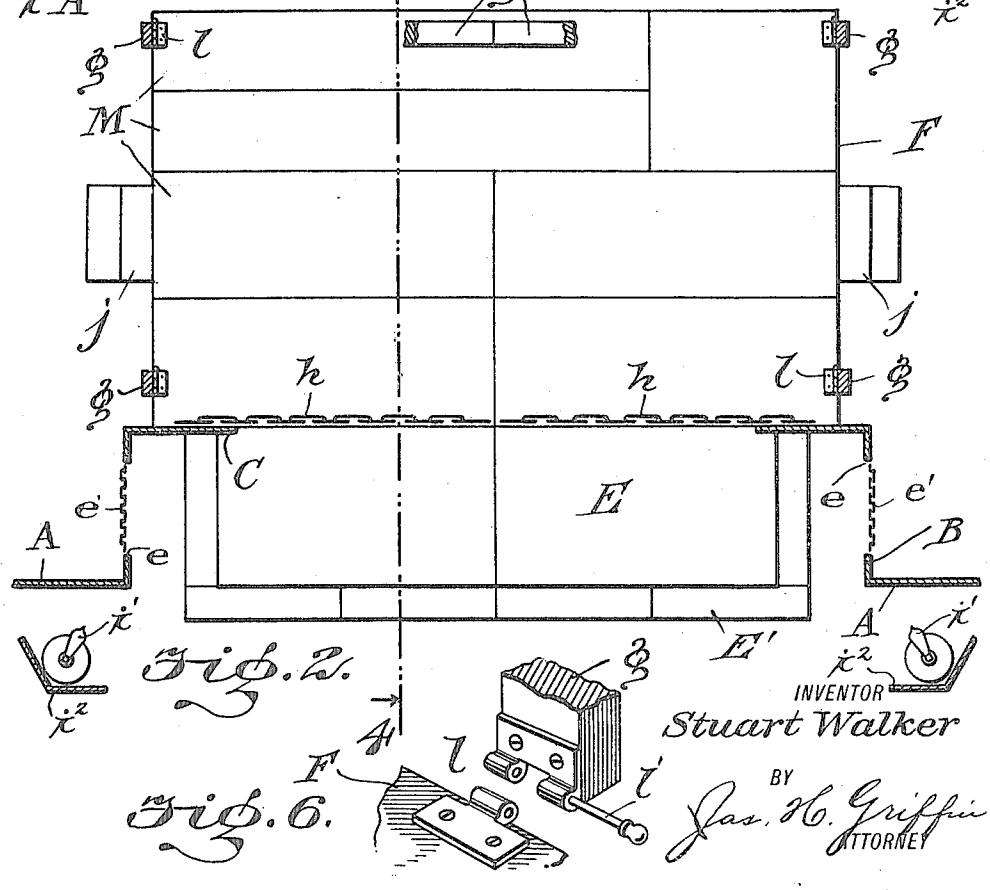


Fig. 2.

Fig. 6.

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2 SHEETS—SHEET 2.

Fig. 3.

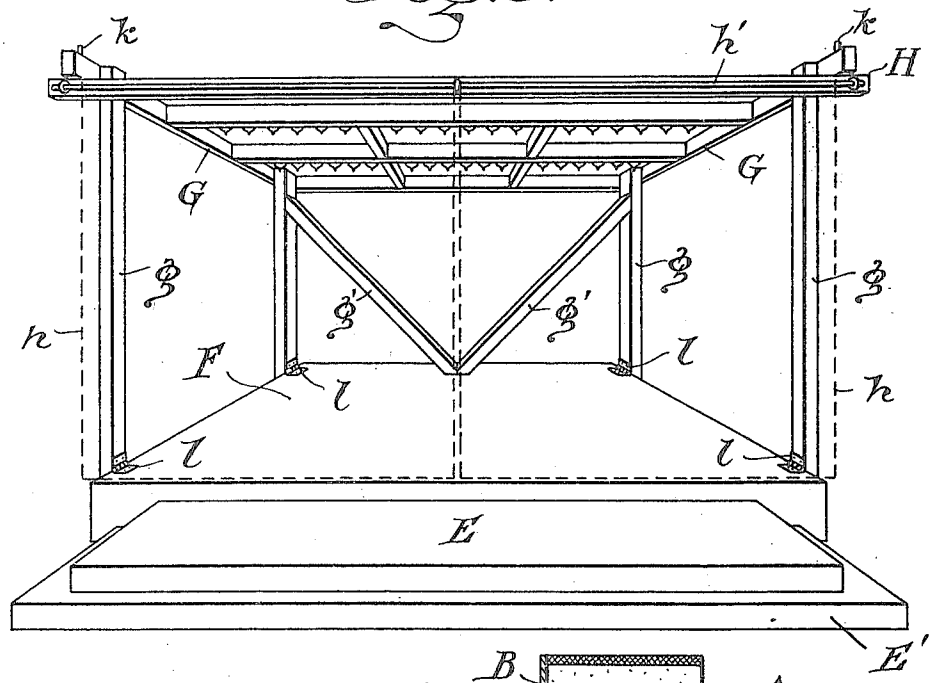


Fig. 4.

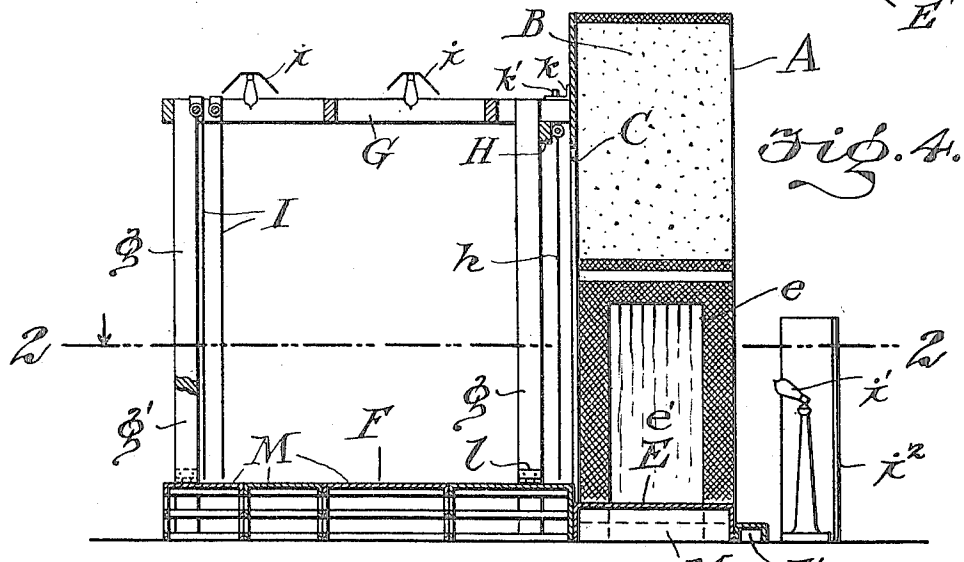
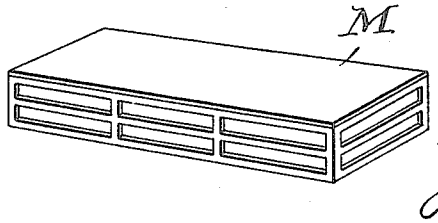


Fig. 5.



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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

STUART WALKER, OF NEW YORK, N. Y.

THEATRICAL STAGE AND EQUIPMENT.

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Application filed May 27, 1916. Serial No. 100,264.

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, STUART WALKER, a citizen of the United States, residing in the city of New York, borough of Manhattan, county and State of New York, have invented certain new and useful Theatrical Stages and Equipment, of which the following is a specification.

This invention is a theatrical stage and equipment and embodies a theatrical unit particularly adapted for employment in any hall or auditorium which does not embody the essential appointments necessary to theatrical productions as now staged. The invention is, however, not restricted to this environment but is adapted for general application.

In theaters and other places where the dramatic arts are practised, the acts are conducted on a single large stage occupying a position rearwardly of a proscenium opening formed in the front wall of the auditorium. This arrangement is such that when the curtain is down, the audience faces a flat blank expanse of wall and curtain. The whole effect is unreal, affected and formal, and, even when the curtain is raised to portray the act, this impression remains so that it is only after the audience has become engrossed in the plot that the stiffness of the arrangement wears off. This has long been recognized and theatrical architects and stage designers have endeavored by highly ornamenting the proscenium arch and curtain to dissipate this impression with a view to making the play seem more real, natural and not removed from the audience. The tendency, to-day, is, as far as possible, to make the audience feel that they are a part of the play and that they are present at the loci or habitat of the scene of the act. This has never been fully accomplished prior to the present invention because of the fact that as soon as the curtain dropped at the conclusion of the act, the audience were immediately reminded that they were after all only in a theater and the same impressions that existed at the opening of the play had to be overcome after each successive fall of the curtain.

With the foregoing in mind, the fundamental object of the present invention is the provision of a stage and equipment which would bring the audience nearer to the play so that the play will seem uncere-monious, unconventional and will not be stiff, unnatural or affected. The invention is aimed to make the audience feel entirely at home and in the surroundings in which the act is staged.

Speaking generally, the invention embodies a front wall adapted to extend across the front of the theater and provided with a reëntrant portion in the form of a recess or alcove in the back of which is formed the proscenium arch with its usual curtain. Rearwardly of the proscenium arch, and normally concealed by the curtain, is the main stage, while forwardly of the arch and positioned in the reëntrant or alcove portion is a fore-stage, which is, in the preferred embodiment of the invention, at all times exposed to the view of the audience. At the opposite sides of the alcove are entrances through which the artists may appear upon the scene or gain entrance to the fore-stage, and positioned forwardly of the fore-stage, and on either side thereof, are concealed sources of light for illuminating the fore-stage and the main stage when the curtain is drawn back or raised. Additional illuminating means are positioned rearwardly of the front wall and associated with the main stage for illuminating the same.

The front wall is suitably decorated in such manner as to be harmonious with the general stage effects of the play to be acted and this decoration is preferably of such natural or easy character as to make the audience feel that they are a part of the picture and are in a room of the kind depicted by the decorations of the front wall.

A further object of the invention is the incorporation of these fundamental features of my invention in a collapsible structure, the stage and equipment thereof being so formed, proportioned and associated that it may be readily packed in comparatively small parcels and shipped from one place to another to be substantially set up or assembled with ease and dexterity. By virtue of this collapsible construction, the invention is made applicable for use in auditoriums, halls or ball-rooms which are not designed or normally provided with the arrangement necessary for rendering theatricals, plays, and the like.

Features and attainments of the invention other than those specified will be apparent from the following description, read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

In the accompanying drawings the present invention is illustrated in its collapsible and transportable aspect, one practical form of the invention being illustrated. The disclosed means constitute, however, but one of the various mechanical forms in which the principle of the invention may be used, is for illustrative purposes only, and does not define the limits of the invention.

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a stage and equipment embodying the present invention, said stage being viewed from the front thereof. Fig. 2 is a horizontal section taken in the plane of line 2—2 of Fig. 4. Fig. 3 is a view similar to the view of Fig. 1, but the front wall, forming part of the equipment, is omitted in the interest of clearness. Fig. 4 is a vertical section taken in the plane of line 4—4 of Fig. 2. Fig. 5 is a perspective view of one of the packing elements which is employed when the stage is used as a portable construction. Fig. 6 is a detailed perspective of one form of detachable connection which may be employed to allow of the expeditious assembling and dismantling of the portable construction.

Because the invention is particularly adapted for employment as a portable theatrical unit, I have chosen that particular employment of the invention for illustrative purposes.

Referring to the drawings, A designates a front wall provided intermediate its lateral edges with a reëntrant portion B at the back of which is a proscenium opening C. Because of the presence of the proscenium opening in this wall, said wall will be hereinafter termed the "proscenium wall."

In the preferred embodiment of the invention, the proscenium wall partakes of the nature of "set pieces" and is made in sections so that it may be readily dismantled and packed in compact form for shipment. To this end, the wall A is detachably joined along the vertical lines d and, in a horizontal plane, along line d', the parts being normally maintained in their assembled position in any suitable and convenient manner.

Positioned in the reëntrant portion of the proscenium wall, and before the proscenium opening C, is a fore-stage E, and juxtaposed with the fore-stage is a main stage F positioned rearwardly of the proscenium opening. Entrance is normally had to the fore-stage from the wings through side openings e in the sides of the reëntrant portion of the proscenium wall. These openings e may be closed by doors or, as shown, by suspended sliding curtains e'.

The fore-stage E is preferably of sufficient height that persons acting thereon may be observed from all parts of an audience adapted to be seated forwardly of wall A and to allow the artists to readily mount to the fore-stage E, said stage is provided with one or more steps E' as shown in Figs. 1 and 3. Artists may, therefore, enter from the wings through the curtained openings e and, after ascending the platform fore-stage E, proceed to carry out the performance, irrespective of the main stage, should the play which they are executing so demand.

The floor of the main stage F, positioned rearwardly of the proscenium opening, is preferably raised to a slightly higher plane than the plane of the fore-stage E and, as it is on the main stage that most of the scenic effects are produced, suitable means is provided for supporting scenic drops, set pieces and lighting media. This means embodies a skeleton-like frame G resembling a gridiron, which is supported at substantially four corners by uprights g and suitable lateral bracing g'. Supported by the front of the gridiron G is a bar H carrying a rod h' on which is slidably mounted the main proscenium curtain or curtains h. The parts are so associated that curtains h are suspended immediately behind the proscenium openings C so that, when the curtains are held together, the main stage is concealed from view, whereas, when the curtains are withdrawn, the appointments of said main stage are exposed to the audience.

The gridiron frame G furnishes support for suitable scenic drops I, and also serves as a mounting for an overhead lighting system shown as embodying a plurality of lamp carrying reflectors i, which furnish, in the main, illumination on the main stage.

The fore-stage may be illuminated in various ways but the preferred manner of accomplishing this is to position spot lights i' forwardly of the proscenium wall A and conceal said lights from the audience by means of screens i^2. Of course, when the main curtain h is drawn, the spot lights i' serve to assist in the illumination of the main stage.

The artists desiring to enter upon the main stage from the wings may readily do so, steps j being provided to facilitate the ascension to the plane of the stage.

As heretofore stated, in the collapsible embodiment of the invention, the proscenium wall A is formed in sections so that it may be readily dismantled and packed in a small area for shipment. This principle of dividing up the elements of the construction is carried out throughout the entire structure. For example, the uprights g which support the gridiron frame G are attached to the main stage by a detachable connection l, the preferred form of which is shown in detail in Fig. 6. Detachable connection l is simply a loose hinge connection, the pin l' of which is adapted to be withdrawn at will for releasing the hinge parts and to be inserted to secure the parts together. In the securing of the uprights g of the main stage,

one of the plates of the connection is rigidly secured to the stage while the complementary plate is similarly secured to one of the uprights so that when the upright is placed in position, pin *l'* may be inserted to lock the parts together. The gridiron frame G is mounted on the uprights *g* in the same or other suitable detachable manner, and the various component parts, such as the beams or bars from which frame G is formed, are also detachably assembled so that the frame may be dismantled and packed in a relatively small space.

When the parts are assembled in the operative positions shown in Figs. 3 and 4, a remarkably rigid construction results and proscenium wall A is maintained in proper position relative to the main stage and its superstructure so as to be held in rigid upstanding position by any suitable connection such as a plurality of keepers *k* mounted on the back of the proscenium wall and adapted to coöperate with pins *k'* mounted near the forward edge of the gridiron G.

It will be manifest that when the superstructure of the main stage and the proscenium wall are dismantled, they break up into a comparatively large number of relatively small parts which, in loose condition, would be inconvenient to transport and would be apt to become lost or broken. The transportation of these parts is facilitated by providing containers or crates into which said parts may be compactly packed for shipment. In accordance with this invention, these crates are so formed and proportioned that they, in themselves, serve as the main stage and fore-stage when the parts are unpacked and assembled in operative positions.

In Fig. 5 one of these crates M is shown in detail. Crate M may be of any structural form desired, but is preferably so constructed that at least one of its faces is flat and regular. Quite a number of these crates is necessary for the packing of the equipment and the crates vary in size in accordance with the parts they are adapted to maintain. However, the apportionments of the parts in packing is such that when unpacked a plurality of crates M will be provided, some of which may be larger than others and of different heights, but a plurality of which may be assembled to form platforms, one of which constitutes the main stage and the other the fore-stage.

Thus, as shown in Figs. 2 and 4, the main stage is composed of seven crates, placed edge to edge and all of the same height, whereas, the fore-stage is shown as formed from two crates. The steps E' surrounding the fore-stage on three sides may either serve as containers for some small parts or may be packed within one of the large crates. In this manner every part necessary to the complete outfitting of a theatrical unit has its prescribed functions to perform, both while the unit is set up for exhibition and while it is in the process of transportation. There is no necessity for a large number of superfluous packing boxes and crates which have no other function and simply house or contain certain fittings during transportation. In the embodiment shown, the parts are so organized in proportion that the entire stage and its equipment will occupy in its entirety nine crates, any one of which is of size to be expeditiously handled during transportation.

The collapsible unit of this invention may be, therefore, tersely described as a complete theater which can be tied up in a box, shipped anywhere and set up with expedition and in a remarkably short time. The invention is, therefore, particularly adapted for use in ball-rooms at such time when a host desires to entertain his guests with a theatrical as part of an evening's enjoyment since the theatrical unit may be shipped to the house, put up in the afternoon and taken down and transported away the following morning. This also applies to theatricals in public halls, auditoriums and similar places of amusement.

Aside from the great ease with which the unit may be shipped from place to place, it has the further marked advantage so that, when set up and the play acted thereon all of its appointments are such as to bring the artists in chummy nearness to the audience, particularly in a ballroom where the stages and proscenium wall are supported directly upon the floor of the room. The audience, therefore, do not get the impression that they are peeping through a hole in the wall at a play, but rather that the play is being acted in their presence and that they are in the room where the scene is taking place. This is rendered more realistic by the entrance of the artists through the curtained openings *e* which give the impression to the audience that they are but additional doors to the room in which said audience are seated. Another advantage of the arrangement is that persons desiring to enter the stage from the audience are not required to go through the stage door somewhere in the rear or climb up the plane of the stage.

The whole effect produced by this invention, when employed in the environment stated, is to render the act unceremonious, unaffected, and entirely lacking in stiffness. This is largely due to the fact that during the changing of scenery on the main stage, while the curtains *h* are drawn, the audience is not required to face a broad flat curtain expanse, but, at such times, sees the arrangement as shown in Fig. 1 there being no monotony whatsoever.

It will be apparent from the foregoing

description of the invention in its portable form that many of the features therein employed may be used to great advantage in theaters which are dedicated entirely to stage productions; for example, the principle of the reëntrant front wall in which is positioned a proscenium opening with a fore-stage before the opening, a main stage rearwardly thereof and side entrances to the fore-stage in the proscenium wall. This arrangement would entirely counteract the blank and bare appearance hereinbefore referred to as inherent in practically all theaters.

Other features of advantage inchoate in this invention which would be desirable in theatrical construction will be manifest to those skilled in the art and some of these features might be employed without necessarily employing all. Accordingly, the present invention is to be understood as not limited to the illustrative showing made but as broadly novel as is commensurate with the pending claims.

Having thus fully described the invention, what I claim as new, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is:

1. In a theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a reëntrant portion, a proscenium opening in the reëntrant portion, a fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening, a main stage positioned rearwardly of the proscenium opening, entrances in the reëntrant portion of the proscenium wall and on either side of the proscenium opening, and a curtain for closing the proscenium opening to conceal the main stage.

2. In a theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a reëntrant portion, a proscenium opening in the reëntrant portion, an elevated fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening, a main stage positioned rearwardly of the proscenium opening and above the plane of the forestage, and an entrance to the forestage from the wings through the reëntrant portion of the proscenium wall.

3. In a theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a reëntrant portion, a proscenium opening in the reëntrant portion, an elevated fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening, a main stage positioned rearwardly of the proscenium opening and above the plane of the fore-stage and an entrance at each side of the fore-stage through the reëntrant portion of the proscenium wall.

4. In a theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a proscenium opening, a forestage positioned in front of the proscenium opening, a main stage positioned behind the proscenium opening, a curtain for closing the proscenium opening to conceal the main stage, and an entrance to the fore-stage through the proscenium wall.

5. In a theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a proscenium opening, a forestage positioned in front of the proscenium opening, a main stage positioned behind the proscenium opening and elevated above the fore-stage, a curtain for closing the proscenium opening to conceal the main stage, and an entrance to the fore-stage through the proscenium wall.

6. In a theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a reëntrant portion, a proscenium opening in the reëntrant portion, a fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening, a main stage positioned rearwardly of the proscenium opening, entrances in the reëntrant portion of the proscenium wall and on either side of the proscenium opening, a curtain for closing the proscenium opening to conceal the main stage and sources of light positioned forwardly of the proscenium wall and laterally of the fore-stage.

7. In a theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a reëntrant portion, a proscenium opening in the reëntrant portion, a fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening, a main stage positioned rearwardly of the proscenium opening, entrances in the reëntrant portion of the proscenium wall and on either side of the proscenium opening, a curtain for closing the proscenium opening to conceal the main stage, sources of light positioned forwardly of the proscenium wall and laterally of the fore-stage, and additional sources of light rearwardly of the proscenium wall for illuminating the main stage.

8. A theatrical arrangement embodying a wall provided with a reëntrant portion, a proscenium opening in the reëntrant portion, a fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening, sources of illumination positioned forwardly of the proscenium wall and laterally of the fore-stage, and means for concealing said sources of illumination, in combination with a main stage positioned rearwardly of the proscenium opening, an entrance to the fore-stage through the proscenium wall, illuminating means rearwardly of the proscenium wall for lighting the main stage and a curtain for closing the proscenium opening to conceal the main stage.

9. In a collapsible theatrical arrangement the combination of a wall provided with a proscenium opening and embodying a plurality of parts detachably secured together, a sectional fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening, and a sectional main stage positioned rearwardly of said opening, all of the parts being detachably assembled whereby the stages and prosce-

nium wall are adapted to be dismantled for shipment.

10. In a collapsible theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a proscenium opening and embodying a plurality of parts detachably secured together, a sectional fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening, a sectional main stage positioned rearwardly of said opening, and an entrance to the fore-stage through the proscenium wall, all of the parts being detachably assembled whereby the stages and proscenium wall are adapted to be dismantled for shipment.

11. In a collapsible theatrical arrangement the combination of a wall having a reentrant portion in which is formed a proscenium opening, said wall embodying a plurality of parts detachably secured together, a sectional fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening, a sectional main stage positioned rearwardly of said opening, and an entrance to the fore-stage through the reëntrant portion of the proscenium wall, all of the parts being detachably assembled whereby the stages and proscenium wall are adapted to be dismantled for shipment.

12. In a collapsible theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a proscenium opening and embodying a plurality of parts detachably secured together, and a plurality of containers into which the parts of the wall may be packed when the wall is dismantled for shipment, said containers being so formed that, when the wall is in place, said containers are adapted to collectively form a fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening and a main stage positioned rearwardly thereof.

13. In a collapsible theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall having a reentrant portion in which is formed a proscenium opening and an additional opening through which the performers may pass to a position, said wall embodying a plurality of parts detachably secured together, and a plurality of containers into which the parts of the wall may be packed when the wall is dismantled for shipment, said containers being so formed that, when the wall is in place, and containers are adapted to collectively form a fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening and a main stage positioned rearwardly thereof.

14. In a collapsible theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall having a reentrant portion in which is formed a proscenium opening, said wall embodying a plurality of parts detachably secured together, and a plurality of containers into which the parts of the wall may be packed when the wall is dismantled for shipment, said containers being so formed that, when the wall is in place, and containers are adapted to collectively form a fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening and a main stage positioned rearwardly thereof.

15. In a collopsible theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a proscenium opening and embodying a plurality of parts detachably secured together, a sectional fore-stage positioned forwardly of the proscenium opening, a sectional main stage positioned rearwardly of said opening, a curtain for closing the proscenium opening, and an entrance to the fore-stage through the proscenium wall, all of the parts being detachably assembled whereby the stages and proscenium wall are adapted to be dismantled for shipment.

16. In a collapsible theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a proscenium opening and embodying a plurality of parts detachably secured together, a curtain for closing the proscenium opening, a sectional fore-stage positioned in front of the proscenium opening, a sectional main stage positioned back of the proscenium opening, and a demountable superstructure on the main stage for supporting scenic drops and illuminating means, all of the parts being detachably assembled whereby they may be dismantled for shipment.

17. In a collapsible theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall provided with a proscenium opening and embodying a plurality of parts detachably secured together, a curtain for closing the proscenium opening, a sectional fore-stage positioned in front of the proscenium opening, a sectional main stage positioned back of the proscenium opening, the sections of the stages embodying a plurality of containers, and a demountable superstructure on the main stage for supporting scenic drops and illuminating means, all of the parts being detachably assembled whereby the proscenium wall and superstructure of the main stage may be dismantled and packed in the containers which normally constitute the stages.

18. In a collapsible theatrical arrangement, the combination of a wall, being provided with a reëntrant portion and having a proscenium opening formed in the reentrant portion embodying a plurality of parts detachably secured together, a curtain for closing the proscenium opening, a sectional fore-stage positioned in front of the proscenium opening, an entrance through the proscenium wall to the fore-stage, a sectional main stage positioned back of the proscenium opening, and a demountable superstructure on the main stage for supporting drops and illuminating means, all of the parts being detachably assembled whereby they may be dismantled for shipment.

19. In a collapsible theatrical arrange-

ment, the combination of a wall, provided with a reëntrant portion, and having a proscenium opening formed in the reëntrant portion, said wall embodying a plurality of parts detachably secured together, a curtain for closing the proscenium opening, a sectional fore-stage positioned in front of the proscenium opening, an entrance through the reëntrant portion of the proscenium wall to the forestage, a sectional main stage positioned back of the proscenium opening, the sections of the stages embodying a plurality of containers, and a demountable superstructure on the main stage for supporting scenic drops and illuminating means, all of the parts being detachably assembled whereby the proscenium wall and superstructure of the main stage may be dismantled and packed in the containers which normally constitute the stages.

In testimony whereof I have signed my name to this specification.

STUART WALKER.

Copies of this patent may be obtained for five cents each, by addressing the "Commissioner of Patents, Washington, D. C."