

Aug. 26, 1924.

1,505,942

E. O. BLANTON

ART OF PRODUCING MANIKIN ACTORS

Filed April 21, 1921

3 Sheets-Sheet 1

Fig. 1

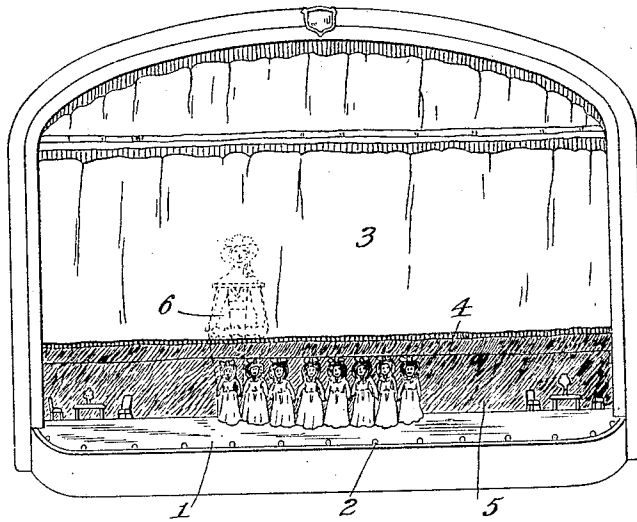
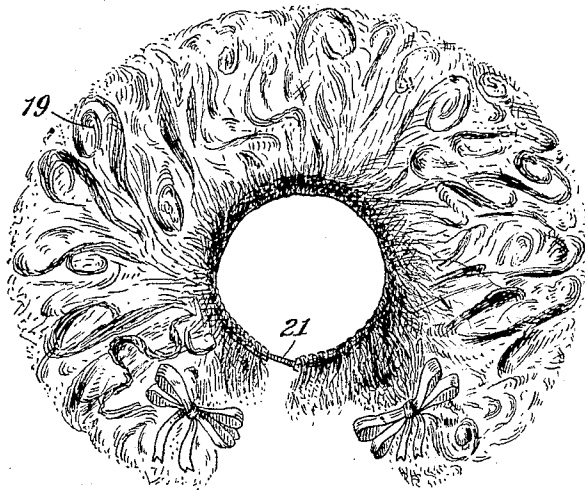


Fig. 4.



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Fig. 2.

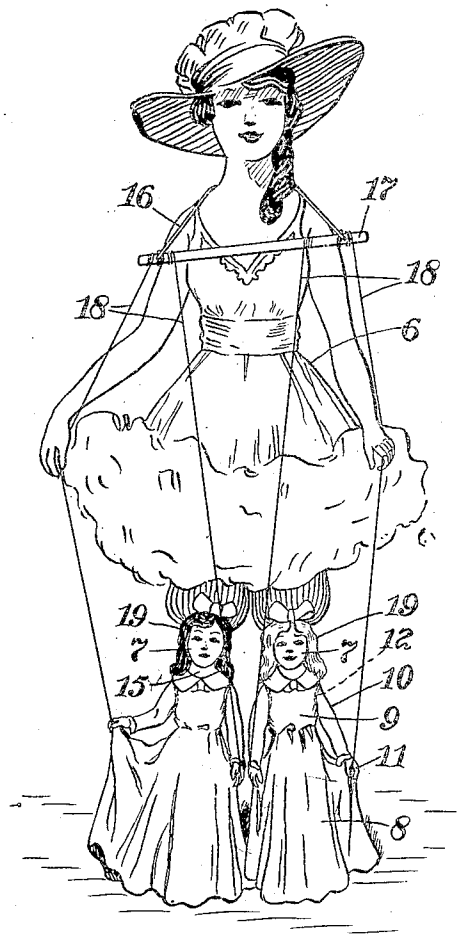


Fig. 3.

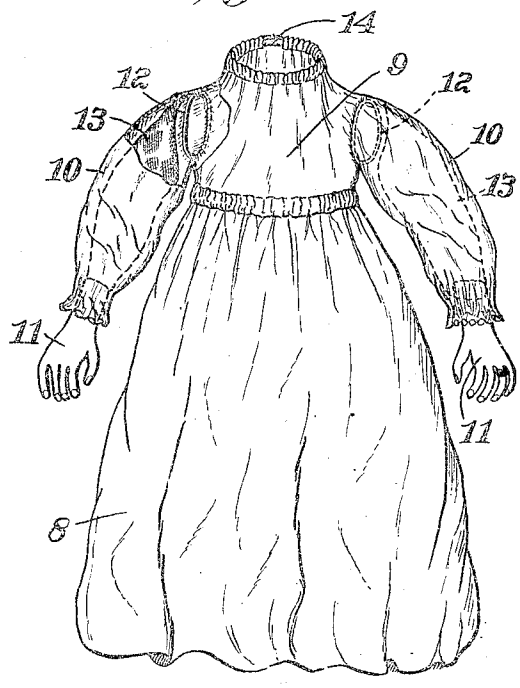
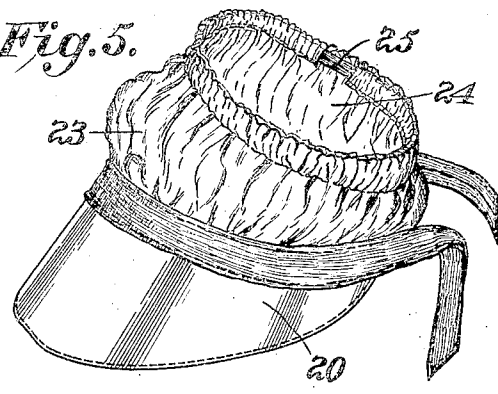


Fig. 5.



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3 Sheets-Sheet 3

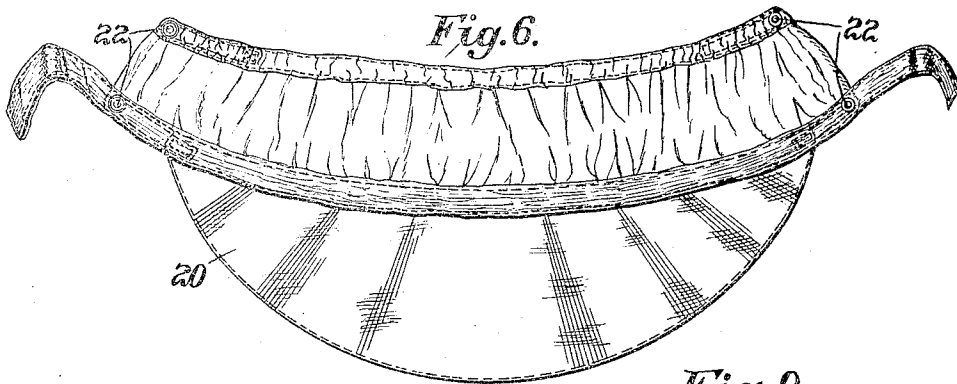


Fig. 7.

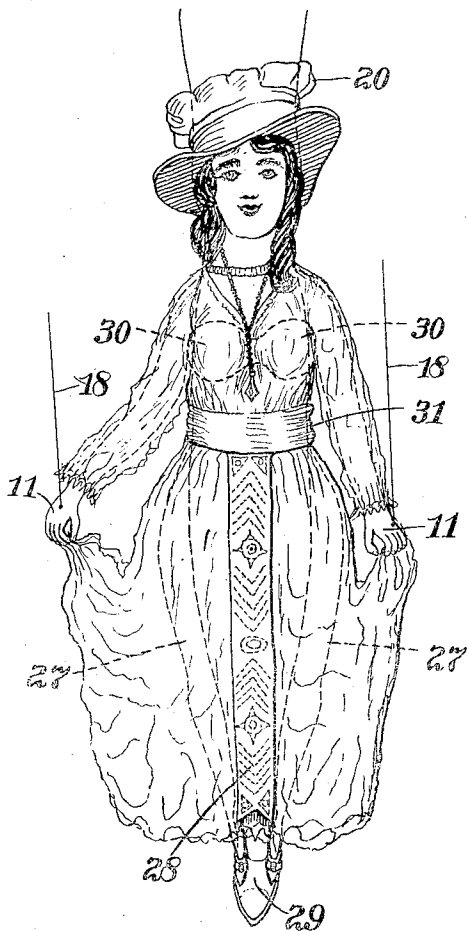


Fig. 9.

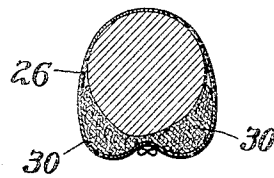
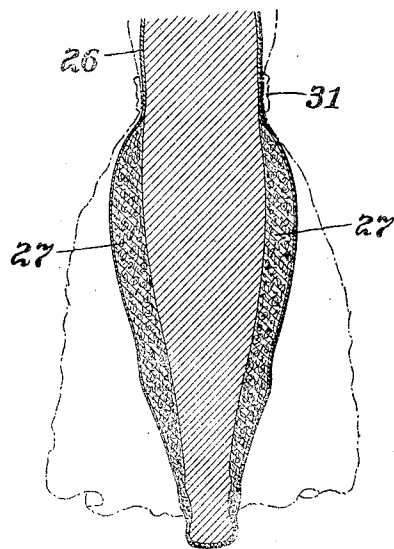


Fig. 8.



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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

ELMA OSBORN BLANTON, OF JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA.

ART OF PRODUCING MANIKIN ACTORS.

Application filed April 21, 1921. Serial No. 463,171.

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, ELMA OSBORN BLANTON, a citizen of the United States, residing at Jacksonville, in the county of Duval and State of Florida, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in the Art of Producing Manikin Actors, of which the following is a specification.

This invention relates to theatricals, and more particularly to the art of producing manikin characters for acting in pantomime roles in vaudeville sketches.

One of the essential features of this invention resides in the production of manikin pantomime theatricals by dressing the operators' legs and leaving the operators' arms free to manipulate the universally movable arms of the manikin so that they may be caused to gesticulate or make other movements characteristic of the human being.

Other very essential features of this invention will appear as the following specification is read in connection with the accompanying drawings which form a part of the application, and in which:

Figure 1 is a front view of a stage showing several operators with their legs dressed to produce the manikin figures and with the curtain broken away to show one of the operators,

Figure 2 is a full view of one of the operators showing the method of operating the arms of the manikin figures,

Figure 3 is a perspective view of one of the dresses removed and with parts in section so as to disclose the construction of the arm and neck portions,

Figure 4 is a top plan view of one of the wigs which are utilized,

Figure 5 shows a perspective view of a cap or hat which may be used with any of the costumes,

Figure 6 is a modified form of hat,

Figure 7 is a perspective view of the leg of an operator showing the same dressed in such manner that a dancer in tights is represented, and

Figure 8 is a vertical section taken through the leg of the operator in a plane normal to the line of vision in Figure 7.

Figure 9 is a transverse sectional view taken through Figure 8 at the bust line.

In the drawings, 1 indicates the ordinary stage, and 2 the usual foot lights. 3 represents a curtain of any suitable design, but

I preferably employ a curtain with a phantom edge such as is indicated at 4 so that it will not appear that the lower edge is resting upon the heads of the little manikin actors. There is also employed in the production of the sketches relatively dark or black background 5 which obscures the arm-operating cables or cords which will be hereinafter described.

Stage furniture of any suitable character may be employed and such scenery as is desirable will, of course, be supplied, but as this specification does not deal with these features they are not described specifically herein.

In the production of these sketches relatively thin operators are obtained in order that the diameter of the leg immediately above the calf will not be large and thereby secure a relatively small neck, as will be hereinafter understood, for the manikin actors or actresses as the case may be.

Each operator, indicated by the numeral 6, has her knees painted to indicate the face 7 of the actor or actress; that is, the eyes, nose, mouth and eyebrows are painted either directly on the skin of the knee cap or are painted upon a stocking at a point which will cover the knee cap as will be understood, the stocking, of course, to be flesh colored and to be rouged at the point where the cheeks would appear on a miniature human figure.

I shall first describe a dress to be employed for a manikin actress, and these each consist of a skirt 8, a waist or body portion 9 and sleeves 10 to which artificial hands 11 are attached. These hands may be made of any suitable material but are preferably made of some malleable metal which can be bent or moved to assume various positions or to hold various articles such as horns, tambourines, or with both hands holding trays or other such articles, all of which will be readily apparent to those versed in the theatrical art. The sleeves which are attached to the waist or body portion of the garment are constructed at the armholes with rigid rings 12 of wire or any other suitable material so as to prevent falling away and flattening of the garment at this point and the sleeves are padded as shown at 13 with some flexible type of padding so that the arm may be universally moved.

It will be clearly understood that the

skirt, waist and arm portions of the garment may be constructed in any suitable manner and the costumers will, of course, be called upon to devise such garments or costumes as may be most appropriate for the sketches which these little actors or actresses are made to perform, but each garment is supplied with an elastic neck band 14 adapted to constrict around the leg of the operator immediately below the knee in such manner that the leg of the operator immediately above the neck-band may represent the neck 15 of the manikin actor.

The face of the manikin operator being painted directly upon the flesh of the operator's leg and the neck being the flesh of the operator's leg the illusion produced to the audience is most real and if the operators have any real muscular control over the knee cap the facial expression of the manikin acts may be considerably changed at will. Each operator has, of course, both legs dressed up in this manner so that two manikin actors are produced for each operator and the hands 11 are manipulated in the following manner: Suspended from the operator's neck by a cord or other suitable device 16 is a bar 17 to which are attached strings or fine cables 18 in order that their upper ends may be properly supported and that they may be conveniently reached by the operator. The lower ends of these cords are attached directly to the hands and being black or of a dark color are invisible against the background 5. The operator by grasping these cords may manipulate the hands to perform various different gesticulations or may so manipulate them that they will carry various articles such as trays which may be placed upon tables forming a part of the stage furniture. In other words, by proper manipulation of the cords or cables the manikin actors may be caused to use their hands in a manner very much similar to human beings. In fact, fans secured to the hands may be caused to be operated to fan the manikin actor or actress in a very natural manner.

The upper ends of the cords or cables 18 are supported upon the rods 17 in separated relation as shown so that the operator may grasp and operate any one cord or a multiplicity of cords without having to hold all of them in his or her hands at one time which would make it difficult to operate any particular one or any particular two.

Each manikin actor or actress is provided with a wig 19 and if desirable with a hat 20 which are adapted to fit above the knee of the operator and are constructed in the following manner. The wig is built around a resilient band 21 which may be continuous as shown in Figure 4 or open and with snap fasteners or hook and eye 22 as shown in Figure 6 so that instead of slipping it

over the leg in the manner of an ordinary garter as is done in the case of the wig shown in Figure 4, it can be placed around the leg and fastened with the snap fasteners or hook and eye as is found most desirable. In each case, however, the band upon which the wig 19 is formed is made of some elastic or stretchable material which, constricting around the leg, supports the wig in proper position above the knee.

The hat is constructed in a similar manner; that is, the frame 23 has an opening 24 in the top defined by an elastic band 25 adapted to constrict around the leg of the operator so as to support it in position above the wig and over the same in the manner of an ordinary hat. This band may be continuous as is the band of the wig shown in Figure 4 or it may be open and fastened in the manner of the wig shown in Figure 6, all of which will be readily understood.

In dressing the manikin actors or actresses the hat, if one is used, is placed upon the leg of the operator first in the manner of a garter immediately above the knee and the wig is placed upon the leg also in the manner of a garter immediately below the hat or cap and partially under the same. The dress is then applied by slipping the foot through the elastic neck band 14 and allowing the same to constrict around the leg immediately below the knee, the face of the manikin operator being painted directly upon the flesh of the knee of the operator or upon a flesh-colored stocking at the knee. The dress is complete and the actor ready for the sketch.

When the curtain is raised to a point immediately above the operator's knee the actors appear to the audience to be miniature people and by taking short steps the operator may so simulate the movements of the miniature actors that it is impossible for the audience to know that the actual operator is a full grown person.

In Figure 7 the operator wears a short silk stocking 26 of flesh color which terminates immediately below the knee of the operator. In this stocking pads 27 representing the legs of the miniature dancer are placed on opposite sides of the legs of the operator and a division piece 28 is run down the front of the leg of the operator and which is preferably black or some color contrasting with the stocking so as to produce the effect of two legs for the manikin actor. The shoe of the operator, 29, may be also painted to produce an illusion of two shoes as will be readily understood and as is shown in Figure 7. Also inside the stocking suitable bust pads 30 are utilized and surrounding the leg of the operator immediately below the bust pads is a belt 31 which gives a waistline effect. In this fig-

ure it will be noticed that the actress is represented as being in tights and her body is then covered with some diaphanous material with the sleeves attached thereto in the usual manner as above described and with a constricting neck-band adapted to fit around the leg of the operator as previously described. This dress may be made in many folds and the hands preferably hold sticks that can be waived in various manners so as to produce a dance similar to that performed by La Louie Fuller.

There is nothing in effect broadly speaking different in the construction of the parts and the method of operating in Figure 7 than there is in Figure 1, but this figure and the dress disclosed therein is simply illustrated to show one of the many variations which may be employed in costumes for use on these manikin actors.

While all of the garments here shown have been for representing female manikin actresses it will be readily understood from a reading of the description of Figures 7 and 8 that male manikin actors may be produced in a similar manner and the faces of the actors or actresses may be either those for white actresses or for black-faced comedians, as is desired, and the operator may so manipulate his or her legs that the actors or actresses may move about on the stage in pairs or one preceding the other. In fact, either one of the operators' legs may be dressed up and the other one in solid black so that only one actor is operated by each operator, the other black leg not being seen against the black background of the stage.

All of these details and the various duties which the manikin actresses or actors perform it would, of course, be understood is within the knowledge of the theatrical manager and have no part herein.

From the foregoing description and the accompanying drawings those versed in the art should be able to readily understand the

construction and operation and the possibilities to which this invention can be put. I, however, do not wish to be limited to the specific construction herein shown which is only one embodiment showing the broad principle of the invention.

Having thus described the invention, what I claim is:

1. The art of producing a manikin actor which consists in first painting face features on the knee cap of the operator and then dressing the leg of the operator in suitable clothes characteristic of a manikin and concealing that portion of the operator which is not dressed as a manikin.

2. The art of producing a manikin actor which consists in painting face features on the knee of an operator, dressing the leg of the operator below the knee with suitable clothes, characteristic of a manikin affixing a manikin wig to the leg of the operator above the face features and concealing that portion of the operator which is not dressed as a manikin.

3. The art of producing a manikin actor which consists in painting face features on the knee of an operator, dressing the leg of the operator below the knee with suitable clothes characteristic of a manikin affixing a wig and a hat to the leg of the operator above the face features, and concealing that portion of the operator which is not dressed as a manikin.

4. The art of producing an animate manikin actor which consists in painting face features on the knee of a human operator, supporting suitable clothes characteristic of a manikin on the legs of the operator which carry flexible arms, providing the operator with means for manipulating the arms, and concealing that portion of the operator which is not dressed as a manikin.

In testimony whereof I affix my signature.

ELMA OSBORN BLANTON.