



Deborah Meader Papers

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WPA

"Recreational Puppetry" Bulletin #6
Works Progress Administration Probably 1935?

* "The Recreation and Leisure Time Department is indebted to: Mrs. Deborah Meader for material presented in this bulletin.

* Mostly contains a play (The Froy Prince) and instructions for building props, hand puppets + "an inexpensive ~~theater~~ puppet theater." (p. 25)

* Selling notion of ~~doing a~~ having a puppet project — "A Puppet Project is valuable because it may employ a number of ~~at~~ different groups simultaneously." (p. 1)

* Sells her idea of "be-spectacleful little girl w/ dark braids may be the princess of her dreams."

* Advocates starting modestly to build success and moving on to more complicated because theatre will already be built.

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
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RECREATION DEPARTMENT
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RECREATIONAL PUPPETRY

Bulletin No. 6.



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File -
A: Puppetry

A COMMUNITY PUPPET PROJECT

A Puppet Project is valuable because it may employ a number of different groups simultaneously, all taking a specific part in its preparation. The men and boys may build the theatre - while a group of women with skill in sewing, make the puppets and dress them. Another group of men and boys may be working on the necessary properties - while those who are to take part in the play are learning and rehearsing their lines. When the puppets, properties and theatre are ready (and speed is the watchword so that interest may not lag,) the actual rehearsal of the play may begin.

Puppetry is a very old form of the drama. It has certain advantages over drama played by living actors because in casting the parts, the personal appearance of the puppeteer does not determine the part he plays. A be-spectacled little girl with dark braids may be the princess of her dreams with lovely golden hair, if she can feel like a princess, and the smallest boy in the class may be the giant, if he can make the puppet giant talk like one, and project the proper spirit into his character and across the footlights to the audience. Physical handicaps do not prevent their owners taking part in a dramatic production--perhaps for the first time.

Also, the protection the back drop affords, relieves the self-conscious child of his nervousness and he is able to throw his whole soul into his part, his attention and that of the audience is on the puppet, so consequently he gives a better performance. This heightens his own enjoyment as well as that of the audience.

Visa-versa, it places the child who is seeking the spot-light in the shadow which is equally to be desired.

We advocate the use of hand puppets rather than marionettes because the technique of handling them is so much easier to acquire. They are easier to make and there are no strings to tangle. A good performance may be given with only a few rehearsals. Also, when operated directly before the face, rather than above the head, their field is so broad that it is possible to give folk tales, fantasies, historical episodes, Bible stories or comedies, successfully.

Only four or five rehearsals are necessary usually, but there must be enough to ensure a good performance. The interest to go forward with the next production depends on a successful first performance. If the final windup has been a success, all of those who had any connection with it will feel amply repaid for their labors and will want to cooperate in the next one, or a different group will be eager for an opportunity to try to excell the first performance. The second one may be anything from History to Shakespeare. The theatre will be ready but there may be more elaborate properties to make. This time a group may enjoy making their own dramatization. It is exceedingly important to have puppets, properties, theatre and back drops in readiness soon enough to allow sufficient time for enough rehearsals to ensure a smooth performance.

On the following page is given the simple dramatization of a fairy story with full directions for its production.

THE FROG PRINCE

(A puppet play in three scenes.)

Characters:

Witch - Moon Fairy - Prince - Frog - Princess
and King.

Prologue - Place: In the forest-Witch's
Cauldron at left.

Witch (on left hand:) Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.
Maw and gulf of salt sea shark
Root of hemlock digged in the dark
Cool it with a baboon's blood
Then the charm is full and good
This charm never fails - it will make
Prince lose his way. Then I will be revenged on
the King for banishing me outside the castle walls.
Once I get his darling here I will have him in my
Power.

By the pricking of my thumbs
Something I hate this way comes

Prince enters (right)

Prince (on right hand:) How tired I am! It is good to see a campfire.
Good Dame, could you tell me how to find my way out of
this woods, I am lost.

Witch: Help you find your way back to the castle! No, never!
Now, I'll turn you into a frog
Even to live in swamps and bogs.

Prince: How queer I feel! I am fainting! (Falls to ground.)
Frog comes up in his place.) Can it be true that I
have been turned into a frog! What shall I do!

Witch: Oh, yes, it is true. How will the king know you now. At
last I have my revenge.

Exits

The Frog Prince

Enter Moon Fairy on moon (left).

Moon Fairy (left hand:)
Do you know where the moon magic lingers?
Do you know where your dreams come true?
Ah! Watch and wait in the moonlight
It is full of magic for you

Frog (right) What is this I hear? Can it be possible that there is
moon magic that could help me! A wicked witch has
turned me into a frog. Surely you have as much power as
she has.

Moon Fairy: I have moon magic it is true, but I can not undo the witch's powerful spell.

Frog: Is there nothing you can do?

Moon Fairy: I can help you only by ending the spell, if a Princess will let you eat from her dish, drink from her cup and sleep in her bed.

Frog: That sounds hopeless. What Princess would have anything to do with an ugly frog.

Fairy: Do not despair -- go to the next kingdom and make your home in the well in the King's garden. I will help you all I can.

Frog: Thank you, dear fairy. I will do as you say.

Scene I

Place - The King's Garden.
Princess discovered playing with her golden ball.
A well is at right.

Princess: How beautiful you are, golden ball; I am going to toss you way up into those white clouds. (Ball goes into the well) Oh! How could you fall into the well! Now I'll never see you again. (Cries bitterly.)

Frog appears from well.

Frog: (Right) Why do you weep, King's daughter? Your tears would melt even the stones to pity you.

Princess: Where did that voice come from?

Frog: Here I am, Princess.

Princess: Oh! is it you, old water paddler -- I am crying for the loss of my golden ball that has fallen into the well.

Frog: Then weep no more. I can get it for you. But what will you give me if I fetch your plaything?

Princess: Anything you like, dear frog. What will you have? My dresses, my pearls and jewels or the golden crown I sometimes wear?

Frog: No, I want none of these. I want you to let me be your playfellow. I should like to eat from your golden dish, drink from your golden cup and sleep in your little white bed. If you will promise to let me do this, I will dive down into the well and bring up your ball for you.

Princess: Oh! yes, I will promise anything you like if you will only get my ball for me.

Frog: Very well, then, here I go. (Dives)

Princess: (Aside) What a silly frog. After I get my ball, I'll leave him here and what can he do? He could never find his way to the palace. (Frog comes up with the ball in his mouth) Oh, there it is, give it to me. (Snatches ball and runs off)

Frog: Wait, wait, take me with you. I can not run as fast as you can. (Frog stops and turns back to pool, sadly.) Surely a King's daughter would never break her promise. Perhaps she means to come back for me. I'll wait for her.

Scene II

Place: Dining room in the palace of King. Table set with candlesticks, bowls and plates for King and Princess - two palace chairs, one at either end.

King and Princess enter (right) and seat themselves (King to left) at the table.

Frog: (Right, outside) Lovely Princess, open your door,
Let me come in and go out no more.
Can you forget the vow you made
Down at the well in the oak tree's shade?

King (Left) Who can that be? Daughter, go to the door and see.

Princess (Right, rising reluctantly, goes slowly to door)

King: Hasten child.

Princess: (Opens door) Go away! (Slams door)

King: What was it, my child? Was it a giant come to carry you away?

Princess: Oh, no Father, it was no giant but a great ugly frog.

King: A frog! What can a frog want with you?

Princess: Oh! dear father. I will tell you all about it. Yesterday I was playing with my golden ball in the garden by the well. I let it fall into the water, and because I cried, the frog fetched it out for me.

King: How kind of him! What did you do to reward him?

Princess: I offered him my gold and jewels, even my crown, but he said he didn't want them.

King: What did he want?

Princess: He made me promise to let him come to the castle to be my play-fellow.

King: You promised that you would do this?

Princess: Yes, I did, for I thought he could not find his way here.

Frog: (Outside) Little Princess, open your door,
Let me come in and go out no more
Can you forget the vow you made
Down at the well in the oak tree's shade.

King: (Sternly) My daughter, you must keep your promise. Let him in
at once.

Princess: Oh, father!

King: Princesses never break their promises.
(Princess goes to the door and admits frog - right)

Frog: Thank you, little Princess. I knew you would keep your
promise.

King: I hear that you recovered my daughter's ball yesterday.
We thank you.

Frog: I was happy to get it for her. Please take me up by you.

Princess: I don't want to. You might be dirty.

King: Daughter, do as the frog asks.

Frog: I am hungry. Please push your plate a little nearer and
we will eat together.

Princess: (Pushes plate toward frog and turns her back upon him.)

Frog: Come, eat with me, Princess, it is very good - you must
have half.

Princess: (Tosses her head.)

King: (Sternly) Remember, the frog is our guest.

Princess: Oh, well, then.

Frog: I have eaten quite enough. I am very tired. Help me up-
stairs that I may sleep in your little white bed.

Princess: Oh, Father, do I have to let him sleep in my bed?

King: Little Daughter, you must never make promises that you do
not intend to keep.

Princess: Come along then. (Helps frog out of the room - left)

-- Curtain --

Scene III
Princess' Bed Chamber.

Bed of Princess at right - chair at left.

Enter both (left) Princess right and frog left hand

Princess: You shall not sleep in my bed. There is only room enough
for me. Here, you sleep over here in this chair.

Frog: That will not be comfortable and besides you will not be
doing as you promised.

Princess: I don't care if it isn't. I won't have you in my little bed. (Lies down) (Goes to sleep)

Frog: (After a moment's pause) Oh, hum, I am so tired. I cannot sleep in this chair. Princess - Princess. (No answer) She must be asleep. (Hops to the Princess' bed) I will be very, very careful and not waken her when I lay down beside her.

Princess: (Wakens and screams) Go away you ugly frog! (Pushes frog to the floor) I hate you! (Hides her face) Prince springs up in his place.

Prince: (Softly) Little Princess!

Princess: (In great surprise) Who are you? Where did you come from? Where is the frog?

Prince: I was the frog.

Princess: You!

Prince: Yes, I. A wicked witch changed me into the ugly frog that was here a moment ago. But a beautiful Moon Fairy told me that if a Princess would let me eat from her dish and sleep in her bed that I would be changed into a Prince again. You helped me break the spell.

Princess: How dreadful for you to have been changed into a frog. I am so glad that I kept my promise. I like you.

Prince: My Father's kingdom is a long way from here. Perhaps when we get to know each other better, you may learn to love me and will go with me as my bride.

Princess: Come, let us find my father. He will be so glad that you are no longer a frog.

-- Curtain --

PUPPET MANIPULATION

Place the first finger in the head of the puppet, the thumb and little finger in the two arms. Bend the two remaining fingers close to the palm of the hand.

Keep the wrist stiff with the head of the puppet vertically above the elbow.

Have the puppet enter the stage from the side, not bob from below.

Keep the puppet at the proper height, being a little above the waist line above the stage floor frame.

By a small movement of the first finger move the head of the puppet speaking, with varying motions and emphasis, with each phrase spoken.

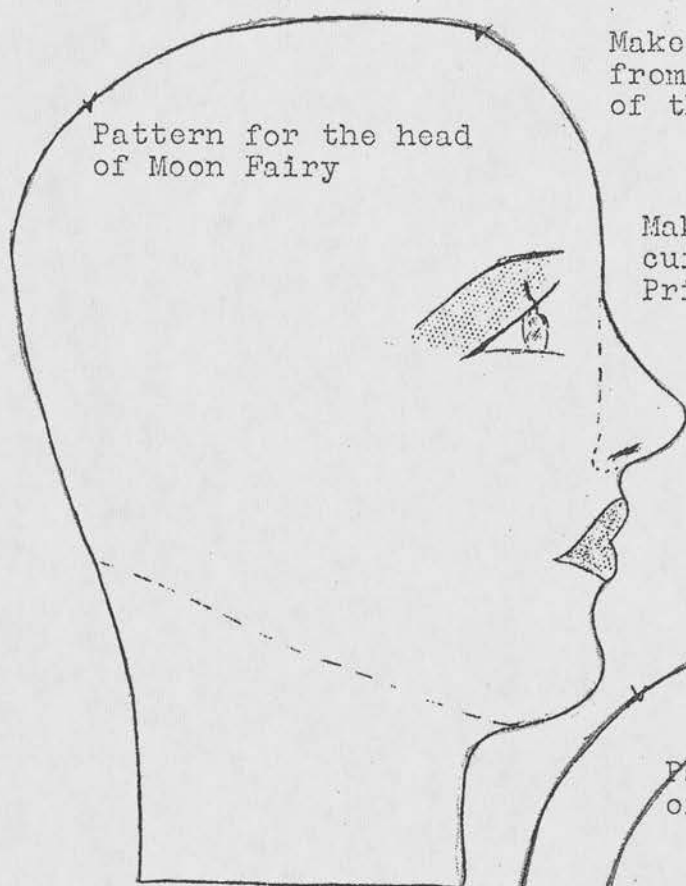
Hold heads of puppets, not speaking, still. They may change their positions but must continue to listen.

To have the puppet bow, bend the wrist directly forward, keeping the head straight from the body of the puppet.

The small theater is operated on a table. The puppeteer's face should be behind the back-drop and directly opposite the theater opening, so that the position of the arms will be comfortable.

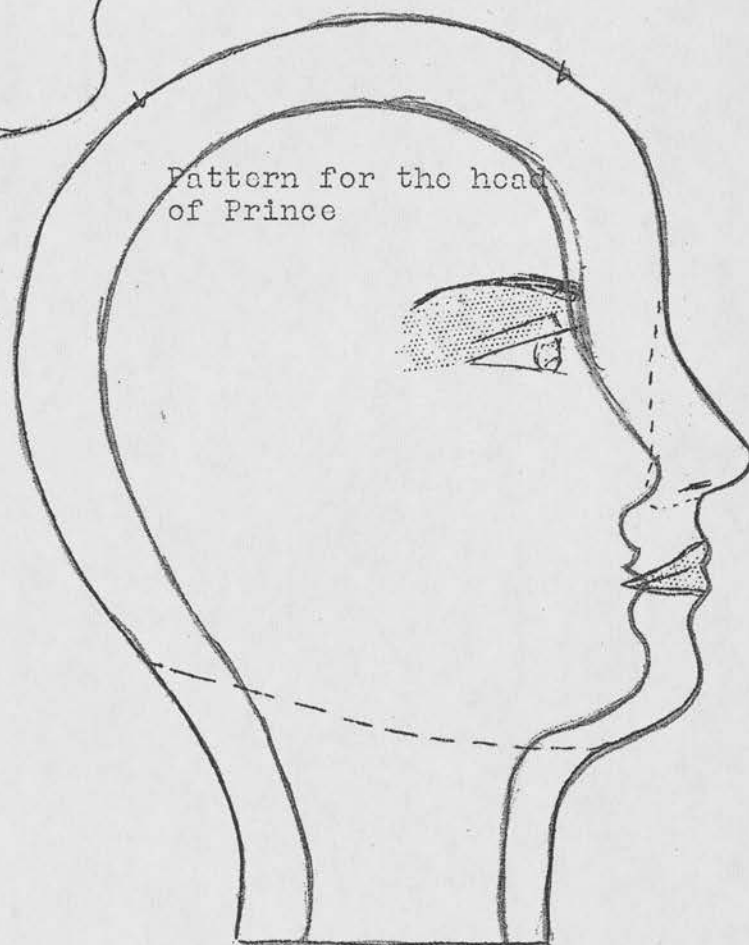
MATERIALS NEEDED

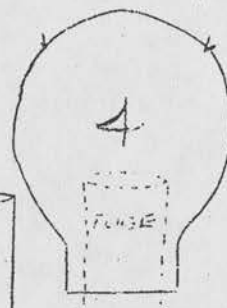
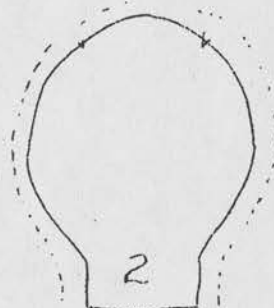
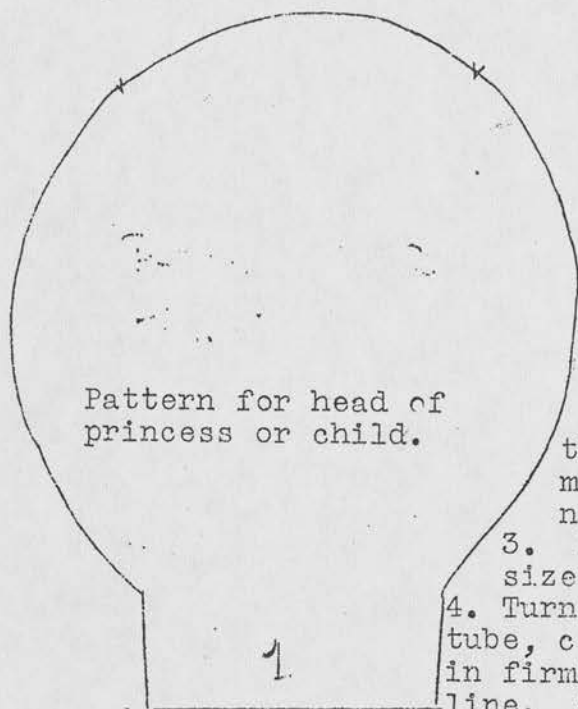
Peach colored broad cloth, one-fourth yard.
Four small tubes - two inches in length.
Kapoc or a fine grade of cotton for stuffing.
Water color paint - for painting eyes and mouth.
Rouge - for cheeks.
Buckram for cuffs and crowns.
Yellow silk or sateen for Prince.
Green velvet, brocade or silk for cape and hat.
Red silk or Sateen for dress.
Purple sateen or silk or velvet for coat and hat for King.
White for dress for Princess. Pink for Coat.



Make heads of Moon Fairy and Prince from directions for making the head of the king.

Make hands and put in buckram cuffs as was directed for the Princess.





2. Lay the pattern on peach colored broadcloth and mark around it exactly. Backstitch or stitch on the line, leaving an opening between the marks at the top of the head and at the neck.

3. Is a tube of cardboard 2" long of a size to fit the finger.

4. Turn the head right side up. Insert the tube, covering it with the material. Sew it in firmly thru the material on the dotted line. Stuff tightly with kapoc or cotton

from the top, obtaining as rounded a shape as possible. Sew the top together and take a stitch or two from the top to pull it into a round shape.

5. Cut and sew two bags 5" long and 2 1/2" the end. Turn and stuff lightly with kapoc.

7. Sew bags to front and rear of head and corners as in the cut.

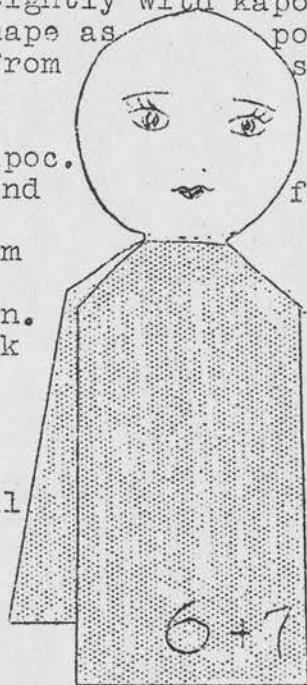
8. Pattern for hands. Cut 2 pairs from peach colored broadcloth.

9. Stitch around leaving the wrist open. Turn. Stuff tightly with kapoc and mark the fingers and thumb with pencil.

10. Stitch the fingers and thumbs on marked lines. Pull the palm side more tightly in at the wrist than the outside to curve the hand. Gather material together at the wrist.

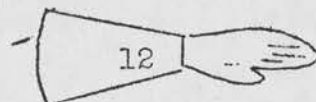
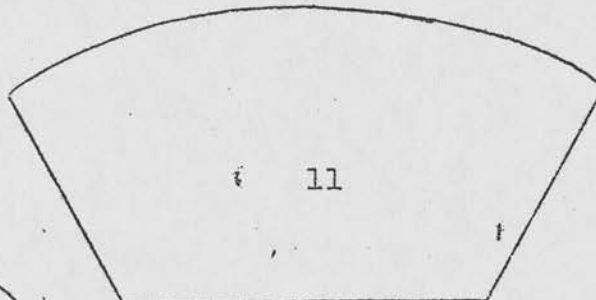
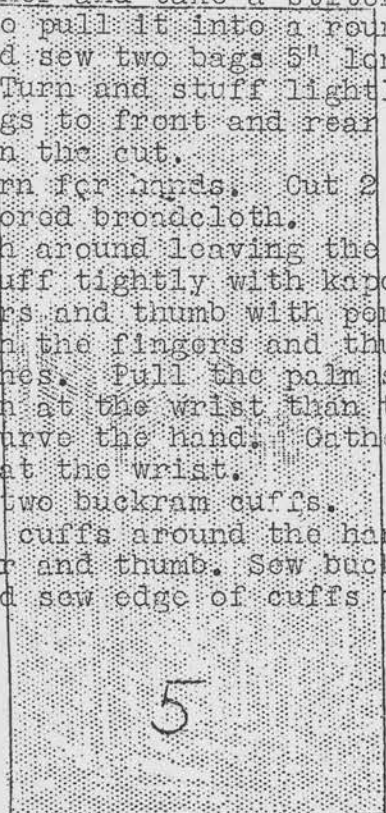
11. Cut two buckram cuffs.

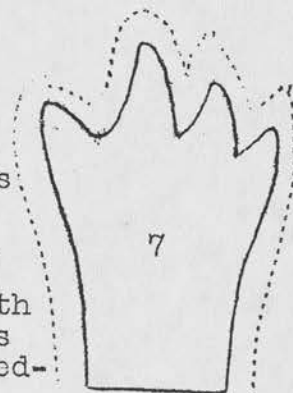
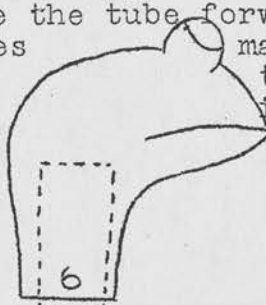
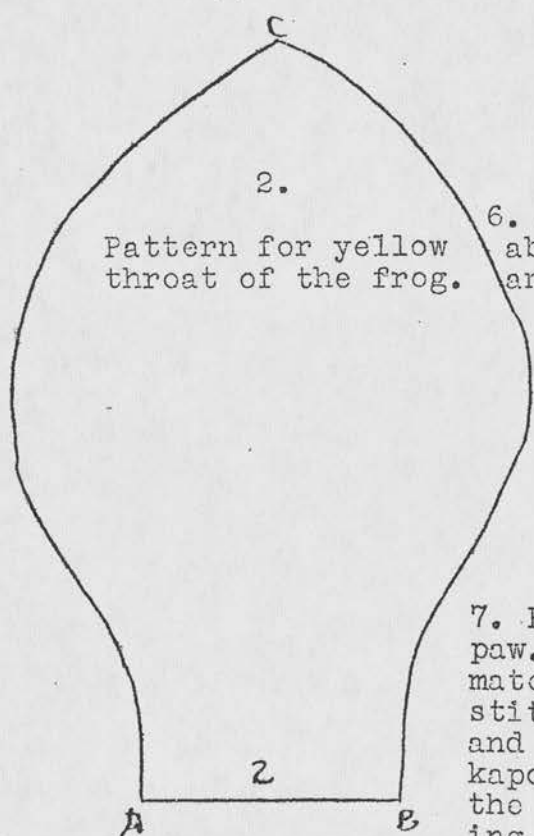
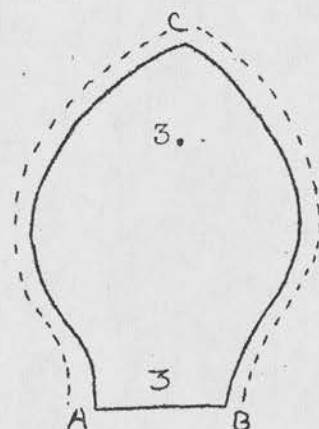
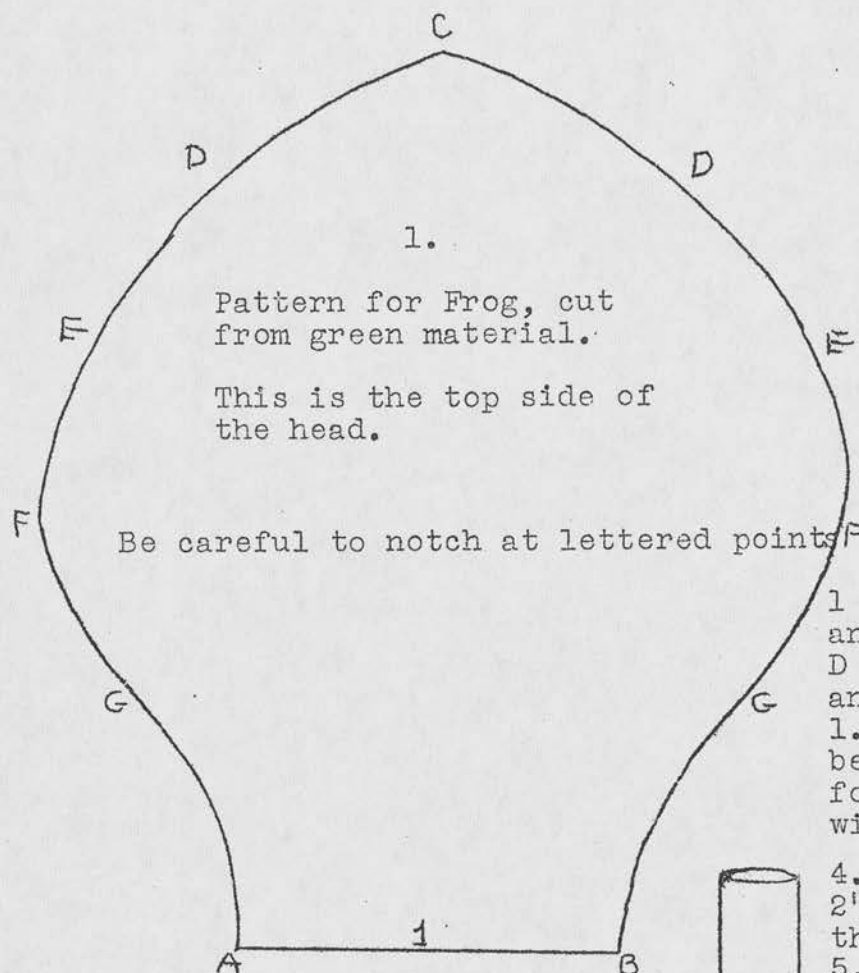
12. Fold cuffs around the hands to fit finger and thumb. Sew buckram together and sew edge of cuffs to wrist.



wide, open at fold in the cor-

13. Paint the eyes of the princess blue with light brown eyelashes and eyebrows. A tiny spot of white will give life to the eye. Paint the lips red and rouge the cheeks.





Pattern for yellow throat of the frog.

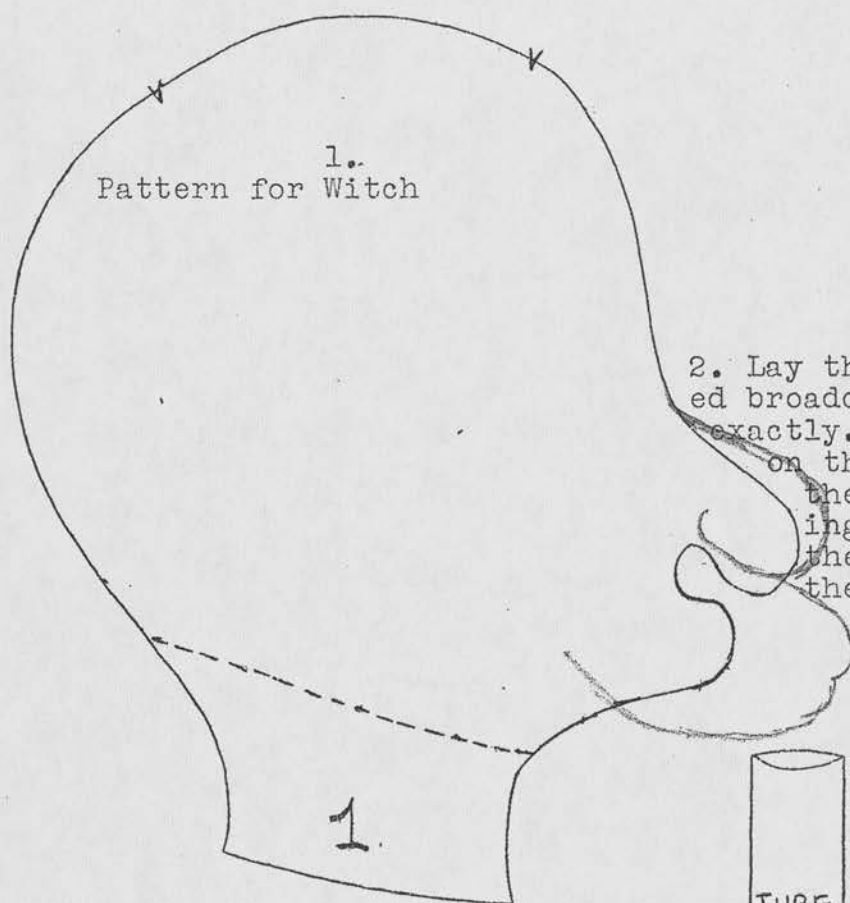
6. Bend the part of the head above the tube forward at right angles in making a tuck the yellow throat so that it is held firmly.

7. Pattern for frog's paw. Cut from green material, double and stitch on line. Turn and stuff tightly with kapoc. Put in cuff as the hand on the preceding page.

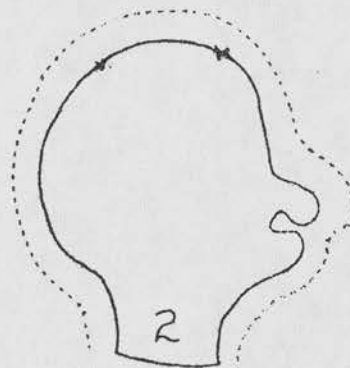
3. Pin the points of 1 and 2 together at C, A and B. Fold and pin with D and F coming together and E and G meeting in No. 1. Sew 1 and 2 together being careful to have the fold even. Stuff firmly with kapoc.

4. Is a tube of cardboard 2" long of a size to fit the finger.

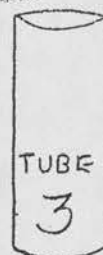
5. Put the tube in so that the material will cover the tube. Sew firmly thru the material & cardboard.



1.
Pattern for Witch

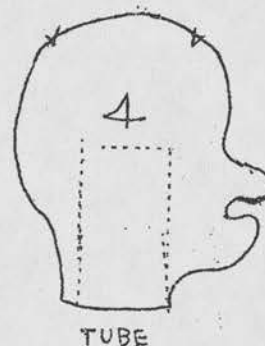


2. Lay the pattern on peach colored broadcloth and mark around it exactly. Back-stitch or stitch on the machine directly on the line, leaving an opening between the marks at the top of the head and the neck.

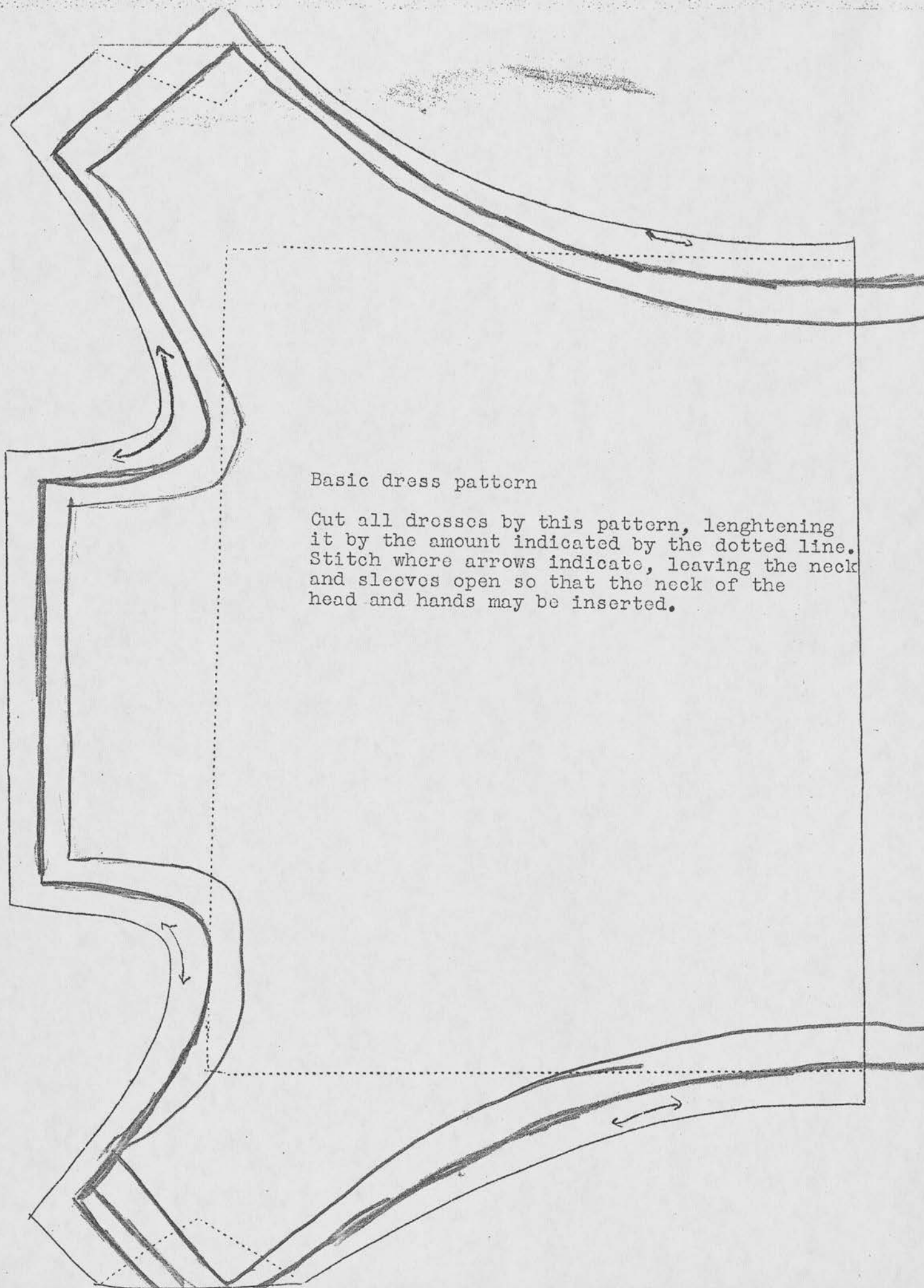


3. Is a tube of cardboard 2" long of a size to fit the finger.

4. Turn the head. Force kapoc firmly into the nose and chin. Sew in the tube firmly thru the material. Stuff tightly from the top obtaining as round of a contour as possible. Stuff round and round the tube, building it up as you go. Do not stuff the front or back first. Do not allow too much stuffing to wad up next to the neckline. After it is stuffed, use a long needle and strong thread and from the top of the stuffing at the back of the head inside the material, make a stitch to the center of where the eyeball should be, going back to the back of the head and starting from there stitch in the second eyeball. Now sew the opening together.



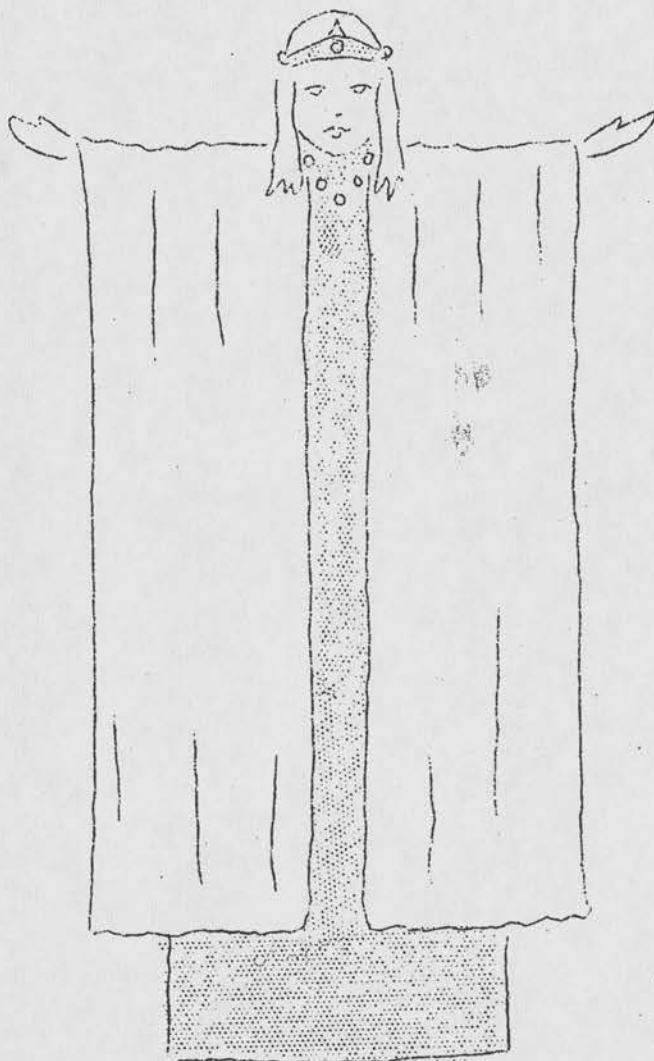
Make hands for the Witch the same as illustrated for the Princess.



Basic dress pattern

Cut all dresses by this pattern, lengthening it by the amount indicated by the dotted line. Stitch where arrows indicate, leaving the neck and sleeves open so that the neck of the head and hands may be inserted.

The Princess should have golden hair. Mohair, crepe hair, yarn or silk floss may be used. Lay the strands across the head from brow to the crown. Sew it where the part should be with a fine back-stitch. It should be thick

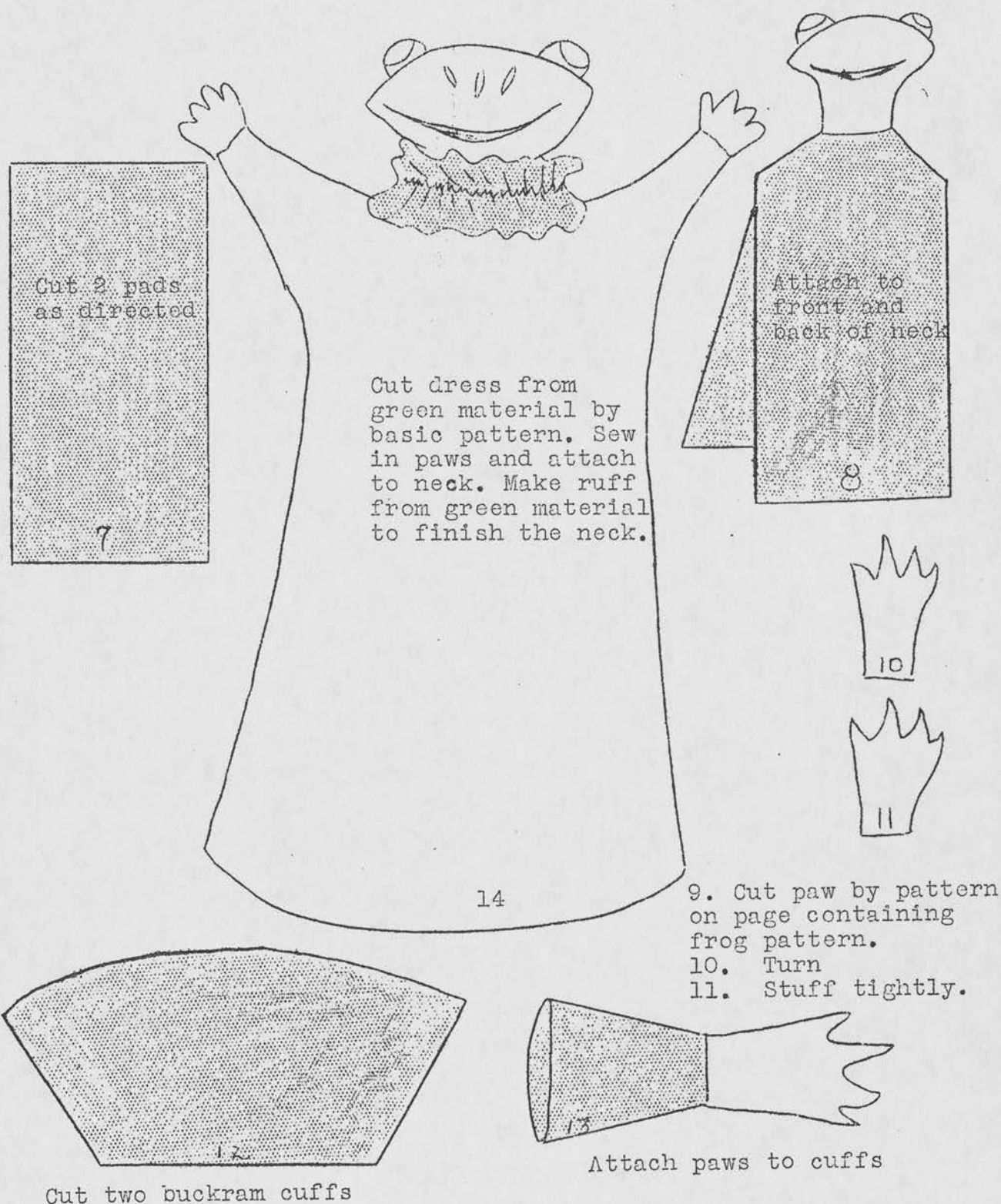


enough to be spread to cover the back of the head. Using the basic pattern cut the Princess' dress from white material. Sew where indicated, following the directions on the preceeding page. Over it, there may be a flowing robe of pink or blue voile or chiffon or any other soft material which may be shirred on the shoulder so that it will fall softly in folds. A string of beads around her neck and some beads sewn to her gilded buckram crown (cut from the pattern given on the page with the Prince's costume) will give the proper royal effect.

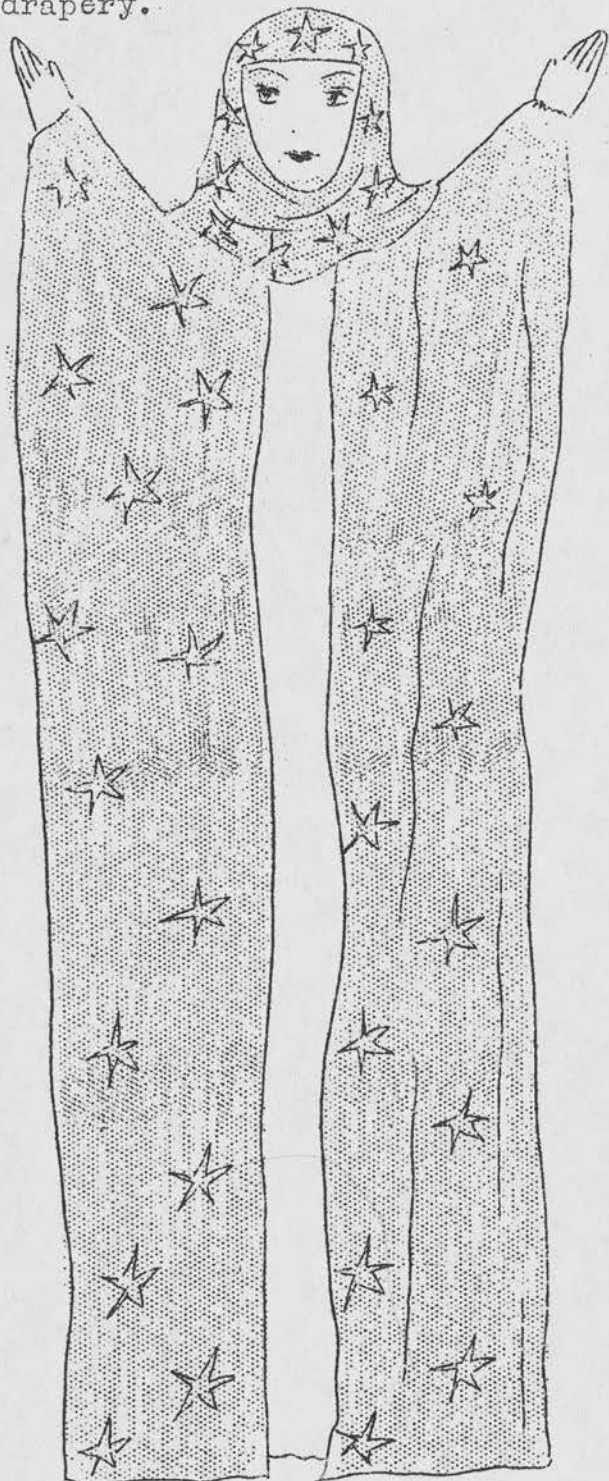


The Witch should have grey hair, made of yarn, crepe hair or floss. A fringe may be sewed around the head high enough so that the hat will cover where it is sewn. The dress is black cut from the basic dress, a circular cape in black lined with red is effective and it may have a collar or a red kerchief may be tied around the neck. The hat is black, made in a peak - stiffened with wrapping paper.

Paint the mouth of the frog red, outlined in black - three black marks may be made on the top of the head to connect ridges. The eyes may be shoe buttons or button nolds sewed where the fold comes with black pupils and white around them.

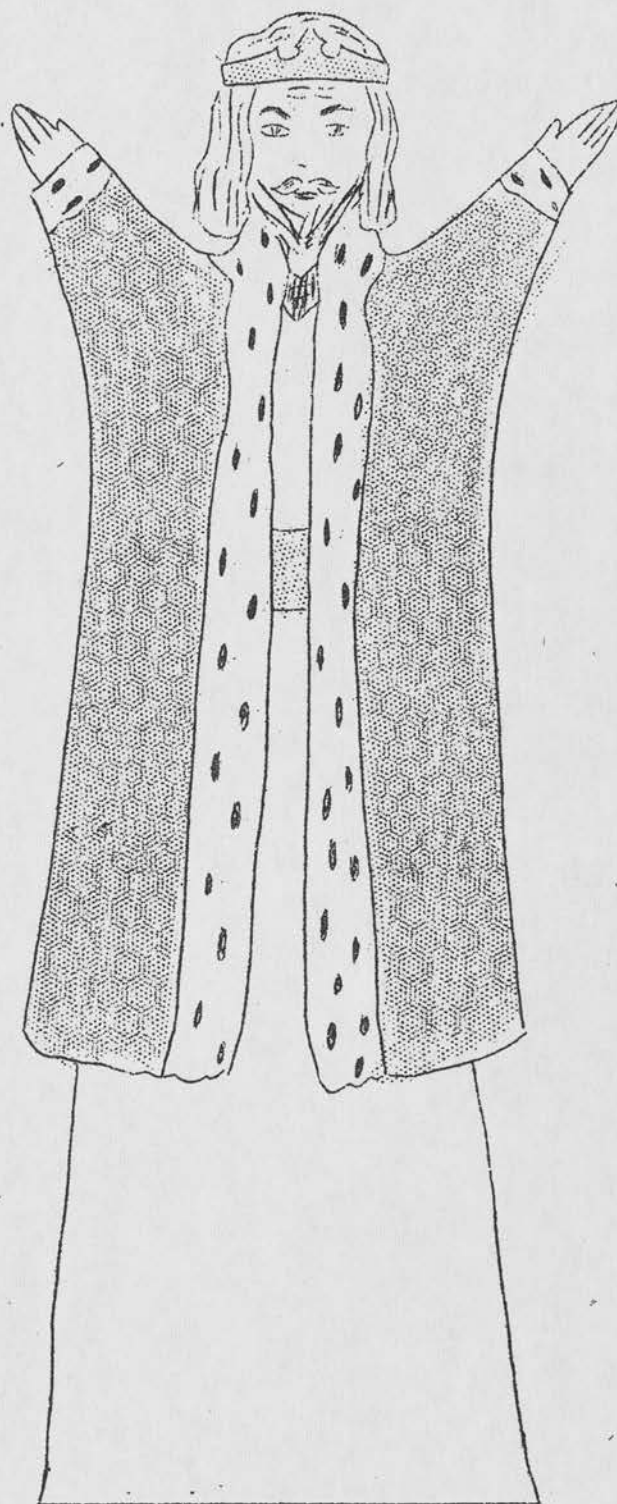


The Moon Fairy looks well with black hair. The basic dress may be white or pale blue and the draperies blue of georgette chiffon or voile so that it will drape softly. Gold stars may be posted on the drapery.

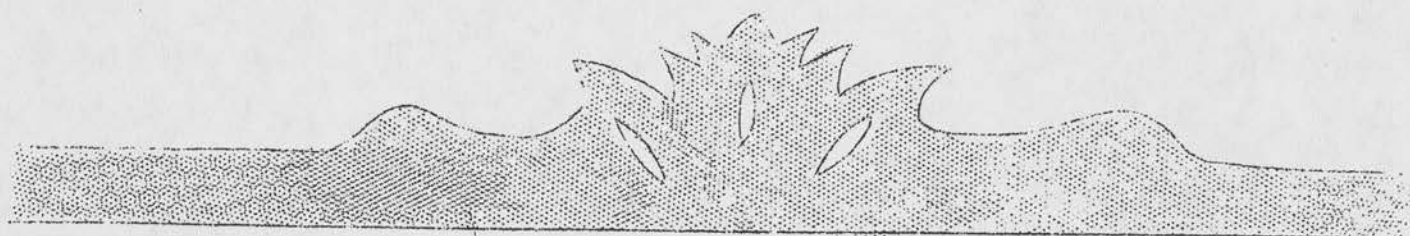


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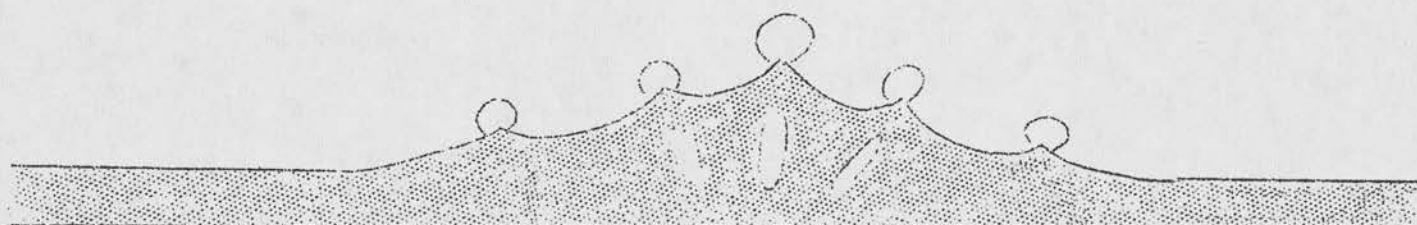
The eyes of the king should be black. His mustache, and beard black. Cut his dress from red and his coat from the same



pattern, shortened and opened up the front. Flannel or cotton may be sewed up the front and around the bottom and sleeves to simulate ermine. Black stitches may represent the black tails.



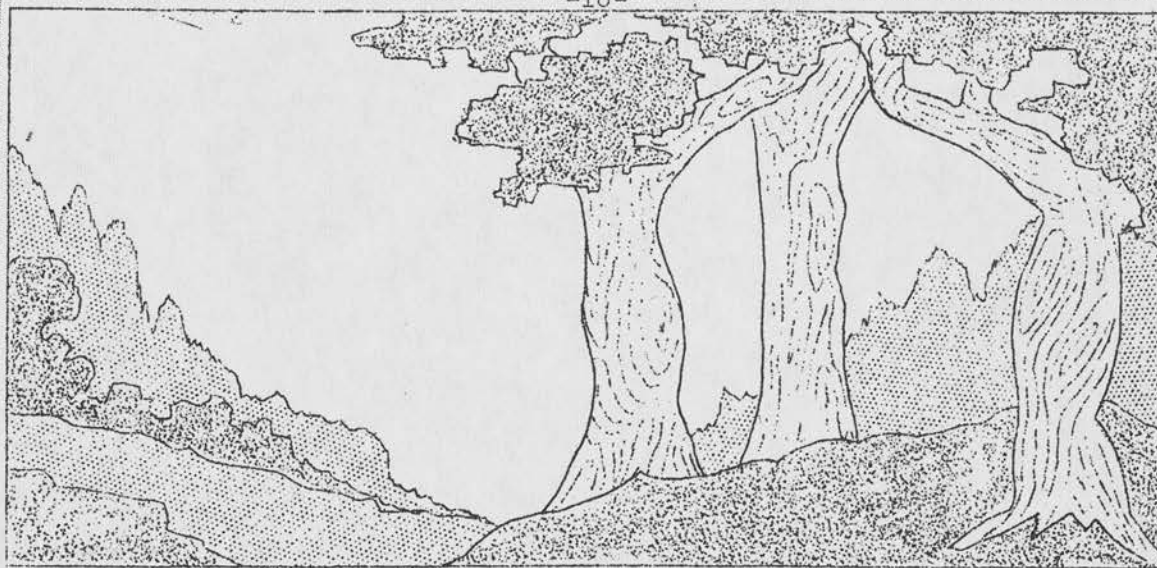
CROWN FOR THE KING



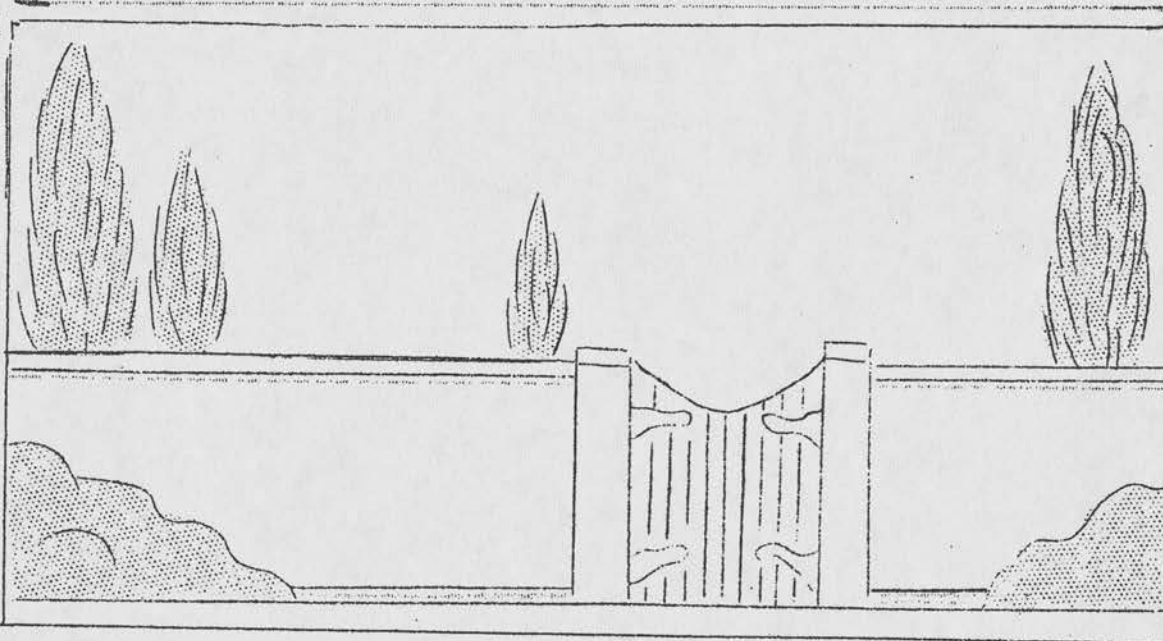
CROWN FOR THE PRINCESS



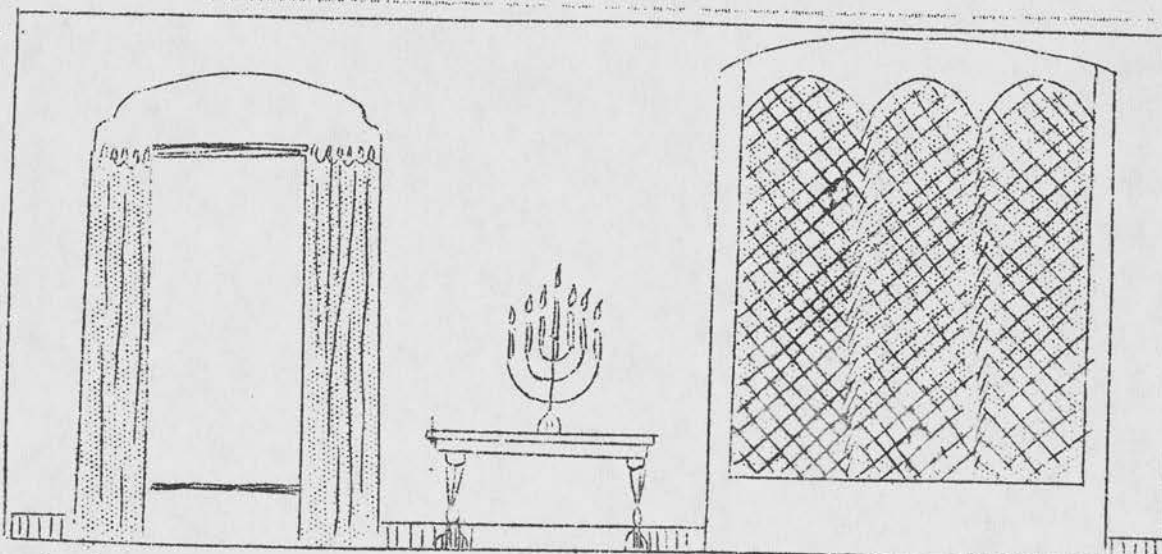
The Prince has brown eyes, a small brown mustache, long curly brown hair - his dress may be cut from yellow - his tunic from green with a gold belt. He may have a shoulder cape of green lined with yellow, a hat of green with a yellow brim and a curling feather and a gold necklace completes his costume.



Back drop for Prologue

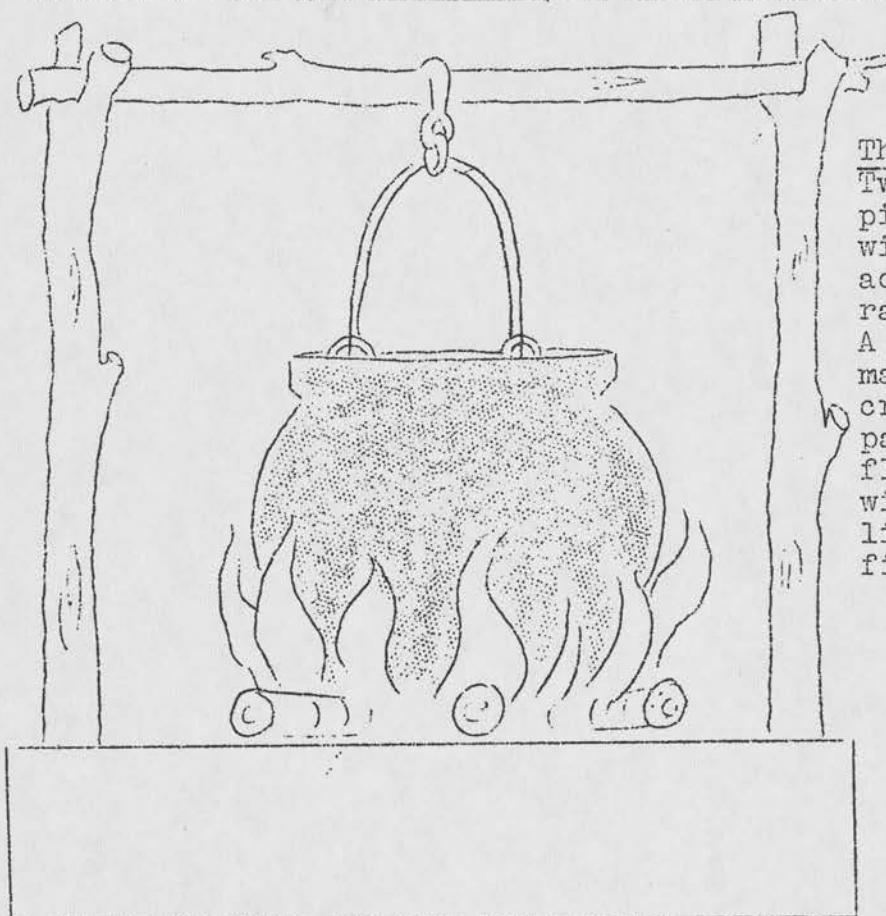
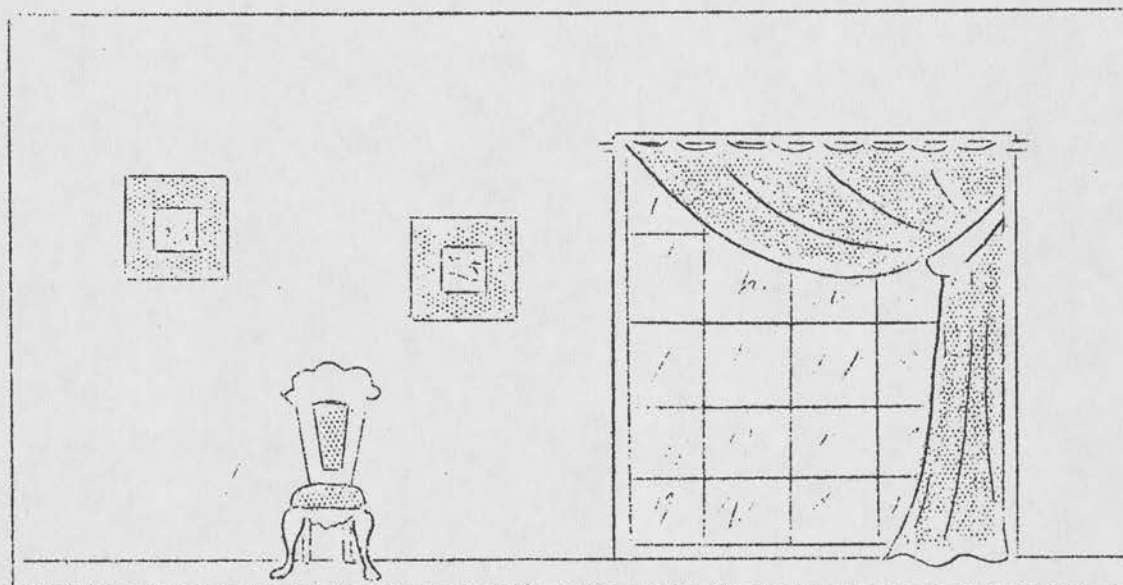


Back drop for Garden



Back drop for Palace Dining Room

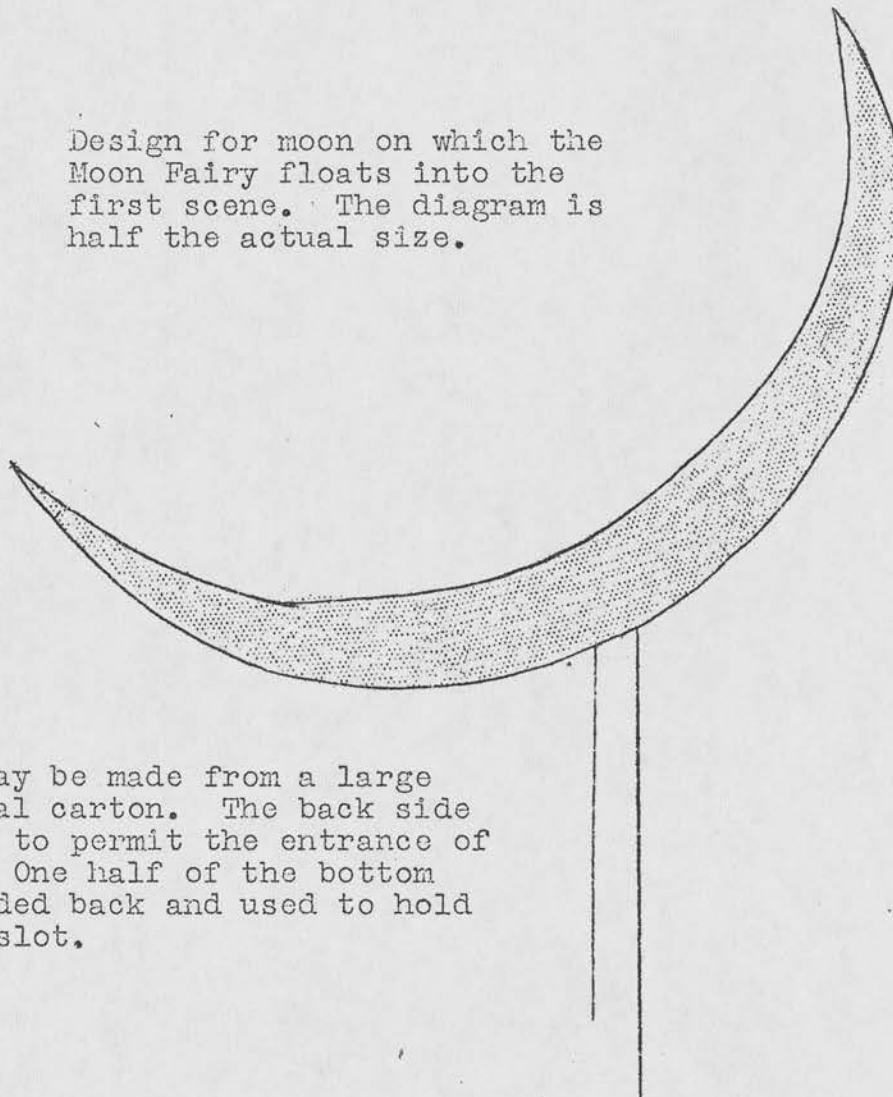
Design for backdrop for Bedroom of Princess



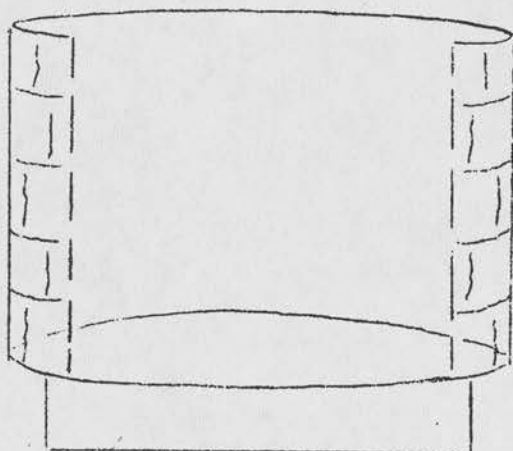
The Witch's Cauldron

Two notched sticks picked up out of doors, with a third piece laid across them - form a rack for the cauldron. A toy pot, painted black may be hung from the cross-piece. Red tissue paper represents the flames. It may be wired with a small electric light bulb to make the fire more realistic.

Design for moon on which the Moon Fairy floats into the first scene. The diagram is half the actual size.



The well may be made from a large size oatmeal carton. The back side is cut out to permit the entrance of the frog. One half of the bottom may be folded back and used to hold it in the slot.



Cut two sides and two backs from compo board, ply board, cigar boxes or heavy corrugated paper with a coping saw. These may be had at a ten cent store. Nail or glue one back to one side so that it will face toward right and the second back to the second side so that it will face toward the left.

Side of chair for dining room of palace

Back of Chair

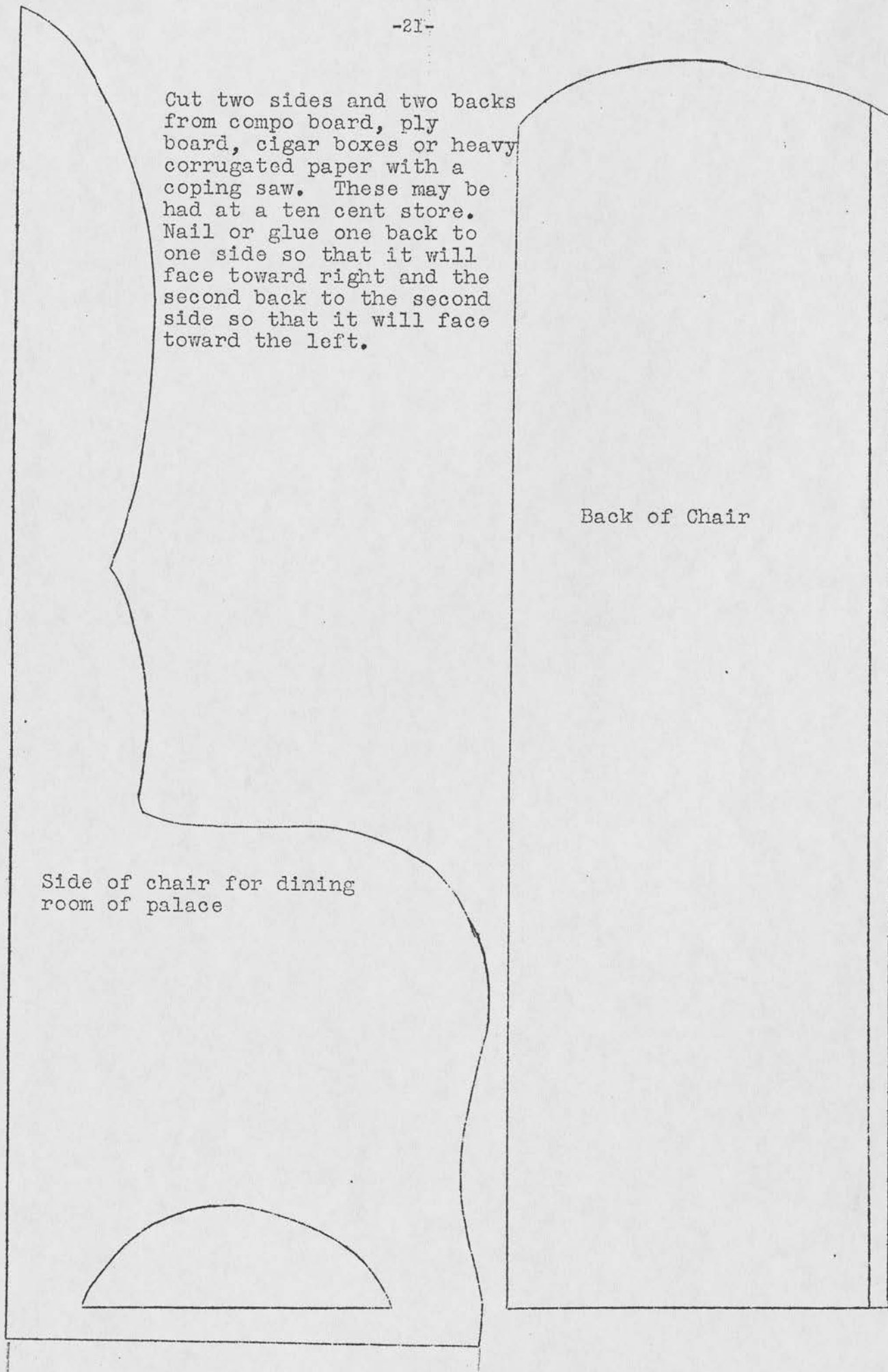
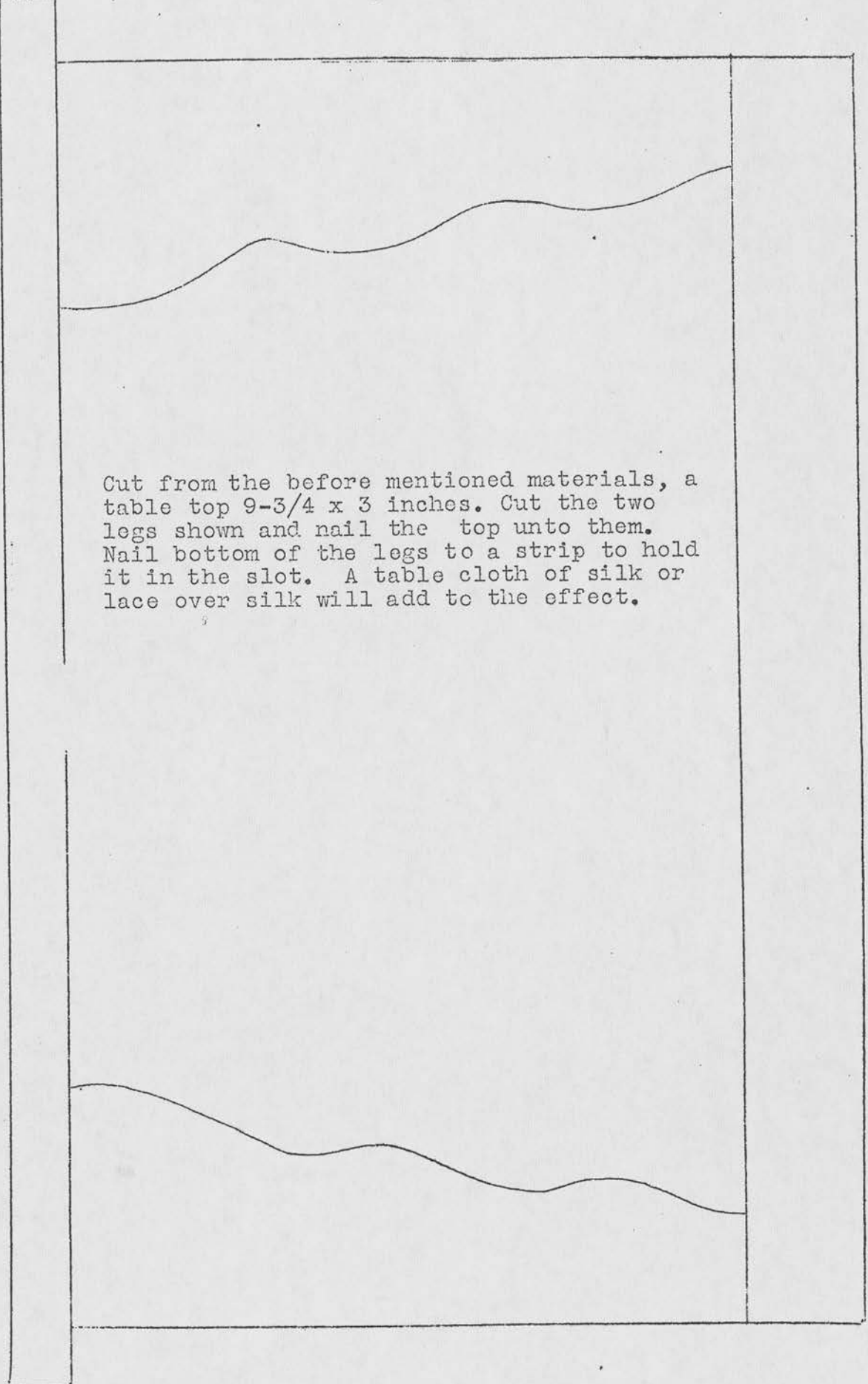
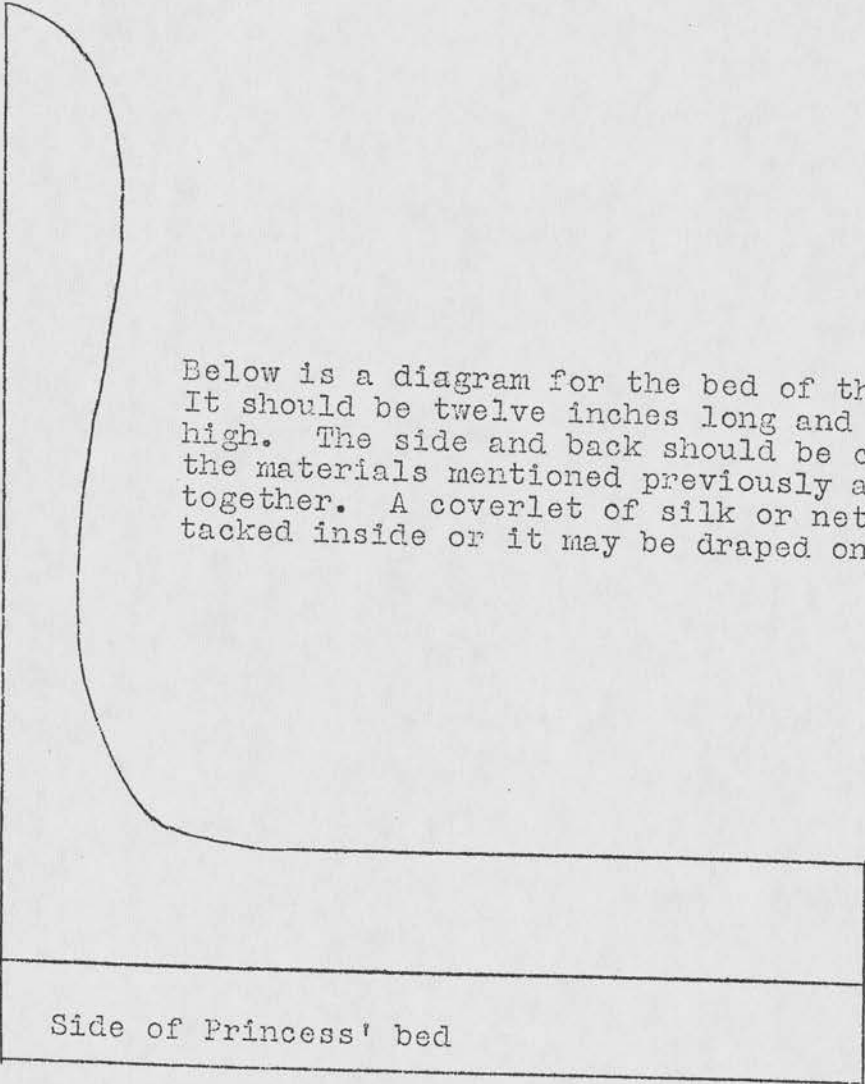


Table for Palace Dining Room

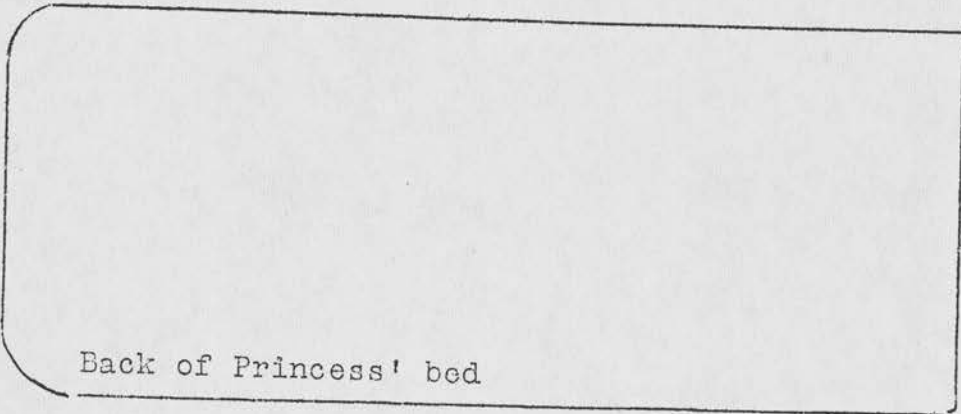


Cut from the before mentioned materials, a table top 9-3/4 x 3 inches. Cut the two legs shown and nail the top unto them. Nail bottom of the legs to a strip to hold it in the slot. A table cloth of silk or lace over silk will add to the effect.

Below is a diagram for the bed of the Princess. It should be twelve inches long and ten inches high. The side and back should be cut from the materials mentioned previously and nailed together. A coverlet of silk or net may be tacked inside or it may be draped on the side.

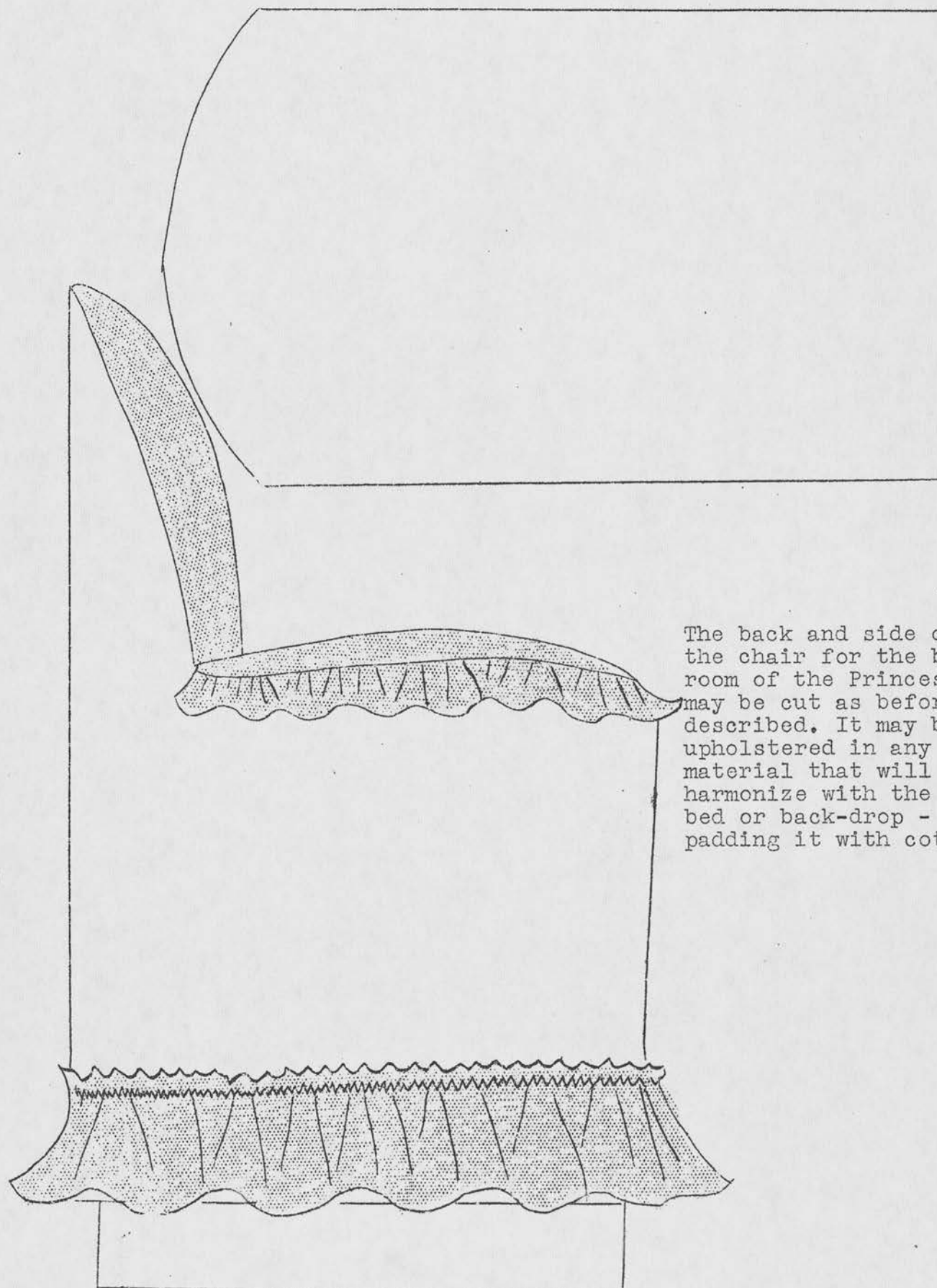


Side of Princess' bed



Back of Princess' bed

The chair for Bedroom of Princess



The back and side of the chair for the bedroom of the Princess may be cut as before described. It may be upholstered in any material that will harmonize with the bed or back-drop - padding it with cotton.

THEATER

A theater may be built as follows:-

Use a manufactured building board 4 ft. wide and 6 ft. in length for the front, in which is an opening 36 in. wide and 18 in. high; the bottom of which is 52 in. from the floor and use the same material for two wings, 6 ft. 2 in. high.

Strips - Fasten flush with all edges of the front and wings, strips of wood 1 in. by 2 in. Also fix a strip entirely across the front between the border strips at the upper edge of the stage opening. Also strips flush with the other three edges of the stage opening. Nail, or better, use screws through the manufactured board into the wood. All strips are to be clear white pine.

Wings are hinged to either side of the front, enabling the whole to stand firmly on the floor. The hinges should be toward the inside edges of the strips on the front to reduce the crack between wings and front. The wings are spread to a convenient angle. They are held in position by a wood strip, extending between the top strips of the two wings, placed 1 ft. to the rear of the front and provided at each end with an angle iron to hook flatly over the upper edge of each wing. This strip serves also to support the backdrops, being provided with 6 small right angle hooks, placed 8 in. apart, on its rear edge. The backdrops are of cambric or similar semi-transparent fabric on which the scenes are painted but through which the puppeteer may see the puppets on his hands, directly in front of his face.

A shelf, 14 in. wide, angled at the ends to the spread of the wings, rests on horizontal strips across both wings, 36 in. above the floor. The shelf is notched at the corners to fit closely against the front. Holes to fit over upright round-headed screws in the strip supports, hold the shelf in place and the wings, firmly. It is for puppets, etc., not in use and for the manuscript of the play.

Stage and Footlight Trough, The stage is a clear white pine board, 1 in. thick, 4½ in. wide and 38 in. long notched at the forward corners, so as to easily go through the 36 in. stage opening as far as the opening's front edge. This front edge of the stage is hinged to a trough 38 in. long to contain footlights of any desirable dimensions, according to the electric lamps to be used, say 3 in. to 4 in. wide and of similar depth. By lifting one end of the stage and trough, they may be removed from the stage opening and the stage, if properly hinged, will then form a lid for the trough.

Headlights, may be supported by strip which supports the curtain rod. The electric lamps, may be finger shaped as show-case lights, ordinary bulbs or Christmas tree lights adapted to the new use.

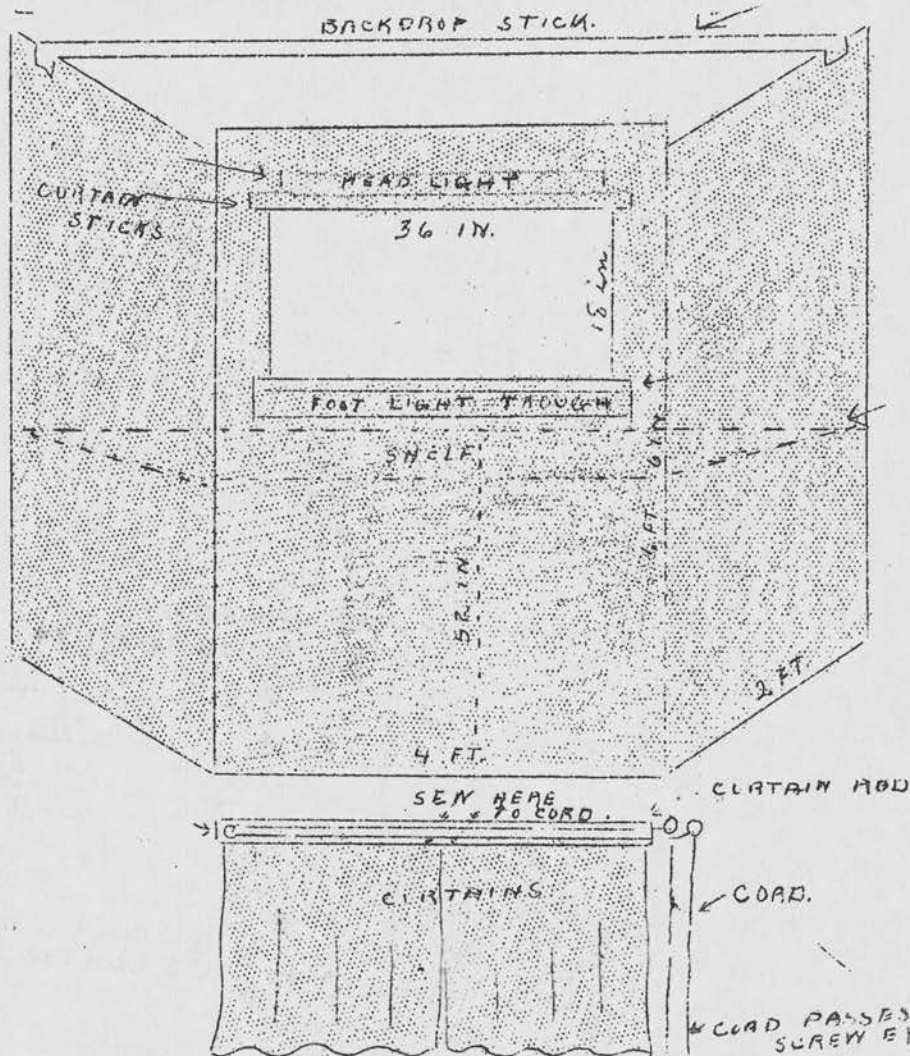
Property Slot- Along the rear edge of the stage, place a strip of oak ¼" by 1" and 38" long. This is attached at each end by a round-headed screw into the edge of the stage board but through a 1/4 inch wood washer, forming a 1/4 inch slot along the length of the stage, into which extensions of the various properties, used in a scene may be slipped and firmly held in position. The tension of the strip may be controlled by a second screw at each end, 2½ inches from the other screws but omitting the washers.

Curtain - A metal curtain rod, extending from wing to wing, is held in position, $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. to the rear of the long strip at the top of the stage opening and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. above the opening by supports placed 42 in. apart. These supports may be large screw eyes, curtain hooks bent over the rod or by other supports. On this rod ten curtain rings support each curtain, which is weighed by five lead weights along their lower edge. The curtains in length nearly touch the stage floor.

Curtain Cord - For operating the curtains, place a screw eye beyond the left support of the curtain rod at the level of the curtain top edge. Place two screw eyes at the same level beyond the right support of the curtain rod. Place two 2 in. round hooks, bent to almost form a screw eye, upright in the right horizontal strip supporting the shelf - one extending up through a notch at the middle of the shelf's end and the second 10 in. further towards the rear. Thread the five with a firm curtain cord that will not stretch, make it taut and tie ends together. Sew the last ring towards the stage center of one curtain to one cord and that of the other curtain to the other cord - pulling downward on one cord, vertical at the right will open the curtains and pulling downward on the other will close them.

The last rings at the opposite ends of the curtains tie to the rod supports - small pulleys may be used instead of screw eyes.

A theater built in this way may be foldable by removing dropstick, shelf, stage and footlight trough, folding the wings on the front for storage.



4350

Learn Varied Arts in Puppetry Course of WPA Project



MINNEAPOLIS JOURNAL PHOTO

Jan. 24, 1937

TWENTY-FIVE REPRESENTATIVES of WPA art, handicraft, recreation, education and youth projects were on their way last night to several sections of the state, taking with them knowledge learned in a puppetry course at the Minneapolis WPA art center. They learned how to design, manufacture and operate puppets and marionets, and will use their knowledge to teach the craft to others in carrying on educational and amusement work in many communities. At the left, Beulah Cedargren, president of the Art Students' League, is setting the stage for a shadow puppet show. Miriam Kanel, center, shows operation of a Chinese stick shadow puppet, and right, Mrs. Devorah Meader, supervisor of the course, is explaining the operation of a marionet theater to Eleanor Kochen.

Puppets to Amuse Throng 1937



MINNEAPOLIS JOURNAL PHOTO

THE ANTICS OF THESE puppets will amuse some of the hundreds of people expected to attend the first annual Good Will Day celebration and fall festival in Robbinsdale late today and this evening. The puppets are members of the Tiny Theater Puppet show

of the WPA recreation project for rural Hennepin county. Here they are shown in the hands of their master, Bernard Reuper. The celebration was to open at 3 p.m., with a monster parade to be followed by a vaudeville program. It will celebrate completion of Robbinsdale's new high school.



Shadow puppetry design is one of the classes in which Dewey Albinson, supervisor of the project, is especially interested. The student is Fern Johnson.

Jan. 24, 1937



Even the masters of manipulating puppets had to spend long hours of practicing, and Erleen Bungert, left, and Betty Ann McGinn are confident they will master it.

April 1937



For Acrobatic Fingers

Finger puppet manipulation is no snap, it was learned by Olaf Aalvu, left, and Harry Olin, students at the Minneapolis Art Center, a WPA project, but they were assured by Instructor Deborah Meader that it could be mastered.

Minneapolis Tribune photo



WPA

"The History, Development, and Popularity of Puppets"
by DSM - ~~the~~ rec. by WPA, 2/8/39

→ New U/m

* Cites F Tony Sang, ^{'life-size marionettes'} Remo Bufano (huge figures/puppets) and Papa Matteo (huge figures), and King Kong in film, commercial advertising.

* Mostly a history paper.

THE HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT, AND POPULARITY OF PUPPETS

A marionette belongs to the great family of puppets, which is a general term applied to any specially constructed, articulated figure, and refers both to marionettes and hand puppets.

No one person (at least in modern times) ever "invented" marionettes, as some people believe. Marionettes and puppets are so old that even today their origin has not been definitely established. It is known they are of ancient origin, traces of them being found in Greek, Roman and Egyptian tombs. They were popular in England in the 16th century and references to them have been made in writings of Aristotle, Plato, Horace, Goethe and Lessing. The ancient Greek name for marionettes means literally, "puppets suspended from strings or threads". In India, the name formerly given only to puppet showmen meaning "string puller", has today come to be a term applied to any theatrical producer, a further proof the puppet plays must be more ancient than the theatre of human actors.

Marionettes were known in China, according to written record as early as, 630 A. D., where it is thought they were brought from Turkestan. Owing to the political and military expansion of Mongols, Chinese traders carried the marionettes over Asia to Africa and Europe where they were developed into religious automata used in Churches and church processions.

In England the plays were given on streets, by day or by lamp light, and they were frequently exhibited at fairs. Puppets were often used as Bible characters, the story of Creation being most popular. Political situations were also portrayed by puppets. (In accordance with the times in 1745, puppets were often beheaded.) Any popular play was imitated by them.

There are three different types of puppets beside the marionette. They are all figures in imitation of the human form or animals and are manipulated by persons. The three different types are--The Rod or stick puppet-- The Hand or fist puppet, known also as the glove or mitten styled puppet, The Shadow or silhouette puppet--and the string marionette.

Some authors draw a definite distinction between the hand or fist puppet and the string marionette or the string operated character. According to Tony Sarg, the string marionette is the true marionette while the other types originated from that source. Two types are most commonly used. The fist puppet and the string marionette. The difference between the two is: the marionettes are elaborately constructed figures worked by strings fastened to a wooden control and manipulated from above the stage level. Figures with various means of animation have a venerable history. They have been unearthed from pre-Christian ruins; Egyptian tombs and Etruscan remains; Xenophon mentions a performance with such figures in 422 B. C. They were used in pagan and religious rites.

The hand or fist puppet consists of a head and an empty dress, slipped upon the hand of a performer, who animates the puppet with his thumb and two fingers--it is to this type that Punch and Judy belong.

The popularity of marionettes and hand puppets, like a great many other things, seems to go in cycles, and in the 17th century hand puppets rose rapidly in favor and attained their greatest height in the early part of the

18th century/ It was then that Punch flourished in England. He has been a familiar figure for hundreds of years. History traces him from ancient Egypt, and in each country he is known by a particular name. In Italy he is Pulcinella; in France, Polichinelle, or Guignol; (Genol); in England, Mr. Punch; in Germany, Pulzinella. His broad burlesque appealed to the low state of the English folk humor, of the period, and it was then, too, that his physical appearance of hooked nose, hump front and back, cap and ruff became standardized. In 1713 a permanent theatre was established for him in Covent Garden, but it was not until the end of the century that he married Judy, who from that time on remained a permanent member of the troupe. Punch was so popular he had to appear in every performance, (Even Biblical dramas), to satisfy public demand, and as an actor he was seriously compared to the greatest living actors of the day. (Edmund and Keene). In fact, not only in England but nearly in all Asiatic and European countries. Punch, in one form or another, is the national hero, and in each country his characteristics as a greedy braggart--are the same. Throughout its history, we find the hand puppet theatre, the voice of the common people, and Punch their greatest spokesman. Easy to transport, the hand puppet theatre quickly drew a crowd when set up on the street corner and it was the newspaper of the times, for the puppets not only reflected the life and customs of the period, but also influenced and shaped public opinion. Punch was in turn commentator as well as agitator on important religious and political questions of the day.

Although the mechanics of manipulating hand puppets seems to encourage slap-stick methods of expression, that is not true of all hand puppets. The French writer, George Sand, established a complete puppet theatre in her home. Her son carved the heads, and she costumed the figures. Over a period, of 25 years, they presented a series of parodies and satires on popular authors of the period. The puppets have been preserved and are occasionally placed on exhibition at Nohant, France.

Writers of other periods knew and liked the puppets. Shakespeare mentioned them repeatedly, and on one occasion makes Hamlet wish to be the speaker on a marionette stage. Ben Johnson, Addison and Steele, Swift, and Pepys refer to puppets and shows they saw. Maurice Maeterlinck wrote some beautiful marionette plays. Cyrano de Bergerac stabbed and killed a famous ape, "Tagotin" who appeared in a puppet show, because he thought the ape was making fun of his nose! Samuel Johnson thought the marionettes played much better than living actors, and coming to our modern writers, George Bernard Shaw declares himself a Champion of the puppets.

Musical geniuses, such as Mozart, too, have written for the miniature actors. Joseph Haydn had his own marionette theatre and wrote a number of operettas for the puppets as well as his familiar "Toy Symphony".

The greatest poem in the German language, which has become a well-loved opera, was inspired by marionettes. As children, Goethe and his sister were given a marionette theatre for Christmas by their grandfather, and having written for and loved the puppets from childhood, Goethe drew his inspiration for "Faust" from seeing a marionette performance of an old German legend on which the plot was based.

The 18th Century might well be called the "Golden Age" of marionettes, for it was then that they reached their greatest popularity and played a considerable part in the public life of all civilized countries. At this time marionette showmen became so numerous as a class that they were formed into a guild, with their own special regulations and customs. One peculiar rule was that none of the play texts should be written, but everything, even the prompter's stage directions, had to be memorized. This custom, in part, has survived today; and most professional marionette companies memorize the lines of a play, and do not, as many suppose, read the lines while working the little puppets, which would be a task requiring the physical agility of an octopus and the mental agility of a Dorothy Parker. Some companies do have one group to manipulate the puppets, while another group reads the lines, but it is felt that this method is not as satisfactory as when the lines are memorized by the manipulator.

Strangely enough, at this time the church, especially in England and France, was very severe in its war against the legitimate theatre, but the puppets seem to have been in some way overlooked.

The legitimate stage actors became jealous of the puppets because they thought their proceeds were being reduced through competition. They called the puppets "miseries, both dangerous and demoralizing", and their dislike finally became too strong for the puppets to combat, clever as the puppets were at defending themselves with biting satires at the expense of the actors. Then in England the company of Drury Lane demanded the puppet show theatres be closed, while in France, the actors succeeded in driving the puppet showmen to the markets in the Parisian suburbs, and then they could only produce plays without dialogue. Only monologues were allowed, and they could not be spoken in the natural voice.

Until now nothing has been said about the other types of puppets. There is the Rod or stick puppet which is a figure operated from below, by means of rods or sticks. These include the Chinese Shadows. Through the history of the ancient Orientals we find the shadow puppets predominating. They were used almost entirely as a form of entertainment. In certain countries women were not allowed to mingle with the men, and so they viewed the performance from the back of the curtain, seeing the figures in relief while the men saw the shadows. In time these figures were modeled and painted to increase their appeal to the women spectators. In China, actors of the court were introduced in place of the puppets and their shadows appeared on the screen.

The Chinese (Javanese) Shadow flourished in Imperial China from very early times, and is the daintiest of dramatic forms. It has a strong appeal to the emotions. In 121 B.C., an historian tells a legend of this origin. An emperor of the Han dynasty lost his favorite wife and grieved so at her loss that the court magician was called before him with a command that he bring her back to life. The penalty for his failure was the magician's head. This stimulated his ingenuity to such an extent that he cut from transparent fish skin the figure of the empress, carved it cunningly and colored it very beautifully. He threw this figure and others on a lighted screen. As the Chinese think of the dead as shades, the emperor was delighted to see his lost empress moving about in the land of the shades among her shadow

companions. This is our first knowledge of colored moving pictures. Shadows of the souls of the dead were recalled in this manner in connection with religious rites. Gradually plays were introduced in the Imperial courts.

Puppets have been introduced and used throughout the world in religious ceremonies. Even our Southwest Indians use these figures in their ceremonies to the gods.

The revival of interest in this country has brought about impressive productions by Tony Sarg and the creation of his life size marionettes. Remo Bufano in his production uses figures 10 feet tall. Papa Mateo directs huge figures weighing nearly a hundred pounds. In the moving pictures there is King Kong, and others. Commercial puppets are used in demonstrating what milady shall wear and to display various products. In the field of education puppets have been used as teachers in Russia and Czechoslovakia. In puppetry the creative possibilities are endless, not only in the construction and use of materials but as correlation in every curriculum.



WPA

No. 6
"Recreational Puppetry" ¹ MN Work Projects
Administration, Prepared by DSM, reprinted
August 1940.

* ~~For~~ "Far sighted leaders wish to widen
their field [recreation] to include cultural
activities." (p. 2)

- especially good for a recreational
leader who has some, but not
thorough, knowledge of handicraft and
art ~~and~~ areas.

* "Demonstrations of puppetry are still novel
and are so interesting to communities that
after they observe indirectly a favorable public
sentiment for recreation as a whole." (p. 2)

p. 2-5
* Benefits: Self expression, ~~there~~ necessity for
cooperation, entertaining, physical coordination,
"develops fundamental knowledge ~~of~~ and appreciation
of the arts" (playwriting, art, handicraft, drama,
music) "If an appreciation for craftsmanship
only has been developed, the activity has value."

* Indicates groups to work with - PTA, (Safety
Programs), 4-H, YMCA, YWCA, libraries
or churches.

R

ECREATIONAL PUPPETRY

MINNESOTA
WORK PROJECTS
ADMINISTRATION



REPRINTED AUGUST, 1940

WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION
OF MINNESOTA

Minnesota Building St. Paul, Minnesota
S. L. Stolte, Administrator

Division of
Professional and Service Projects
Henet L. Kaufmann, Director

RECREATION DEPARTMENT
Louise Wood, State Supervisor

RECREATIONAL PUPPETRY

Bulletin No. 6

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Bulletin Prepared by
Deborah S. Meader
Supervisor of Puppetry
Recreation Department
Works Progress Administration

PUPPETRY AS A RECREATION

I VALUE OF PUPPETRY TO A RECREATIONAL PROGRAM

A. STIMULATES INTEREST:

All who have had anything to do with well constructed artistic puppets skillfully handled know that puppets do have an immediate and lasting appeal to people of all ages. This appeal is primarily to the imagination. Charlie McCarthy, a puppet, has become one of the most popular personalities of radio and screen. Puppets have been loved throughout the ages and this love has resulted in the creation of national puppet heroes in practically every country from earliest times to the present day. Puppetry is one of the earliest forms of drama. It enables people to escape from the world of reality to a miniature world of make believe.

B. ACTS AS A SOCIALIZING FORCE:

Puppetry is a combination of varied activities coordinated in a dramatic production. Those interested in writing and handicraft, music and the drama find themselves working together in a community of good fellowship. It is possible for people of all ages and both sexes to work together. It is invaluable for those unfortunates who are either shy or physically handicapped. Emphasis is on accomplishment, not on appearance and personality. Shy people because their shyness has forced them to live within their imaginations, are often found to have more to contribute artistically and dramatically than the exhibitionists who have developed no creative reserves.

C. MEANS OF PRESENTING MATERIAL INTERESTING TO THE CHILDREN AND ADULTS OF THE COMMUNITY:

It is a visual method of presenting stories or educational material in an arresting and colorful manner. The puppet show is always a popular feature of community recreation programs. The material presented may be adapted to the season or to holidays, or it may be literature which is appropriate for presentation in the library for book week, or historical material that may be welcome in the school. It may be dramatized teaching on health, safety or conservation.

D. EASY APPROACH FOR LEADERS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES TO CULTURAL FIELDS OF DRAMA, ART, HANDICRAFT AND MUSIC:

With all our recent emphasis on cultural activities, we recognize that many leaders have preparation for

recreational leadership, in physical activities only. Far sighted leaders wish to widen their field to include cultural activities.

If the leader has no previous training in art, handicraft, drama, or music but does have interest and enthusiasm in puppetry and some training in the handicrafts and the techniques involved he may discover that he has aptitudes in one of these cultural fields. This discovery may encourage him to branch out into other types of handicraft activities or simple forms of informal drama.

E. INTERPRETS THE RECREATION PROGRAM TO:

1. Planning Committee or Municipal Recreation Department:

It is necessary to acquaint the recreation planning committee or a municipal recreation department with the educational and cultural value of puppetry to a recreational program.

2. Community:

Demonstrations of puppetry are still novel and are so interesting to communities that often they create indirectly a favorable public sentiment for recreation as a whole. Dramatizations may set forth the objectives and philosophy of recreation to present the program directly.

Community interest in puppetry can best be aroused by a satisfactory demonstration. Arrangements should be made through the planning committee or a municipal recreation department for a demonstration, possibly at a community night program. It should be presented by attractive puppets well handled. The district and county supervisor can assist in arranging this. It is very desirable to have the demonstration accompanied by an explanation of the recreational and cultural values included.

F. OFFERS BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS:

1. Opportunity for Self-expression:

A puppet production develops life-like situations in miniature which presents a succession of problems. A real necessity for cooperation is developed. This gives the individual an opportunity to express himself as a member of a member of a group in solving these problems.

Puppets offer a means for creative self-expression in art, handicraft, music and drama. The person interested originally in the dramatic field only may discover that he has talent or finds satisfaction in expressing himself through music, art or handicraft.

2. Provides Entertainment:

Puppetry provides entertainment of a creative, not passive nature. America has its leisure because of its mechanization. We are in the habit, also, of being mechanically entertained through the movies and radio. We need to develop creative activities that encourage craftsmanship and an appreciation of craftsmanship as well as give an outlet to the innate dramatic urge within us.

3. Develops Physical Coordination of Mind and Body.

A skilful puppeteer must control the bodily movements of the puppet so as to make it appear like a living being. He must synchronize the movements of the puppet with the lines spoken by the operator. This demands the development of mental and manual dexterity.

4. Develops Fundamental Knowledge and Appreciation of the Arts:

a. Playwriting

As yet there are relatively few plays for puppets. This stimulates the dramatization of stories for puppet presentation or the writing of original plays. Valuable research is motivated in selecting interesting and suitable material of literary value. Arranging this material in dramatic form is an elementary type of playwriting.

After puppet characters have been used to present a play, other plays for these characters may be written by the group - each member contributing; or by an individual presenting his own play to the group for constructive criticism; or the play may grow spontaneously as members of the group, after becoming fully acquainted with the various personalities of the puppets, engage them in further adventures.

b. Art

Designing the theatre, puppets and scenery also involves research. Sketches made to scale in color give an opportunity to express creative artistic ability and also of developing standards of color and design. Through the selection of colors to be used in a costume or costumes to appear in a scene together and the most effective color for the background against which these costumes appear. The designing of shadow figures give the creative artist a wide field. Modeling of puppet heads, bodies, and hands, offer opportunity and training in sculpture.

c. Handicraft

Many handicrafts are employed and we recognize the desirability of training in manual skills in our mechanized civilization. The construction of theatre and properties, the carving of heads, bodies, hands and feet provide an opportunity for woodcraft. Heads may be made of papier mache' which includes clay modeling, plaster casting, papier mache'. Scenery and puppets must be painted, and costumes cut and sewed. The technique of silhouette cutting and mosaic is employed in the making of shadow figures. All construction must stand the test of use. The ability to appreciate merits and defects develops judgement. If an appreciation for craftsmanship only has been developed, the activity has value.

d. Drama

An appreciation and knowledge of the fundamentals of the drama is gained. Characterization through the voice and voice projection is especially necessary as there is no change in facial expression in the puppets excepting through the imagination of the audience. The physical obstruction of scenery or screen makes clear enunciation and greater force a necessity. Stage lighting and its effect on the painting or make up of the characters, timing, and sound effects are all employed and through rehearsal must be welded into dramatic form for the final performance. This also furthers more intelligent audience appreciation.

e. Music

Incidental music should be selected which is appropriate to the period, mood and nationality of play. Musical specialties may be added which add variety and increase participation. Songs and dances may be introduced into the body of the play itself.

Rhythm bands may be one possibility for an orchestra for the puppet theatre.

Community singing may be successfully led by a puppet.

If the music has been carefully selected, it will develop audience appreciation indirectly. If an explanation is given why the music used was selected, it will develop audience appreciation directly.

II. QUALIFICATIONS OF A SUCCESSFUL PUPPETRY LEADER

- A. Must Have Interest and Enthusiasm
- B. Must Have Patience

The miniature size and the many details involved in the successful preparation of a production make patience necessary.

- C. Must Have Ability to Coordinate Various Parts of the Project
- D. Should Have Some Knowledge or Skill in Drama, Art, Handicraft, or Music

Technical training is not necessary but interest and appreciation in any of the above is most desirable.

- E. Should Have Specific Training in Puppetry, Handicraft and Technique

This cannot be gained in a few weeks time and must be constantly supplemented by study.

III. STEPS IN DEVELOPING A RECREATIONAL PUPPET PROGRAM

- A. Community Interest:

A satisfactory demonstration as above suggested

should result in interesting one or more adult groups in the community. Such groups might be the Parent Teacher Association, 4-H, Young Women's or Young Men's Christian Association. The Librarians, the teachers, the American Legion, or the churches.

B. Production Group:

The production groups selected will probably be in some way connected with adult groups. Any one in the community should of course be welcomed to participate. Production groups may consist of children or adults or both.

C. Selection of Material:

Selection of material should be satisfactory to the interested adult groups and adapted to the production group's age and interest. For example if the adult group is a P. T. A. which wishes a performance for a Safety Program, safety material which would lend itself to presentation by puppets would be used.

D. Determine Date of Performance:

Prompt decision as to the date of the performance is a stimulating factor. On the time available depends the adaptation of the material and type of puppet used. It is unfortunate to allow puppetry to be a handicraft activity only.

E. Selection of Type of Puppet:

The material to be presented, the age and interest of the group and the date of production must all be taken into consideration in the type of puppet used.

If the group has a special interest in one type, then that must be the determining factor and the material to be presented would be selected as adapted to it.

1. Types

- a. Hand Puppets. (See Note a)
- b. Shadow Puppets. (See Note b)
- c. Rod Puppets. (See Note c)
- d. Marionettes. (See Note d)
- e. Combination of Types. (See note e)

F. Dramatization of Material:

The dramatizing of the selected material is of great value intrinsically and also makes the group feel closely identified with the characters and theme of the play.

G. Scale of Puppets:

This is very important. (The scale is determined by the size of the theatre opening or screen.) If the scale is kept constant puppets and settings may be re-used for subsequent productions.

H. List Work to be Done:

1. Research
2. Design of theatre, characters, costumes and settings.
3. Construction of theatre, characters and settings

I. Sketch in Color:

1. Costumes
2. Properties
3. Settings

J. Construction:

1. Theatre
2. Puppets
3. Properties

K. Casting:

One advantage over the regular drama is that personal appearance does not determine the casting of the characters. The ability to conceive the character, to support the characterization with appropriate vocalization and to manipulate the puppet are the determining factors in casting a puppet play. Duplicate casts are an advantage because rehearsal may begin by alternating operators and readers. Each learns from the other and a great number may participate at one time. No emphasis need be put on learning lines, although with frequent rehearsals lines are memorized painlessly. The final selection of the cast should be postponed until it can be selected

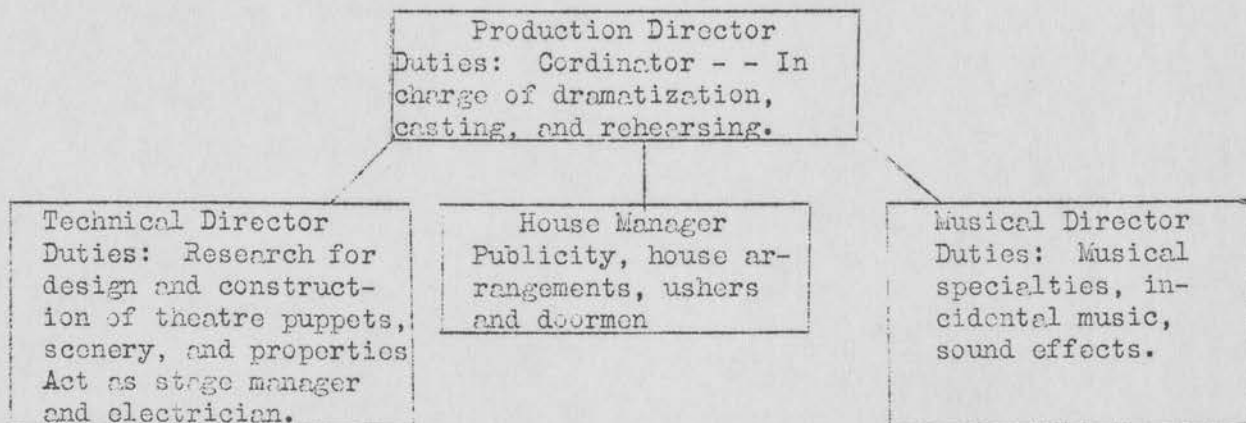
by the production director with the assistance of a casting committee selected by the group. They should have in mind the excellence of the final production, not personalities, when these decisions are made.

L. Rehearsal:

Whenever possible rehearsal should begin immediately. If the group is large the production and construction units may be separate. If too small for this, a part of each period should be devoted to rehearsal. The lines of the play may be read and the action played through with people, if puppets and theatre are both under construction. If substitute puppets are available while the theatre is being constructed, hand or rod puppets may be used over the edge of a table; within an overturned table, if Marionettes; or against a window pane, if shadows. Such activity stimulates construction and makes it more intelligent.

M. Organization for Production:

If the group is large enough the following chart indicates proper organization and defines the responsibilities attached to each department.



N. Production:

This should be of the highest quality possible, artistically, dramatically, and technically. Just

as high a standard may be maintained with small children as with adults, if the material and puppets have been selected in accordance with the age and length of time available. A simple, well planned and produced performance is infinitely more attractive and valuable from every point of view than an attempt at an elaborate one. All future interest and enthusiasm depends on a successful production. It creates a feeling of pride through accomplishment in the participants and a desire to participate in those viewing the performance. It likewise stimulates an appreciation of its value as a recreational activity among adults.

III. DIFFICULTIES THAT MAY BE ENCOUNTERED

A. Financing:

Puppets may be as simple and inexpensive as is necessary. They may be constructed almost entirely from waste materials and many types of make-shift theatre are possible. However, if the steps of procedure have been followed as outlined above, the planning committee will wish to furnish whatever funds are necessary. Adult interest and understanding in the community is important.

B. Meeting Place:

This again is the responsibility of the planning committee. It is most desirable to have a work shop where materials may be left undisturbed. If in connection with this there is space in which to give regular puppet performances, the situation is ideal and we have the foundation of a Children's Theatre.

C. Lack of Interest:

In conference with leaders carrying on work in puppetry, the consensus was that when a satisfactory demonstration was given, no lack of interest was found in adults or children.

D. Length of Time Necessary to Prepare a Production

No one will deny that puppetry may consume much time. If, however, the material to be presented

and the puppets to be used are adapted to the age, interest and skill of the group and to the length of time available before a production, and the leader has the qualities listed above, the time involved will not be a drawback.

E. Lack of Previous Training.

District institutes, additional help and training, bulletin material and supplementary reading is doing much to help leaders become trained in puppetry. It is a mistake for leaders who are not interested nor trained to be forced to enter this field.

NOTES

Note a.

Hand puppets consist of a head with small pads attached to the front and back of the neck and a dress into the sleeves of which hands in cuffs are sewed. It is put on by introducing the first finger in the head, the thumb and little finger in the two cuffs attached to the hands and grasping the pad with the remaining two fingers. Motion of the head, hands and body bring the figure to life. It is operated directly before the face, the puppeteer being masked by a semi-transparent backdrop through which he can watch his manipulation. Hand puppets appeal to boys, girls and adults. The material that they present must be adapted to the age and interest of the group. It should be arranged so that few characters appear on the stage at a time. The play should have action and short speeches. The heads, hands and costumes may be simply constructed and a satisfactory performance may be given in sixteen or more hours time.

Note b.

Shadow puppets may be constructed of cardboard, tag board, construction paper or pyrolin. The figures are jointed and held against a lighted screen, and operated by wires or sticks attached to movable parts. They may be presented as black silhouettes or as transparent colored shadows. They are simply constructed and may be adapted to the use of all ages of children and adults. They may present stories that have a succession of characters appearing for a short time only, or those that have crowds of people or animals. The construction and rehearsal of a complete performance may be carried out in simplified form in eight hours or more.

Note c.

Rod puppets are full figures of cloth and wood, held by a rod which runs through the body to the head. They are operated from be-

low or before the face, as hand puppets. The head may be operated by a string and the arms by wires. This type represents male characters more convincingly than hand puppets and provides a well proportioned body. The technique of handling is more difficult to acquire than that of hand puppets. A successful project with this type would take 20 hours or more.

Note d.

Marionettes are full jointed figures operated from above by strings attached to the puppet at the head, shoulders, back, knees and hands, and to a control held by the puppeteer. The heads and bodies may be constructed of various materials. The construction and technique of handling is more complicated than hand puppets or shadows. They are adapted to plays of few characters or to specialty or vaudeville acts. They have few limitations in this field and should be given an opportunity, not to copy humans but to do the things humans cannot do. A successful simplified project would necessitate 20 hours at a minimum. More time would be very desirable.

Note e.

Various combinations of the above types may be desirable or interesting to us in order to present the desired material. We often use a hand puppet master of ceremonies for a shadow production.

