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BODY SUPPORTED PUPPET STAGE

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Fig. 1

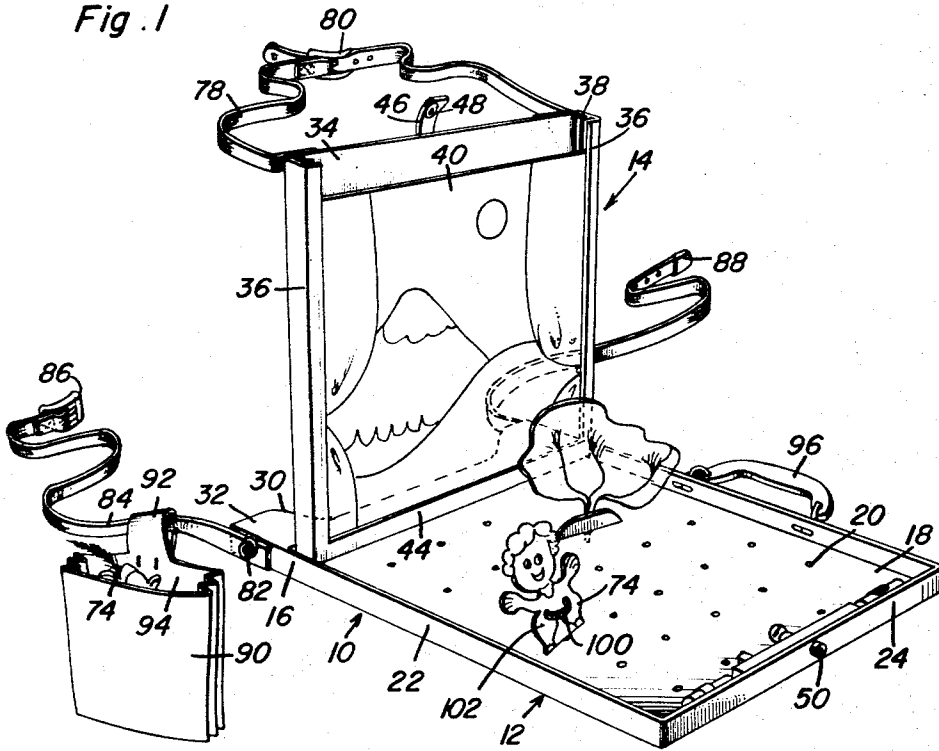


Fig. 2

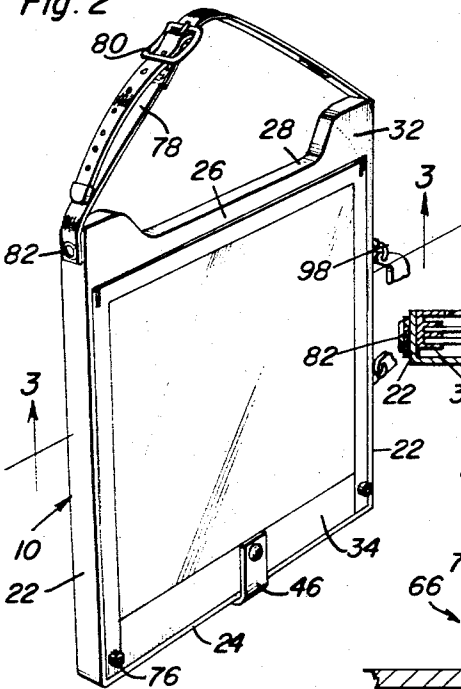


Fig. 4

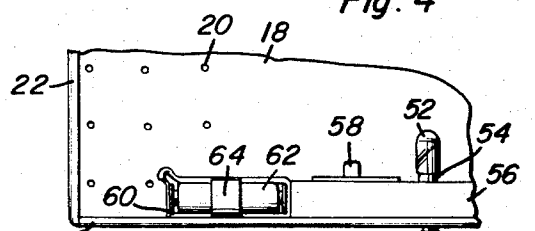


Fig. 3

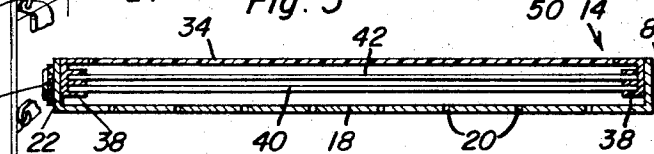
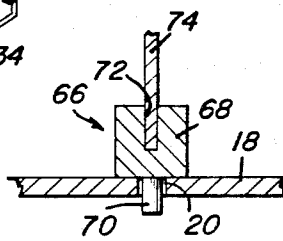


Fig. 5



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BODY SUPPORTED PUPPET STAGE
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A body attached puppet theater including a shallow tray forming a stage and a hinged lid therefor forming a back drop panel. The tray includes a perforated bottom receiving selector figurines while the lid has opposed grooves receiving scenic panels. The inner edge of the tray is formed to fit the body of the person using the device and straps are provided for attaching the device to the person. Illumination means is provided at the front of the tray to illuminate the stage and back-drop and certain of the figurines have elastic elements thereon to receive the fingers to enable the figurines to be moved along the stage surface.

The present invention generally relates to a portable puppet theater and more particularly to such a puppet theater generally in the shape of an attaché case and having neck and waist straps to hold the device in place when being used.

An object of the present invention is to provide a portable puppet theater including a horizontal supported supporting board that has uniformly orientated apertures therethrough for adjustably supporting various items thereon together with a pivoted backdrop including interchangeable members to vary the backdrop scene along with a means for illuminating the theater thus providing a highly novel and entertaining puppet theater.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a puppet theater having neck and waist straps which can be employed for carrying the device over the shoulder with there also being provided a handle for carrying the puppet theater when in its closed condition thus enabling the device to be either carried over the shoulder by using the straps or carried by using the handle attached thereto.

A further important object of the present invention is to provide a puppet theater including characters thereon which are readily recognizable together with a structure on the rear surface thereof to enable the characters to be mounted on the fingers of the child or person using the device so that the child may walk the puppets with their fingers inserted in an elastic band in the rear thereof thus enabling a more realistic characterization by the child.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a puppet theater in the form of a tray having a perforated board forming a stage together with a plurality of puppets for mounting on a puppet supporting device or for mounting on the fingers for manipulation so that the puppets may be conveniently stored in the puppet pocket.

Still another object of the present invention is to provide a puppet theater in the form of a tray having a hinged backdrop attached to the rear surface thereof together with illuminating means for illuminating the stage and the backdrop thus rendering the device highly enter-

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taining and especially useful in enabling handicapped as well as normal children to express their own creativity in designing, writing and performing on their own puppet theater. Children convalescing in hospital or at home will find the puppet theater quite useful in keeping themselves occupied and at the same time enabling individual expression of the child.

Still another important feature of the present invention is to provide a puppet theater which is simple in construction and involves basically a tray structure having a lid-type cover in the form of a backdrop with the entire structure being relatively inexpensive while yet highly entertaining and novel.

These together with other objects and advantages which will become subsequently apparent reside in the details of construction and operation as more fully hereinafter described and claimed, reference being had to the accompanying drawings forming a part hereof, wherein like numerals refer to like parts throughout, and in which:

FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of the puppet theater of the present invention illustrating the same in the position in which it is normally used;

FIGURE 2 is a perspective view of the puppet theater in closed position;

FIGURE 3 is a detail sectional view taken substantially upon a plane passing along section line 3-3 of FIGURE 2 illustrating further structural details of the invention;

FIGURE 4 is a fragmental plan view illustrating the structure for illuminating the stage and backdrop; and

FIGURE 5 is a detail sectional view illustrating the support for a puppet or a portion of the scenery supported on the stage.

Referring now specifically to the drawings, the numeral 10 generally designates the puppet theater of the present invention which includes basically two component parts including a tray generally designated by the numeral 12 and a backdrop generally designated by the numeral 14 which are hingedly connected to each other by a friction-type hinge 16 of conventional construction whereby the backdrop 14 may pivot from a closed position substantially forming a closure for the tray 12 to an upright position in perpendicular relation thereto and will be frictionally retained in either adjusted position.

The tray 12 includes a stage 18 in the form of a perforated board with uniform arrangement of apertures 20 therein. This board 18 may be constructed of fiberboard or the like and is provided with rigid upstanding side flanges 22, an upstanding front flange 24 and a rear flange or wall member 26 which is relatively wide and provided with a notch or cutout area 28 therein to fit and engage the front of the waist region of a wearer. The ends of the notch 28 are outwardly flared as at 30 and terminate in enlarged edge portions 32 so that the tray 12 may be supported generally in horizontal orientation as illustrated in FIGURE 1.

The backdrop 14 is provided with a top wall or closure lid 34 rigidly affixed to a pair of side members 36 having a pair of inwardly facing channels 38 thereon which define trackways for a pair of backdrop panels 40 and 42 which are longitudinally slidable in the channels 38. The side members 36 are interconnected by an end member 44 which also has the channels 38 continuous thereacross for supporting the backdrop panels 40 and 42. As illustrated in FIGURE 3, the side members 36 are orientated

interiorly of the flanges 22 of the tray 12 and the depth of the flanges 22 is such that the backdrop or closure lid 14 will be flush with the top edges of the flanges 22 and 24 when in closed position.

A flexible retaining strap 46 is attached to the panel 34 and includes a female snap fastener element 48 for connection with a male snap fastener element 50 on the flange 24 for retaining the closure lid 14 in closed position as illustrated in FIGURE 2.

Mounted against the inner surface of the front wall or flange 24 is a light bulb 52 supported in a light bulb socket 54 by a housing 56 which includes a conventional on and off switch 58 and a pair of dry cell battery supporting elements 60 for supporting a pair of dry cell batteries 62 in a conventional series manner for energizing the light bulb 52 when the switch 58 is closed thus illuminating the stage 18 and the backdrop panels 40 and 42 depending on which is in front. The battery support 60 includes spring clips 64 for securely retaining the batteries in place even when the puppet theater is being carried and may be subjected to rather rough usage.

A plurality of holders generally designated by numeral 66 are supported on the stage 18 and include a body 68 having a depending peg or pegs 70 received in one or a plurality of the apertures 20. The body 68 is provided with a slot 72 for receiving a card, panel or paper element in the form of a scene or figurine designated by the numeral 74 which complements the backdrop panel thus forming means for adjustably supporting different scenery items or different figurines in adjusted position on the stage 18.

The upper corners of the backdrop or lid 34 have snap fastener connections 76 with a neck strap 78 having a buckle 80 associated therewith for adjustment. Also, the rear edge of the flange 22 where it is enlarged at 32 has a snap fastener connection 82 with a waist strap 84 which also has a buckle type connector 86 for engagement with the apertured end of the strap designated by numeral 88 thus enabling the length of the straps to be adjusted in a well known manner. Mounted on the strap 84 is a pocket structure 90 having a loop 92 encircling the strap 84. The pocket structure 90 has an open upper end 94 for receiving the paper panel 74 or puppets for storage when not in use.

To facilitate carrying the device when in closed position, a generally U-shaped rigid handle 96 is provided on one of the walls 22 and is attached to the wall 22 by the usual loops 98. Thus, when the device is disclosed, it may be carried by using the handle 96. Also, the device may be carried over the shoulder by leaving the waist strap 84 attached thereto and adjusting the buckle structure 86 accordingly.

Also, the puppets or figures 74 have an elastic strap such as a rubber band 100 attached thereto by insertion through slits 102 extending inwardly from the edges of the puppet and terminating in enlargements which receive the rubber band 100. This enables the fingers to be inserted through the rubber band in the rear of the paper figurine or puppet 74 in such a manner that the fingers may project slightly below the bottom edge of a figurine so that it can be walked around the stage by moving the two fingers in the manner of walking with the ends of the two fingers engaging the stage.

A number of the puppets are constructed of plastic and have a permanent puppet character on one side. The other side is blank and washable so that a child or other manipulator can draw his own picture with erasable crayon, wash it off and draw another picture. The two interchangeable backdrops 40 and 42 are preferably constructed of plastic with permanent scenes thereon as illustrated in FIGURE 1. The back panel or closure lid 34 may also be constructed of washable translucent plastic which can be employed for drawing additional scenes in erasable crayon or the like.

The stage having the perforations therein permits pieces of scenery to be placed in any desired position and the

tray structure is sufficiently deep to store the various puppets, straps, wash off sponge, crayons and puppet pocket when in stored condition.

By using the backdrop panel 34 and the illumination structure at the front of the device, the backdrop panels 40 and 42 may be removed thus enabling a child to employ the backdrop panel 34 for shadow effects thus introducing another entertaining feature to the device. The puppet theater or tray of this invention enables the child to see the movements of the puppets thus enabling him to entertain himself and more readily express his own creativity.

The foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation shown and described, and accordingly all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention as claimed.

What is claimed as new is as follows:

1. A portable puppet theater comprising a shallow tray having a bottom forming a stage surface, a closure lid for the tray hingedly attached thereto at one end thereof for orientation in substantially perpendicular relation to the tray, means on the tray for encircling the waist portion of a person using the theater, means on the closure lid for encircling the neck of a person using the theater, the bottom of said tray including a plurality of perforations, and changeable elements including a support member having a depending peg insertable into selective apertures for adjustable orientation on the tray, said closure lid including at least one channel receiving a changeable backdrop scenic panel and means at the forward end of the tray for illuminating the stage formed by the bottom of the tray and the backdrop panels.

2. The structure defined in claim 1 wherein certain of said removably supported members supported on the tray includes a planar figurine having an elastic band associated therewith for receiving a pair of fingers whereby the fingers may be projected below the figurine for engaging the stage surface for walking the figurines thereon.

3. The structure defined in claim 2 wherein the means on the tray for encircling the waist includes an adjustable strap construction, and a supporting pocket mounted on said strap and including a storage space for receiving the movable scenes and figurines normally employed on the stage when not in use.

4. The structure defined in claim 1 wherein said means for illuminating the stage formed by the bottom of the tray and the backdrop panel includes a lightbulb and switch assembly mounted at the forward end of the tray, and dry cell battery means mounted at the forward end of the tray for energizing the lightbulb when the switch is closed.

5. The structure defined in claim 1 wherein the changeable elements include a figurine, means mounted on the figurine for receiving a finger therein for enabling manipulation of the figurine in relation to the stage surface.

6. A portable puppet theater comprising a shallow tray having a bottom forming a stage surface, a closure lid for the tray hingedly attached thereto adjacent one end thereof for orientation in substantially perpendicular relation to the tray, means on the puppet theater for supporting the same from a person using the theater, and movable elements having a support member engaged with the stage surface for adjustable orientation of the movable elements on the tray, said closure lid including facing grooves receiving a changeable backdrop scenic panel.

7. The structure as defined in claim 6 within said stage surface is provided with a plurality of sockets therein, the support member of the movable elements each including a depending projection insertable into selective sockets for retaining the movable element in adjustable orientation.

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8. The structure as defined in claim 6 together with battery operated illuminating means at the forward end of the tray for illuminating the stage surface formed by the bottom of the tray and the backdrop scenic panel.

9. The structure as defined in claim 6 wherein the movable elements include a band thereon for receiving a finger of a person using the theater to facilitate manipulation of the movable elements on the stage surface.

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