

- [54] **UMBRELLA PUPPET STAGE**
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- [22] Filed: **July 18, 1974**
- [21] Appl. No.: **489,706**
- [52] U.S. Cl. **272/21; 46/13; 135/2;**
135/16
- [51] Int. Cl.²..... **A63J 19/00**
- [58] Field of Search **272/21; 46/13; 135/1 R,**
135/2, 16, 35 S, 35 V; D88/3 B

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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A portable umbrella puppet stage for concealing a puppeteer within a foldable enclosure and for providing a performing area for a puppet. The stage is comprised of a collapsible umbrella roof having a circumferential skirt depending from the circular peripheral edge of the umbrella roof. The roof includes a central upright support that may be hand-held or connected to a stand mechanism for supporting the stage at prescribed elevations above a support surface. The skirt includes a rectangular stage opening. A backdrop to the opening is spaced inwardly toward the central support from the stage opening. The backdrop is comprised of a flexible fabric material depending from the umbrella roof. Selective height adjustment of the stage in relation to a support surface may be provided by the stand mechanism. Further, the complete assembly including the umbrella roof, skirt, backdrop, and stand mechanism may be collapsed and folded into a relatively small package for storage or transportation.

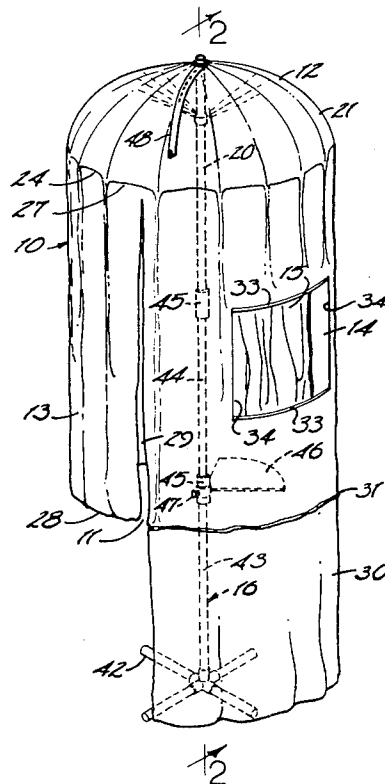
[56] **References Cited**

UNITED STATES PATENTS			
574,091	12/1896	Irvine, Jr.....	135/2
1,219,905	3/1917	Barringer.....	135/2
2,834,150	5/1958	White.....	46/13
3,333,595	8/1967	Bannister et al.....	135/2

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Ford Treasury of Station Wagon Living, Simon and Schuster, Inc., Copyright 1958, p. 188.

6 Claims, 3 Drawing Figures



UMBRELLA PUPPET STAGE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates basically to stages for puppets or marionettes and more particularly to such stages that are portable.

Puppet stages presently utilized in churches, schools and clubs are usually constructed to be rather permanent in nature or are relatively complex to assemble. Such stages are generally made of plywood or other rigid sheet material and are difficult to store and are not easily moved from one place to another. It is therefore desirable to obtain a portable puppet stage that is collapsible to a relatively small package for ease in storage and handling. It is further desirable to obtain such a puppet stage that may be selectively adjusted to locate the puppet stage opening at different elevational locations. This feature would enable usage of the stage by a large age range of children.

U.S. Pat. No. 574,091 to R. Irvine, Jr. discloses an umbrella tent employing an umbrella having sides suspended from the ribs of the umbrella so as to retain the lower edges thereof at a position adjacent the ground surface. A "weight" ring is provided that is joined or made in section to which the lower edge of the sides may be connected. A stand is also provided to enable angular positioning of the central support of the umbrella relative to a vertical axis.

U.S. Pat. No. 2,834,150 to M. M. White discloses a doorway puppet stage that is portable in the sense that it may be removed and mounted to open doorways. This stage provides a draw-type curtain but does not utilize a backdrop for providing a background for the performing puppets. Further, the stage does not provide an enclosure for the puppeteer.

U.S. Pat. No. 2,221,366 to C. F. Bisbing et al discloses an umbrella robe. This apparatus is comprised of a conventional umbrella having a peripheral depending skirting along with windows to protect the user against the elements such as rain and the like. The device is supported solely by the user and is designed for the specific purpose of protecting the user against adverse weather conditions.

A cabana is described in the H. G. Bannister et al U.S. Pat. No. 3,333,595. This device is also an umbrella with a peripheral depending skirting that is fixed to a porous-shaped footing or foundation. The purpose for this device is to provide shelter at beaches and swimming pools. The primary concern of this apparatus is to provide an enclosure that is not readily blown over in the wind.

It is a first object of my invention to provide a portable puppet stage that is easily collapsible for storage and handling purposes.

A further object is to provide such a puppet stage that is inexpensive to construct since it is formed from conventional easily obtained parts.

A further object is to provide such a puppet stage that is elevationally adjustable to locate the stage opening at selected heights to accommodate puppeteers from a wide age group range.

A further object is to provide such a puppet stage that includes a backdrop portion inward of the stage opening that serves to conceal the puppeteer and provide a background setting for the puppet stage.

These and other objects and advantages will become clearly evident upon reading the following description which, taken with the accompanying drawings, disclose a preferred form of my invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A preferred form of the present invention is illustrated in the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a pictorial view of the puppet stage embodying a preferred form of my invention;

FIG. 2 is a section taken along line 2—2 in FIG. 1; and

FIG. 3 is an elevational view of the stage in a folded storage condition.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

A puppet stage is illustrated in the accompanying drawings embodying a preferred form of the present invention. It is indicated generally by the reference numeral 10. Puppet stage 10 provides an umbrella roof 12 and circumferential skirt 13 that form an enclosure 11 in which a puppeteer may stand or sit while operating his puppets (usually hand-held) in a performing area defined by a stage opening 14. Stage opening 14 is formed in the circumferential skirt 13 which depends from the umbrella roof 12. A backdrop 15 is provided inwardly of the stage opening 14 to conceal the puppeteers and to provide a background for the performing puppets. A stand means 16 is further provided to enable support of the stage at selected elevational settings.

The umbrella roof 12 is illustrated in some detail by FIG. 2. As shown, the roof 12 is similar in appearance to a conventional umbrella. Roof 12 includes a central support 20 and a fabric canopy 12 mounted to the support by means of hinged ribs 22. Roof 12 may be selectively collapsed from the open condition shown in FIG. 2 to a closed condition as shown in FIG. 3. This movement is facilitated by a slide collar 23 mounting the hinged ribs 22 for sliding movement along central support 20. When in the open condition (FIG. 2) the outward edge of the fabric canopy 21 defines a peripheral circular edge 24. It is from this edge 24 that skirt 13 depends.

Skirt 13 includes a top edge 27 that may either be an integral part of or fastened to peripheral circular edge 24 of roof 12. A bottom skirt edge 28 is spread elevationally below top edge 27. The skirt extends circumferentially about the peripheral roof edge 24 to conceal the puppeteer and to define the stage opening 14. Preferably, the skirt 13 is formed of a flexible material that may be easily foled.

In FIG. 1, skirt 13 is shown with a vertical slit 29. Slit 29 enables access to enclosure 11 and facilitates folding of the complete puppet stage assembly. Although only one slit 29 is shown, several may be utilized to enable a puppeteer to operate from within enclosure 11 or from a position outside the enclosure.

A removable skirt extension 30 may be provided to conceal puppeteers when the stage is at an elevated condition. Skirt extension 30 may be easily attached to and removed from bottom edge 28 of skirt 13 by a zipper 31 or other convenient fastening means such as snaps. When in the collapsed condition, the skirt extension 30 may be utilized as a wrapper or may be folded

and enclosed within the area between the folded roof 12 and central support 20.

Stage opening 14 is rectangular in configuration having horizontal sides 33 and vertical sides 34. The rectangular configuration of stage 14 is maintained by horizontal stays 35 sewn into the skirt fabric. It has been found that the stays 35 do not impede folding of the stage to the storage condition. The stays also provide a somewhat rigid support for puppets or for stage props.

An important feature of the present invention is the backdrop 15 which is shown in substantial detail by FIG. 2. As shown, backdrop 15 is mounted to roof 12 and spaced inwardly toward support 20 from opening 14. The backdrop includes a top edge 38 mounted to the roof 12 and a bottom edge 39 extending downwardly below the horizontal sides 33 of stage opening 14. As shown, backdrop 15 is of sufficient dimension to completely conceal the puppeteer from the view of the audience through stage opening 14. Backdrop 15 further enables use of background scenery.

To utilize puppet stage 10 as described to this point, the user may hold the central support 20 at a desired elevation while the puppets are performing. This may be a distinct advantage for relatively short presentations and where the stage must be moved about quickly. However, stand means 16 provides a more stable support for the stage when longer performances are desired.

Stand means 16 is basically comprised of a base section 42 having upright tubular sections 43 and 44 extending vertically therefrom to engage and support the central support 20. Tubular sections 43, 44 may be provided with sockets 45 as shown or other devices such as complementary threaded ends to facilitate their assembly and to enable height adjustment of the stage opening relative to the support or ground surface. When it is desirable that the stage opening be located at a relatively high position, both tubular sections 43 and 44 may be utilized, connected end to end and mounting the central support 20 to locate the stage opening at an elevation as indicated in FIG. 2 by solid lines. If the stage opening is to be located at a lower elevation, the central tubular section 44 may be removed and the section 43 utilized to support central support 20. The resulting position of the roof 12, skirt 13 and stage opening 14 is shown in FIG. 2 by dashed lines. In this position, the bottom edge 28 of skirt 13 is brought into close proximity to the ground supporting surface.

A table 46 is provided and is movably mounted to the stand means 16. Table 46 provides easy access for additional puppets or a resting place for script or other material. Table 46 may be elevationally adjusted to any desirable height along the stand means 16 or central support 20 simply by loosening a set screw 47 and moving the table to the desired elevation, then retightening the set screw.

To facilitate storage, a buckle strap 48 is provided. Buckle strap 48 may be removably mounted to the central support 20 while the stage is in use as shown in FIG. 1. Buckle strap 48 is utilized to compress the roof section 12 over the skirt 13 and, if desired, skirt extension

30 to facilitate storage and prevent loss of any elements described above. In the storage condition, table 46 may be lowered closely adjacent to base 42 to facilitate a compact storage configuration of the stage assembly.

5 It should be understood that the above-described embodiment is simply illustrative of the principles of this invention and that numerous other embodiments may be readily devised by those skilled in the art without deviating therefrom. Therefore, only the following claims are intended to define this invention.

10 What I claim is:

1. A portable puppet stage for concealing a puppeteer and for providing a performing area for a puppet, comprising:

- 15 a central upright support;
- a collapsible umbrella roof on said support having a circular peripheral roof edge;
- a circumferential skirt of flexible fabric depending from the peripheral roof edge to form an enclosure with the roof for concealing the puppeteer;
- 20 a stage opening extending through said skirt at a location thereon between top and bottom skirt edges; and

a backdrop within the enclosure, depending from a portion of said umbrella roof spaced inwardly from said peripheral roof edge, said backdrop depending to a lower edge terminating below said stage opening and above the bottom skirt edge and spaced inwardly from the stage opening a sufficient distance to define a performing area between the backdrop and the stage opening in which the puppet may be manipulated by the puppeteer with the backdrop further concealing the puppeteer and said backdrop also being sufficiently close to said stage opening to provide a background setting for the performing area.

2. The puppet stage set out in claim 1 further comprising:

- 40 a slit within said skirt extending upwardly from the top skirt edge at said peripheral roof edge to a bottom skirt edge below said top skirt edge, allowing free access to said enclosure.

3. The puppet stage set out in claim 1 wherein said stage opening is rectangular, having horizontal and vertical edges with said horizontal edges being reinforced by horizontal stays.

4. The puppet stage as set out in claim 1 further including central stand means operatively engageable with the central support for holding the umbrella roof at a prescribed location above a support surface, said stand means being adjustable to enable selective height adjustment of said stage opening.

5. The puppet stage set out in claim 4 wherein the stand means is comprised of individual tubular segments interfitting to provide said selective height adjustment.

6. The puppet stage set out in claim 1 further comprising a removable skirt extension removably mountable to the bottom edge of said skirt elevationally below said stage opening.

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