(No Model.)

G. F. FULLER.

THEATRICAL SCENERY.

No. 259,301. Patented June 13, 1882.

Fig. 3.

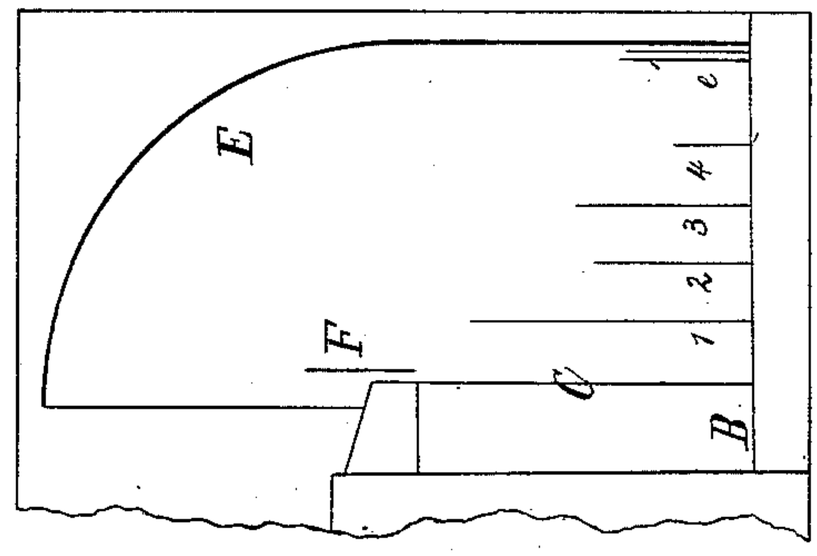


Fig. 2.

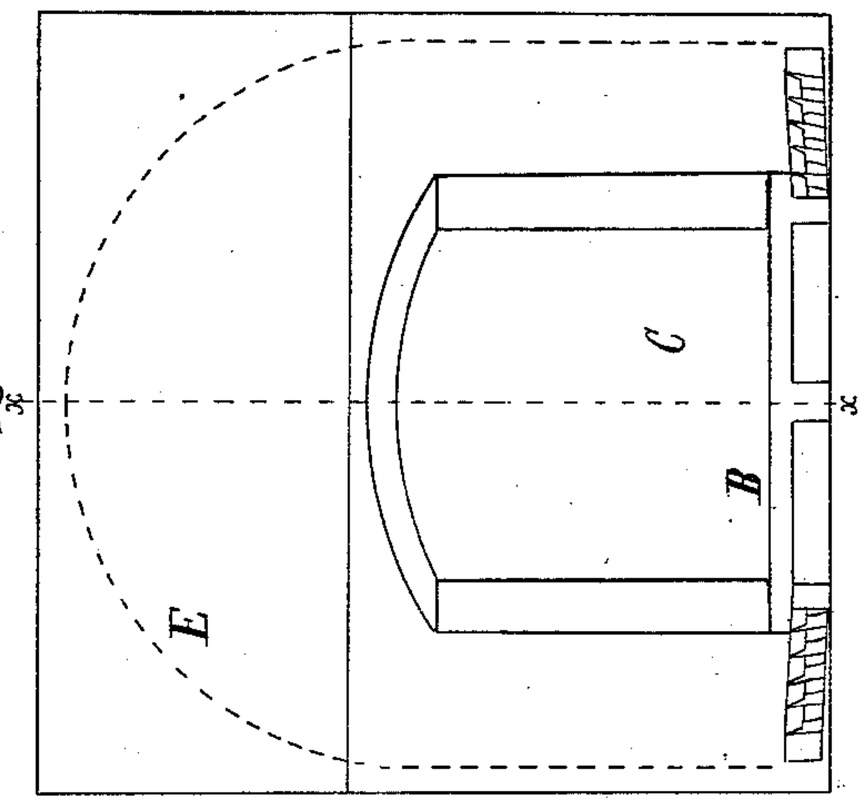
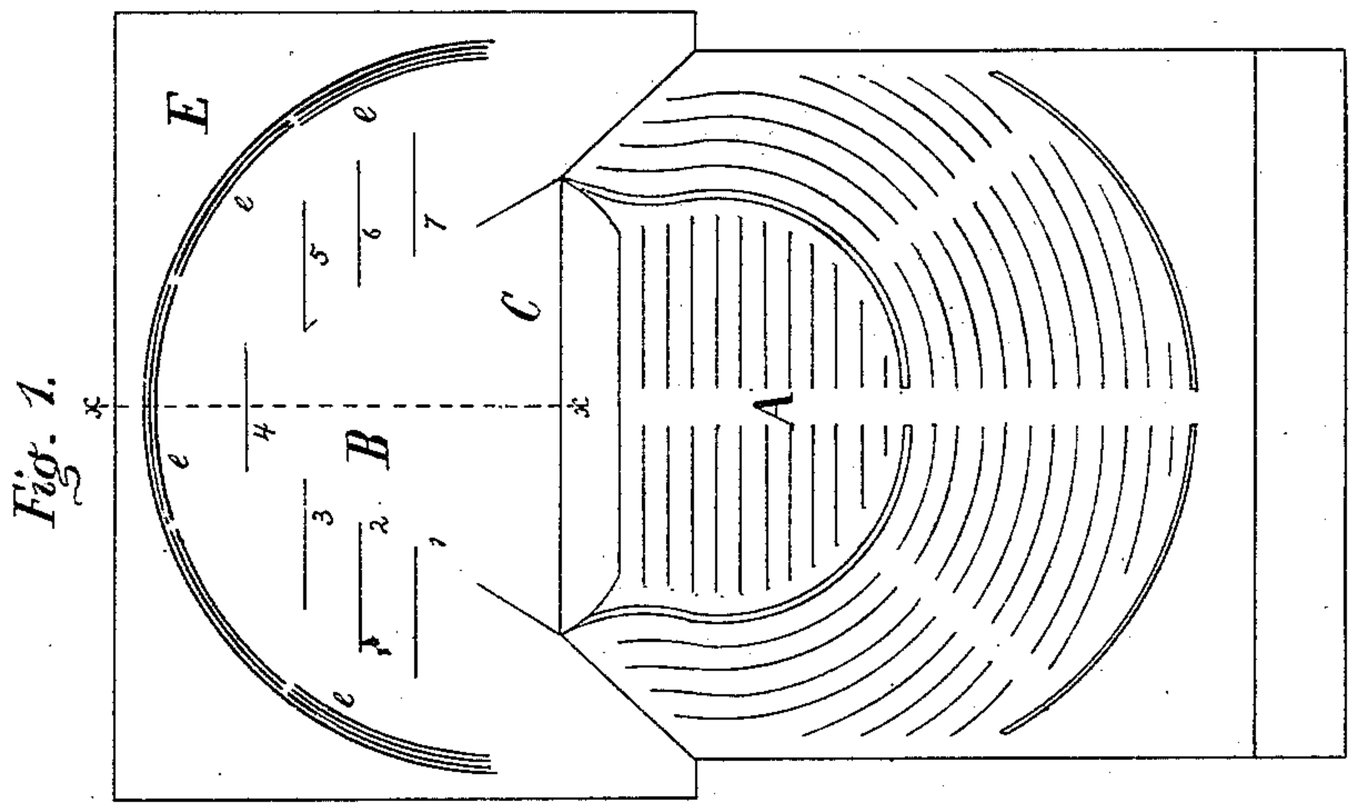


Fig. 1.



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THEATRICAL SCENERY.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 259,301, dated June 13, 1882.

Application filed March 18, 1882. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, GEORGE F. FULLER, of the city and State of New York, have invented a certain Improvement in Theatrical Scenery, of which the following is a specification.

It is the main object of my improvement to increase the illusion of stage representations of landscapes and outdoor scenes. In such scenes the sky has been heretofore usually represented by a series of parallel borders suspended above the stage, a greater or less number of borders being employed, according to the distance from the front of the stage to the flats representing the background and horizon. As the separate borders are easily seen from the auditorium, and as the sky is pictured in a vertical plane or planes, the effect of distance is rarely attained and the true appearance of the sky, especially its arched appearance, is never produced. It has been proposed to represent the sky upon the shallow concave surface of one or more curved scenes, either fixed or movable, as shown and described in British Letters Patent No. 1,784 of the year 1861. Such a method of representing the sky does not accomplish the end which I seek, for the want of a sufficient appearance of rotundity. A near resemblance to nature requires that the sky shall be represented upon the interior surface of a half-section of a rotunda surmounted by a half-section of a dome, and I accomplish this object by mounting the canvas upon which the sky is painted upon a surface in the form of a cylindro-spherical niche, the dimensions of which are as large as the size of the stage behind the curtain will conveniently permit. I dispense with suspended borders and trim the edges of the set scenes to the contour of the objects painted upon them. I thus picture the sky upon the interior of a dome-like structure, which, by reason of its deep concavity in shape and actual distance from the other scenery, closely imitates nature and greatly increases the appearance of depth and height, and permits the production of fine atmospheric effects.

In the accompanying drawings, representing the outlines of a theater provided with my improvement, Figure 1 is a horizontal plan, showing the stage and the floor of the auditorium. Fig. 2 is a transverse vertical section, exhibiting the proscenium in front elevation, and showing in dotted lines the sides and top of the sky-canvas. Fig. 3 is a vertical section of the stage, taken through the lines *x x* in Figs. 1 and 2.

The drawings exhibit in outline the auditorium A of a theater and the stage B. The width of the proscenium-opening C is about one-half the entire width of the stage, and is about equal to the depth of the stage from front to back. In height at the curtain-line D it is about equal to one-half the height of the stage.

The canvas upon which the sky is painted is supported upon what I call my "sky-frame," E, the lower portion of which is a semi-cylindrical frame, presenting its concave side toward the auditorium, and about equaling in height the height of the proscenium-opening. The cylindrical frame is surmounted by a frame in the form of a quarter-segment of a hollow sphere. As a whole, the hollow surface presented toward the auditorium has the form of a cylindro-spherical niche.

By my invention I create a more positive illusion in scenic effect by dispensing with what are technically termed "borders." At present a pair of flats, with their corresponding wings and borders, form a scene. They are of various sizes, regulated generally by the size of the theater. The tops of these flats require to be hidden from the audience, and the present practice is to mask them by a border or borders suspended from the top of the stage, and representing the sky or tree-tops. The lower edge of the border falls down to the top, or a short distance below the top, of the flats, while the upper portion of the border is carried to a level above the proscenium-arch. This method of concealing the tops of the flats involves the objection that it represents a portion of the sky as coming down in front of the trees. By my invention the sky is painted upon a concave surface, which arches over until it reaches a point vertically above the proscenium, or a short distance back from that point, so that no spectator seated in the auditorium, or even in the orchestra, can, in looking upward, see any termination of the sky before the sight is cut off by the proscenium-arch. On the other hand, no spectator can see any abrupt termination of the horizon-line be-

fore the line of sight is cut off by the vertical sides of the proscenium. The proscenium therefore is the frame-work of the picture. When my invention is employed all scenic effects are produced by so-called "set pieces," which stand upon the stage, nothing being suspended from the ceiling, excepting at or contiguous to the curtain-line. The edges of the set pieces, whether trees, rocks, or other objects, are trimmed to conform to the contour of the objects painted upon them, and are arranged in the usual varieties of positions.

I intend to represent interiors by box-scenes, as at present.

The characteristic feature of my invention consists in the representation of the sky upon a concave surface, the upper part of which forms a section of a dome and constitutes the ceiling of the stage. It will of course be understood that this concave surface may be spheroidal or ellipsoidal, or may have any other hollow irregular shape which would present the appearance of the interior of a hollow spheroid.

The structure supporting my sky-canvas may be considered as the section of a rotunda, and its vertical part may form the inclosing-walls of the building at the stage end, or it may constitute a separate inclosure resting upon a semicircular foundation-wall at any convenient distance within the main walls.

Representations of outdoor scenes are given by means of so-called "set pieces," representing mountains, open country, woods, rocks, &c.—as, for example, the set scenes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

In order to facilitate the representation of different sky-pictures, I provide the movable curved scenes *e*, which may, when required, be set in front of the permanent sky-frame E.

I employ at the proscenium one drapery-border, F, which is preferably made of iron, and is used to mask interiors. By dispensing with the other borders usually employed I avoid the presence of a great amount of rigging and the heavy cumbrous stage-galleries, and thus get rid of a large quantity of inflammable material. I also avoid the use of border-lights, which are especially dangerous.

Portions of my sky-canvas may be made semi-transparent, or may be perforated, for the purpose of representing the moon or stars by lights placed behind the canvas.

I claim as my invention—

1. The method of representing landscapes and other outdoor scenes upon the stage, herein described, which consists in dispensing with the usual suspended sky-borders, and in the employment of set scenes, or scenes having their edges trimmed to the contour of the objects painted upon them, in connection with a representation of the sky pictured upon the interior of a half-section of a rotunda surmounted by a half-section of a dome, forming a concave surface extending around the back and suitable portions of the sides of the stage, and arching over the stage from the rear and sides to a point over, or nearly over, the proscenium-opening.

2. The concave sky-frame E, forming the interior of a half-section of a rotunda surmounted by a half-section of a dome extending around the back and suitable portions of the sides of the stage B, and arching over the stage, as and for the purpose set forth.

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