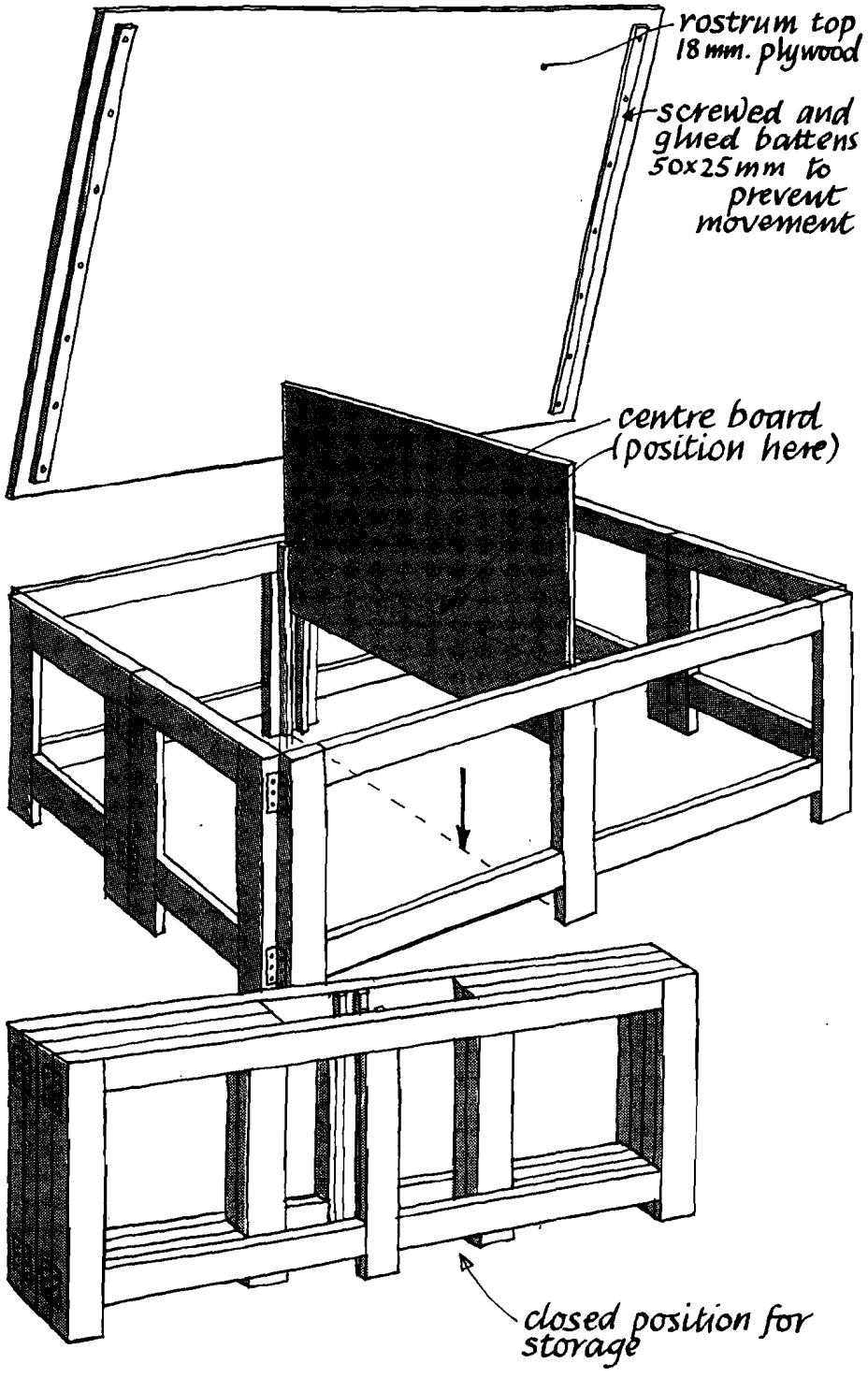
ROSTRA

Rostra, considered as building units for all kinds of stage-building, are most versatile pieces of equipment. As rectangular boxes they can be built into stages or can make new levels on an existing stage. In the form of ramps or steps they allow movement from one level to another and, with wheels or castor runners, they are the basis of mobile set pieces – useful for quick scene changes.

Rigid, non-collapsible rostra are also suitable for staging but are difficult to store away unless a large amount of storage space is available. One useful purpose for a rigid rostrum could be that of a wardrobe – ideal where space for clothing is inadequate – see drawing.

The construction of the basic unit shown here is of a collapsible type for convenience of storage. Variations of shape and size are shown in this section. They include the ramp, triangular and semi-circular rostra, steps and staircases, and spiral and curving assemblies.

An example of a basic rostra stage with a ramp and five individual step units making a four-level set is shown on pages 40–41. It is also featured in the section on design as the arrangement used for a production of 'The Merchant of Venice' (see pages 92–93).

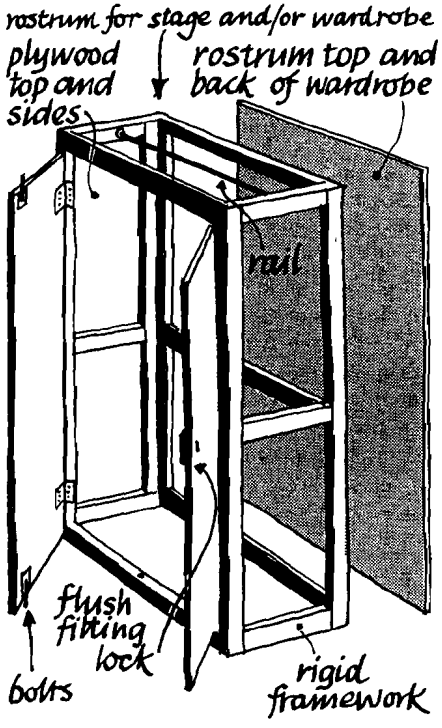


Collapsible rostra–1

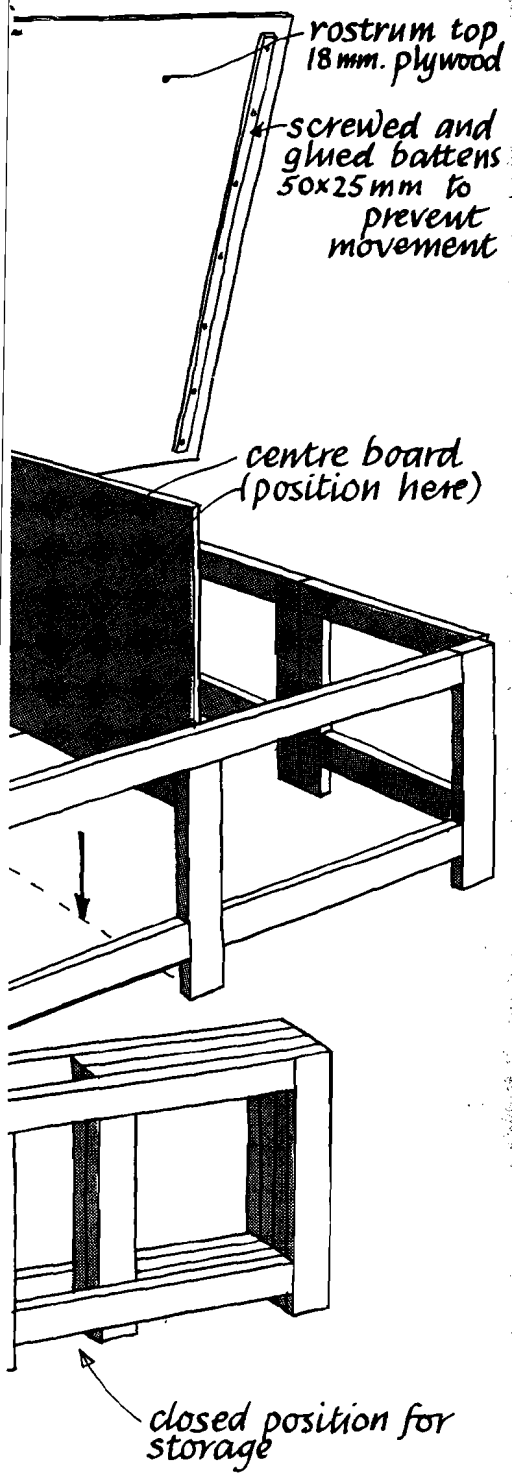
Drawings and plans on these pages show the construction of a large rostrum measuring 6×4×3. Whatever the size, a top board of 18 mm plywood and a 12 mm centre-board will be necessary. Chip- or blockboard may be substituted for the centre-board if more convenient.

A number of such rostra will be suitable for building an independent stage. (The height of 3 units is always optional – some people may prefer a lower level.)

This type of rostra is seen in the stage assembly on page 99.



Wardrobe: the frame must be of a fixed type or be braced at the back to keep it rigid. Sides and top can, as required, be covered with thin plywood or hardboard. Doors are added at the front.



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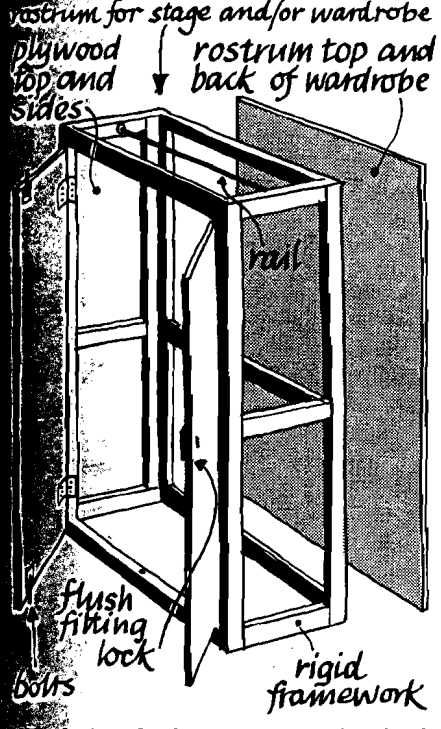

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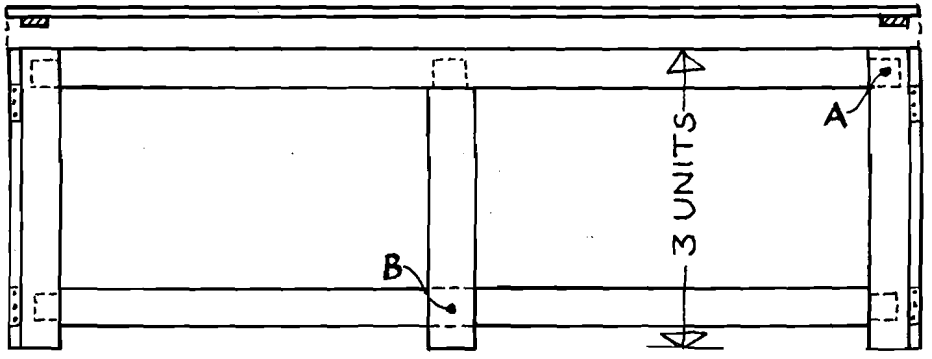
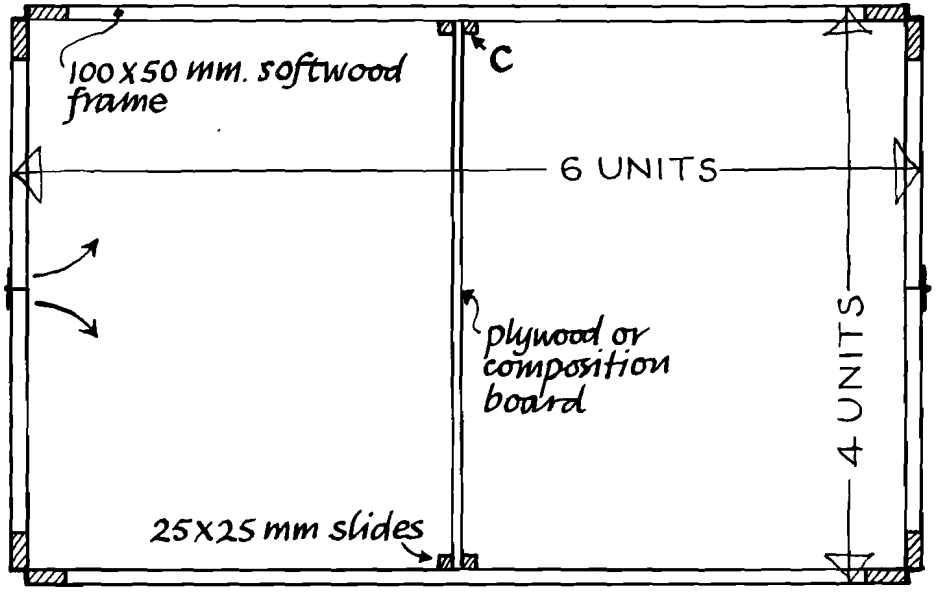
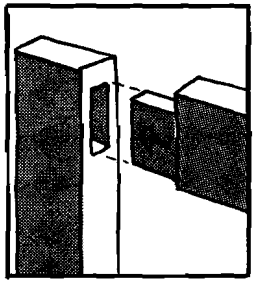


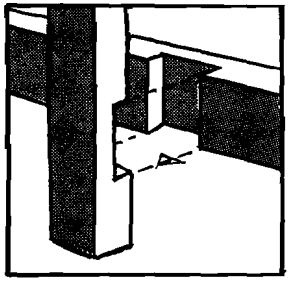
Side elevation of rostrum.



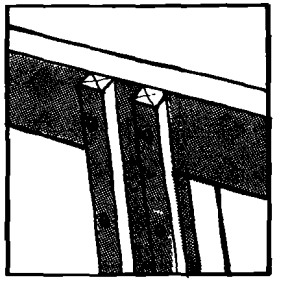
Plan view of rostrum.



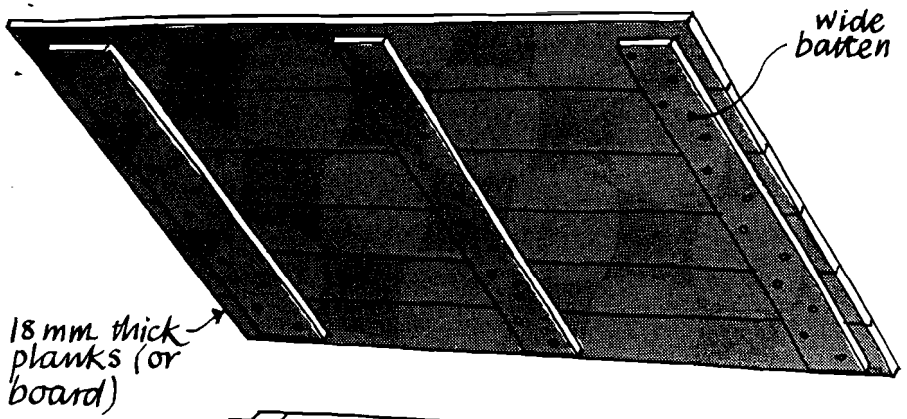
Mortice and tenon joint as at **A**.



Halving joint as at **B**.



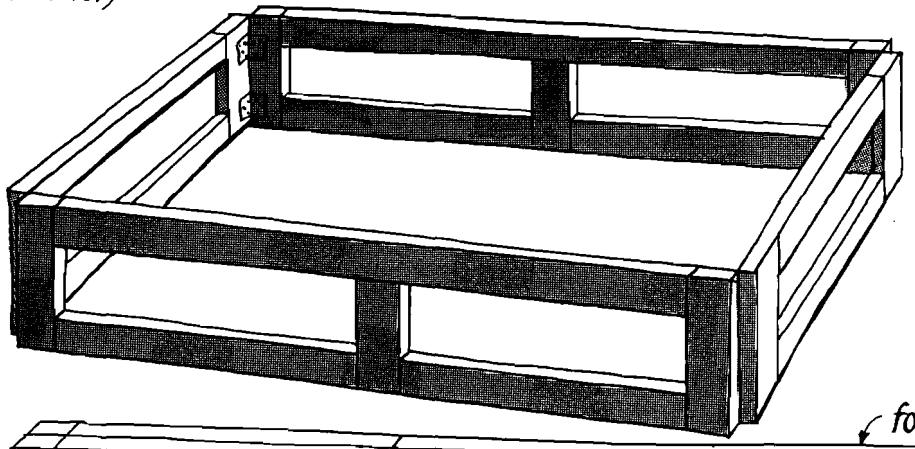
Slides for centre-board as at **C**.

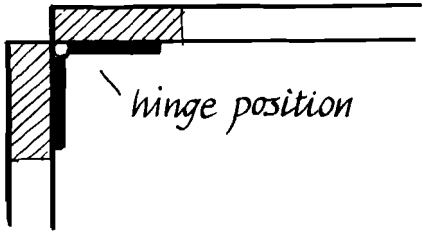


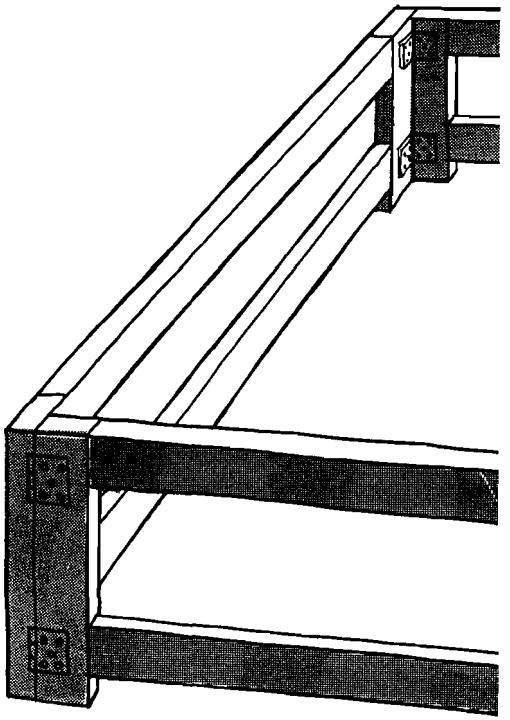
Collapsible rostra–2

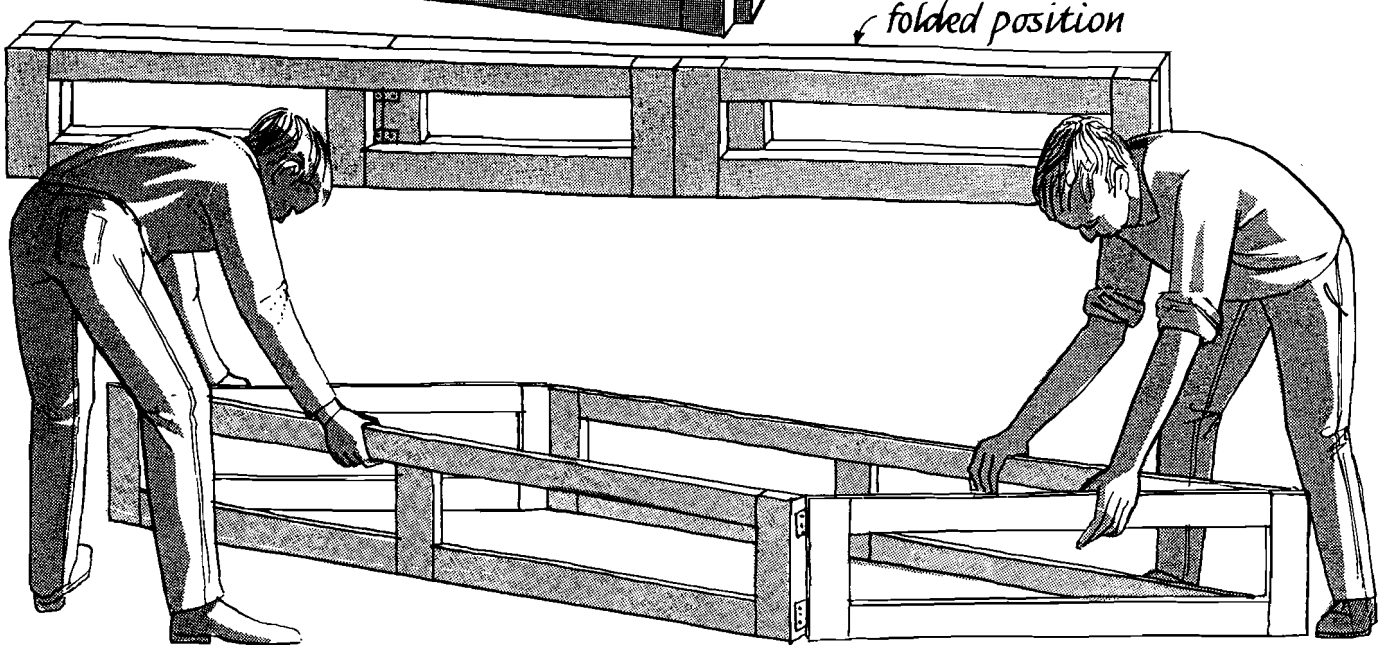
Smaller rostra can be constructed more simply. A rostrum measuring approximately 1.5 m × 1 m, as illustrated here, does not require a centre-board and the top can be built of planking.

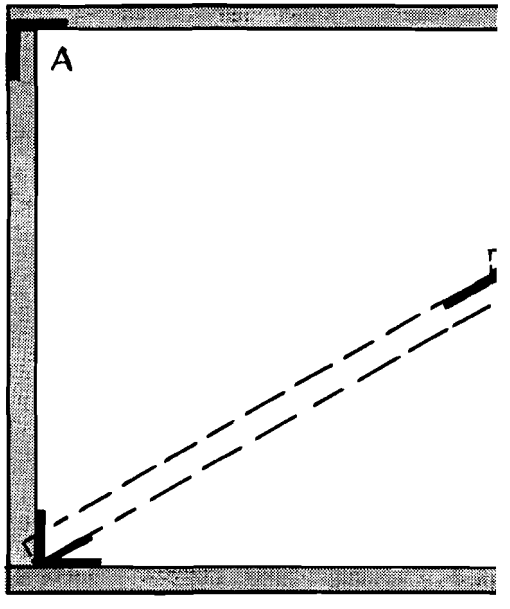
The hinging arrangement is also simpler but in the folded position the rostrum takes up rather more linear space when stored.











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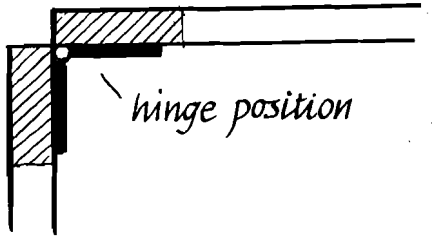
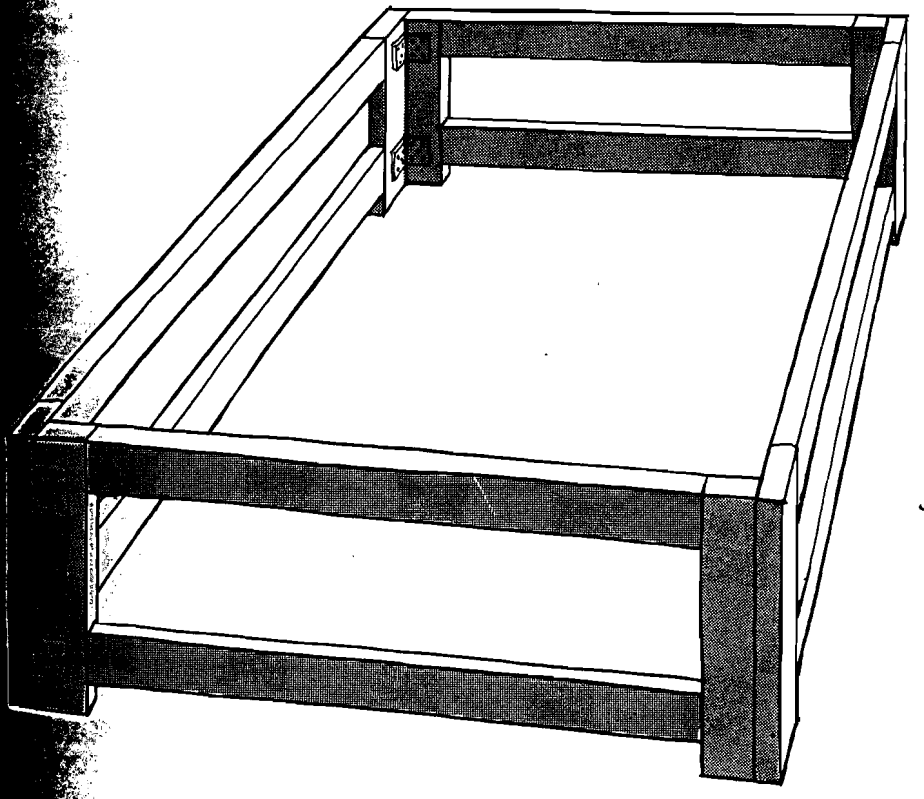
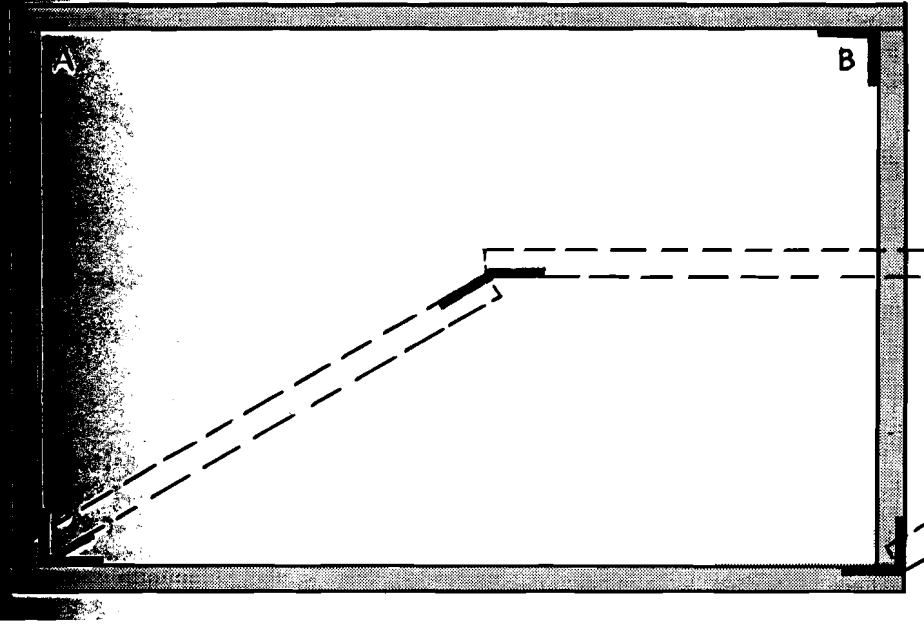


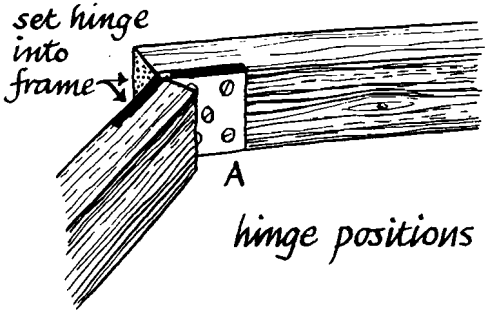
folded position



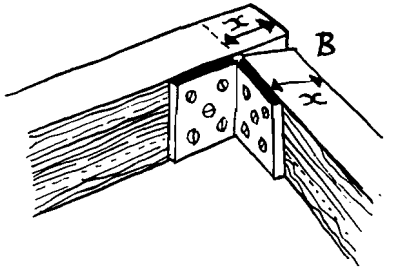


A more elaborate hinging method gives a true right-angle to the frame when it is opened out, and closes up all the corners.

The sides of all the rostra shown may be faced with thin plywood or hardboard if they are to be used individually. If the rostra are used as a large group (e.g. for staging) only the visible faces need be covered.

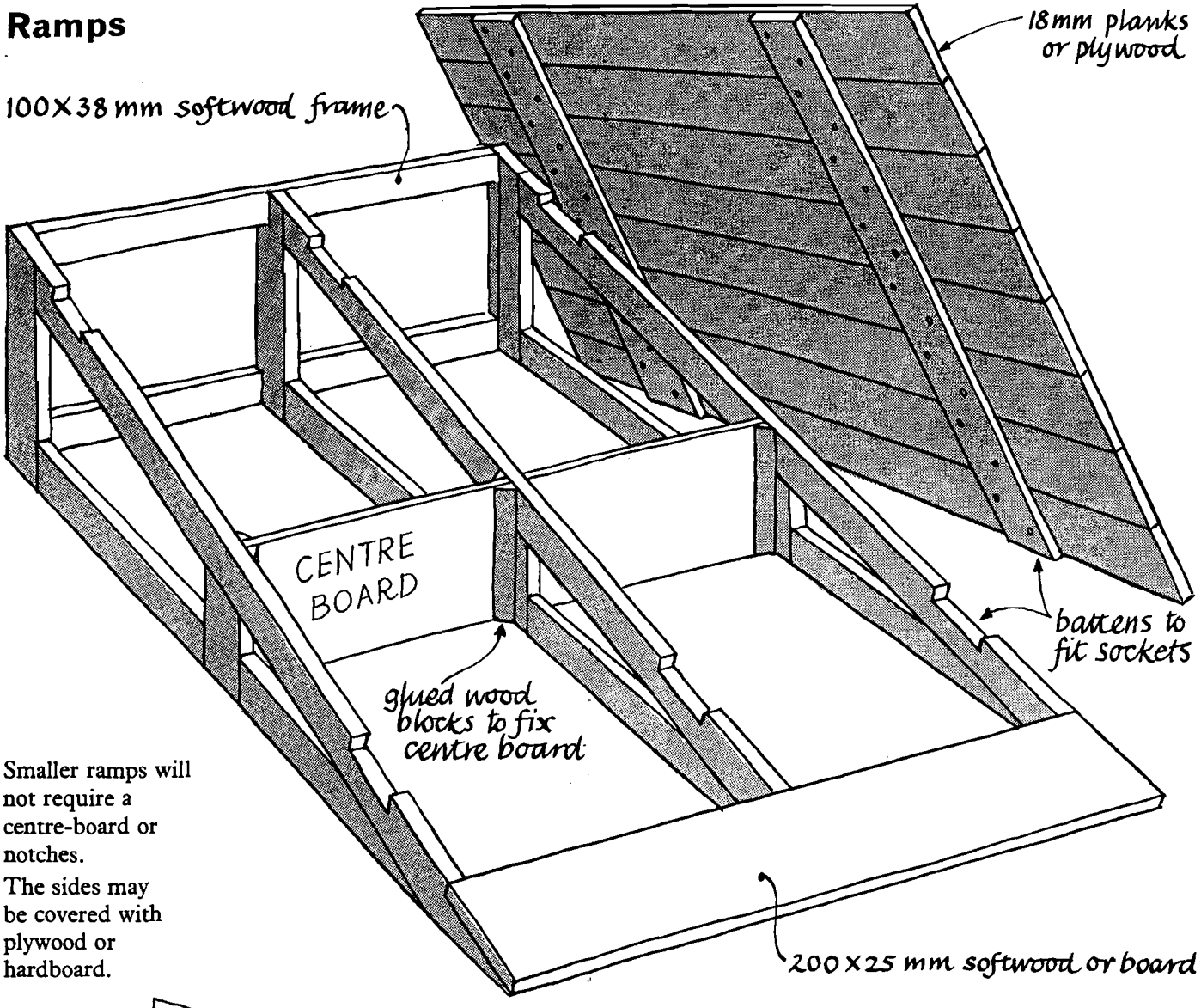


hinge positions



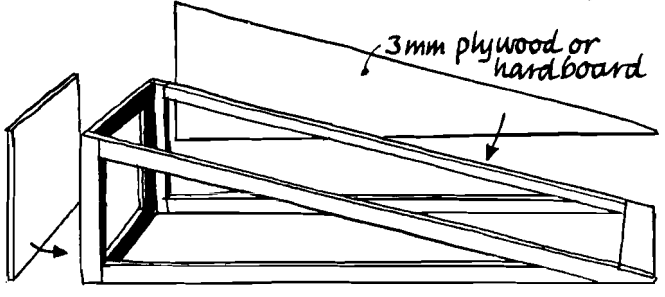
ground plan showing closing movement

Ramps



Smaller ramps will not require a centre-board or notches.

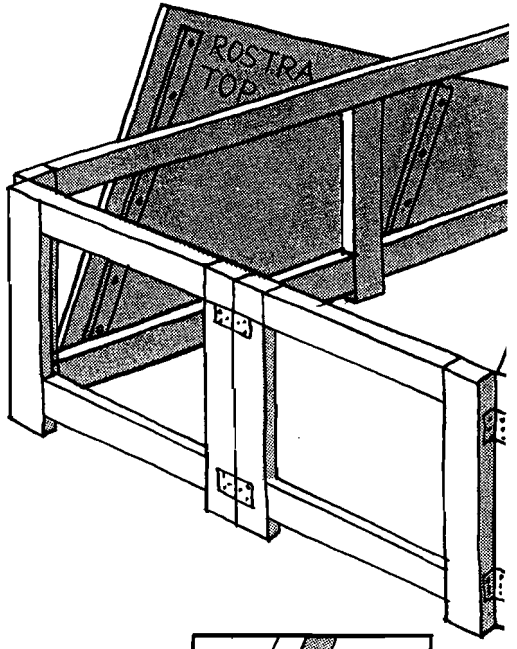
The sides may be covered with plywood or hardboard.

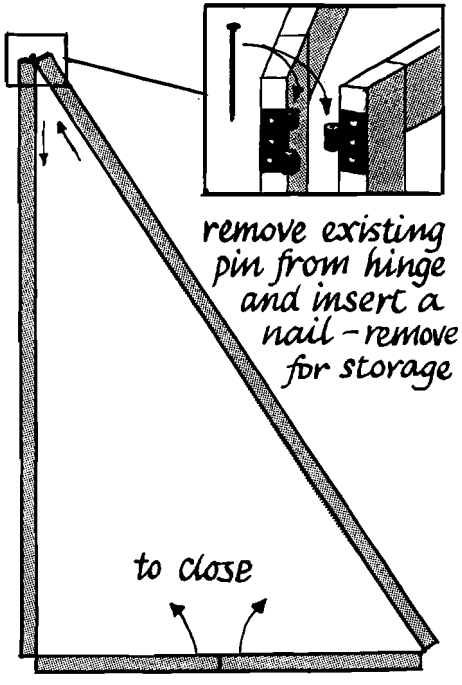


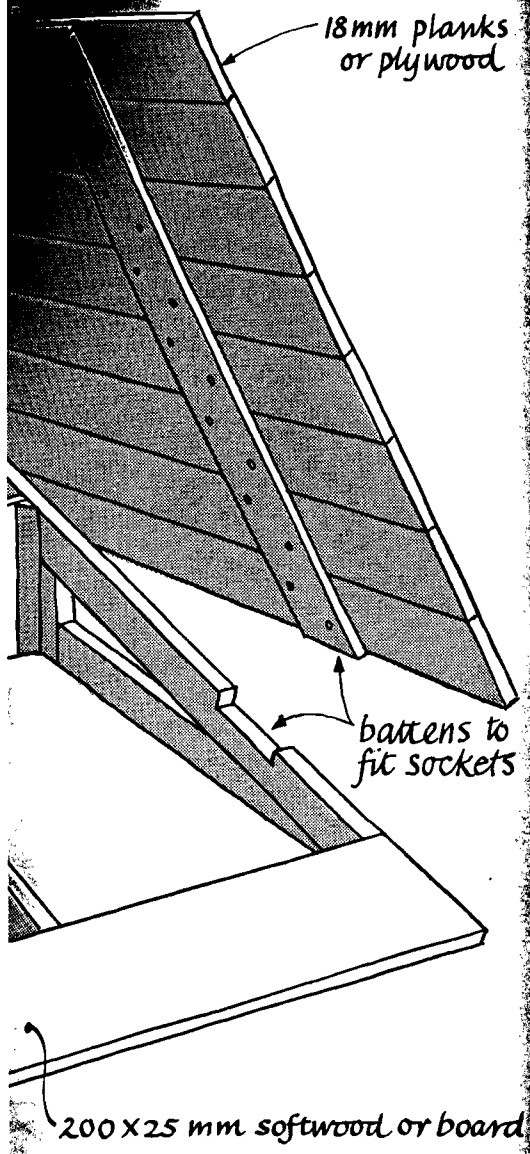
An interesting and dramatic way of moving from one level to another is by means of ramps. The construction and joints are similar to those of 'box' rostra apart from the join at the lower edge. These are rigid frame rostra not suitable for folding.

Triangles and curves

Triangular rostrum: hinging is similar to that shown on page 29.







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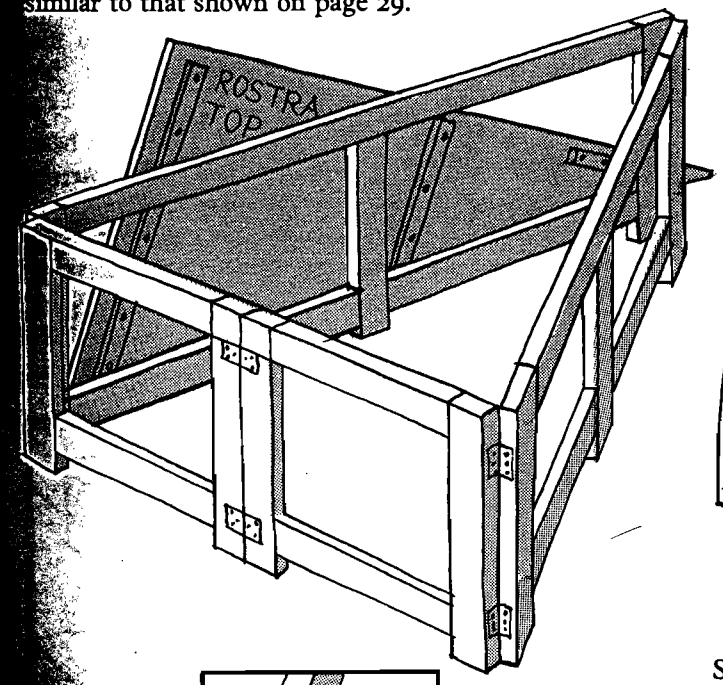
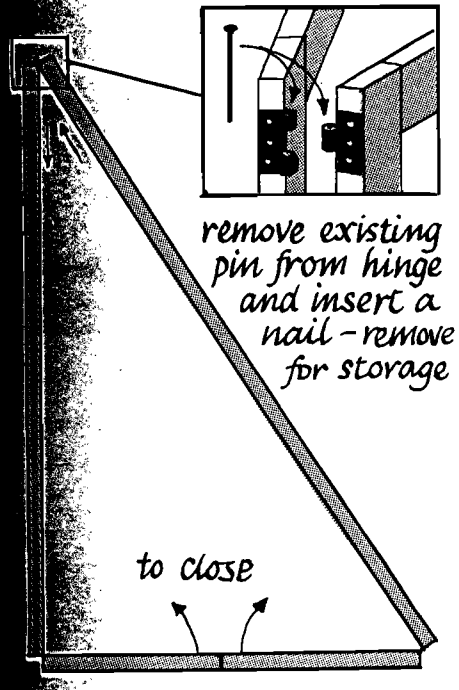
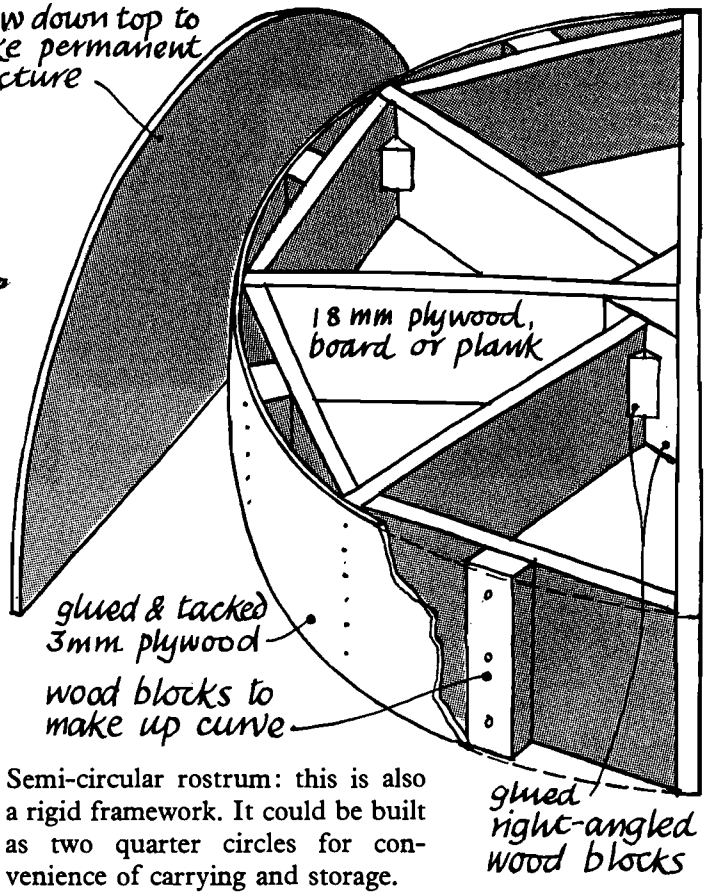
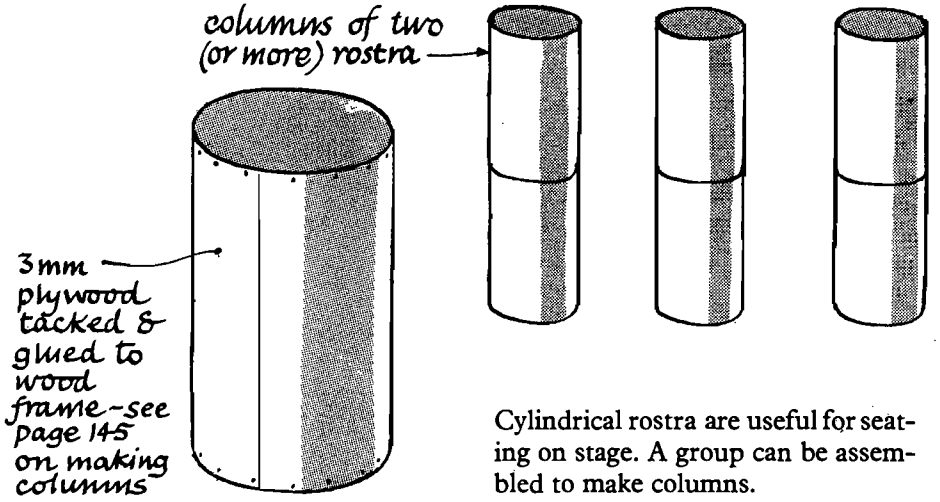






Semi-circular rostrum: this is also a rigid framework. It could be built as two quarter circles for convenience of carrying and storage.

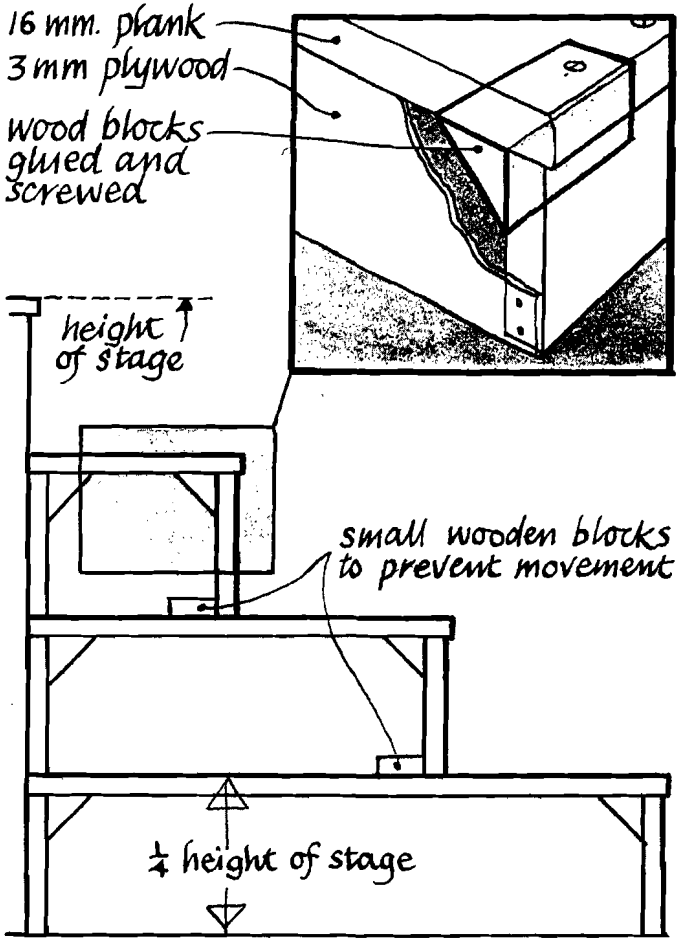


Cylindrical rostra are useful for seating on stage. A group can be assembled to make columns.

Steps – 1

Steps from auditorium to stage need to be wide – approximately 2 metres or more. They will then accommodate large casts for exits and entrances through the auditorium; they will also provide useful space for standing and sitting at different levels.

The steps shown are in three parts: the one at the base is 1 × 2 metres, the one in the middle 66 cm × 2 metres and the one at the top 33 cm × 2 metres. Placed against the front of the stage or apron, these rostra provide four steps, each being one quarter of the height of the stage or apron.

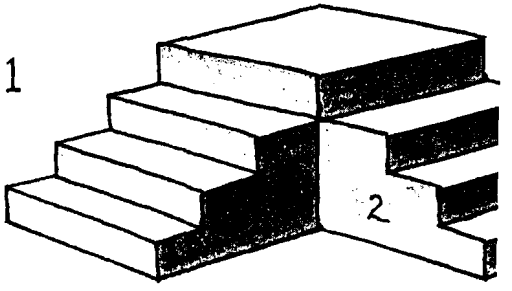


Adaptable set of steps and rostrum

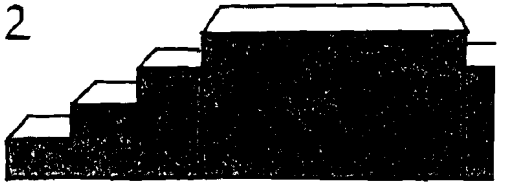
Two sets of treads and one small rostrum
This arrangement gives 8 steps if the last

Some variations with the same equipment

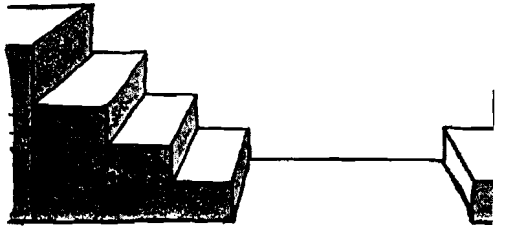
1



2



3



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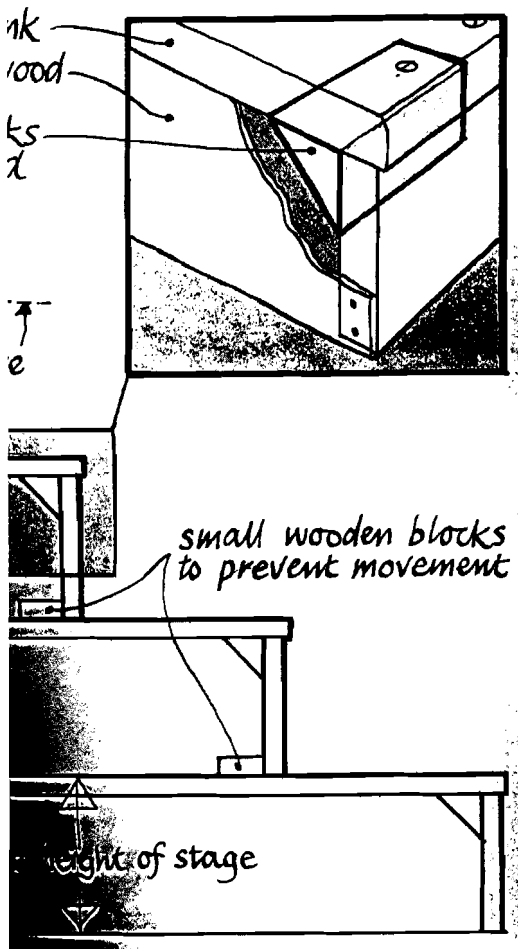
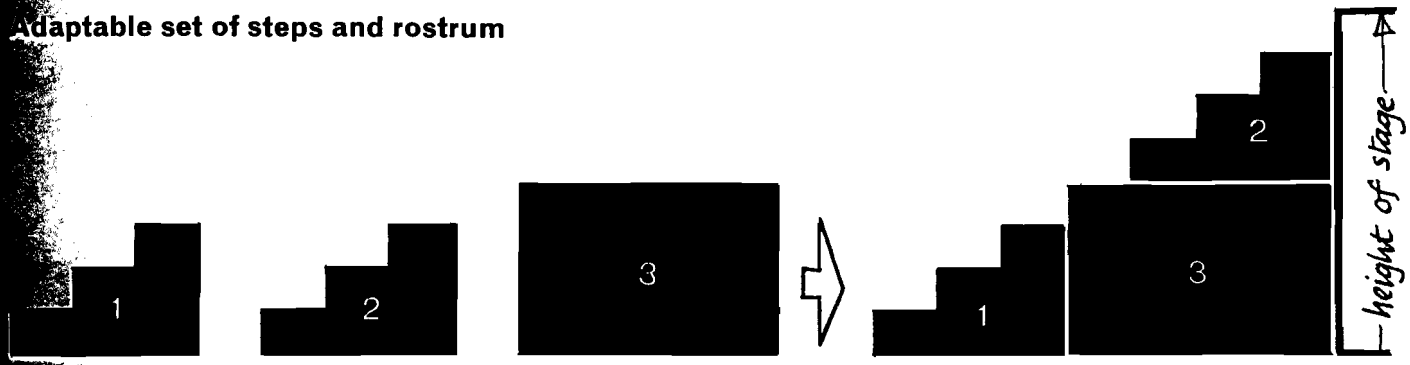
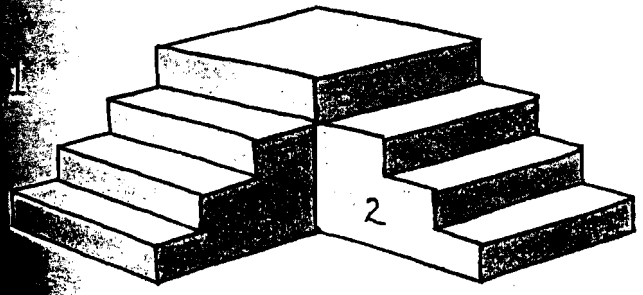


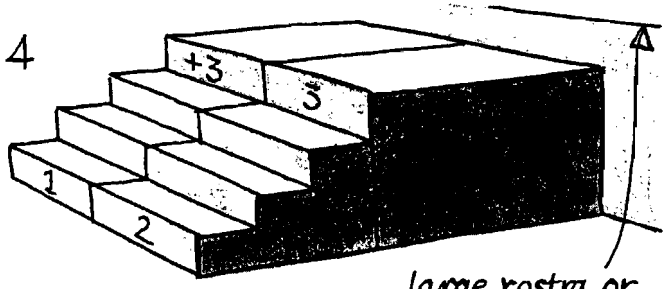
Adaptable set of steps and rostrum

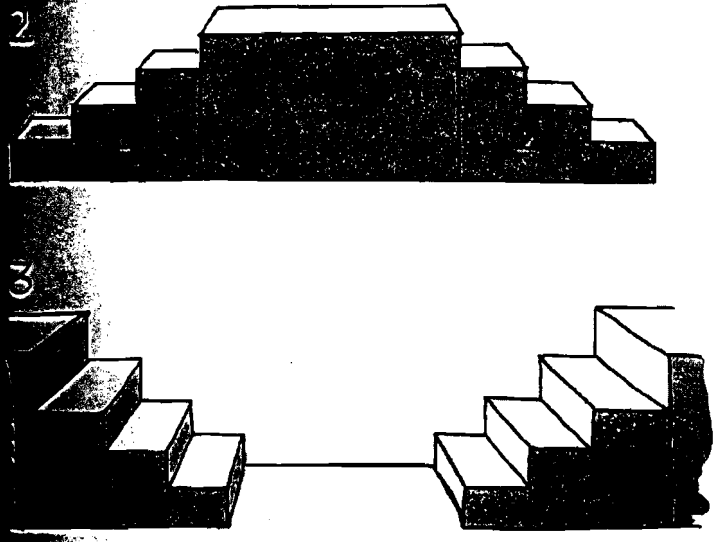


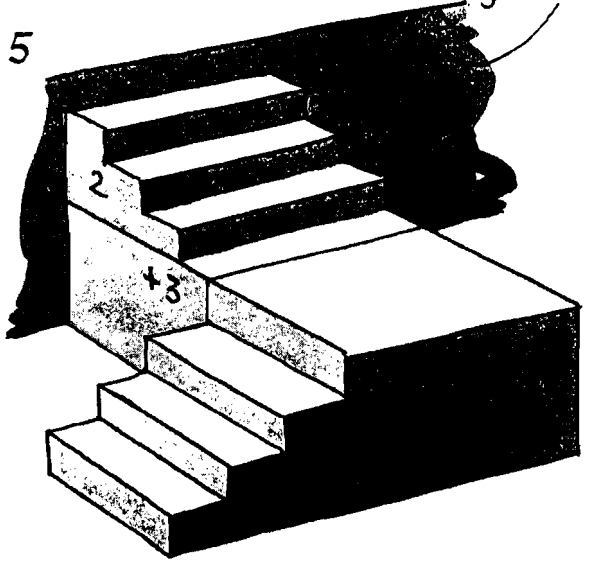
Two sets of treads and one small rostrum: the riser is 20 cm, the tread 30 cm, the rostrum 80 cm high × 120 × 120. This arrangement gives 8 steps if the last step on to the stage is included.

Some variations with the same equipment: variations 3, 4 and 5 will require an additional rostrum.



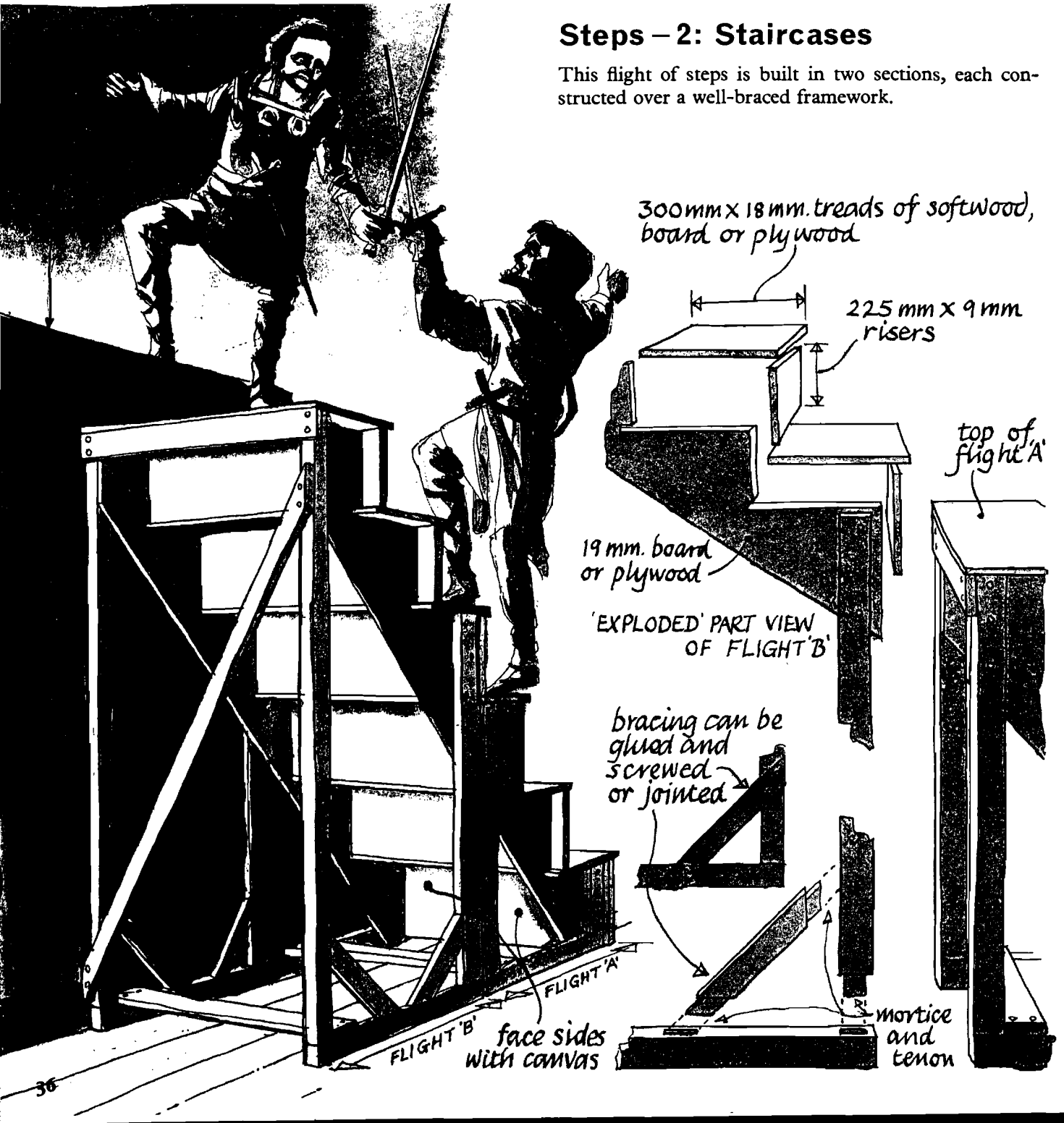






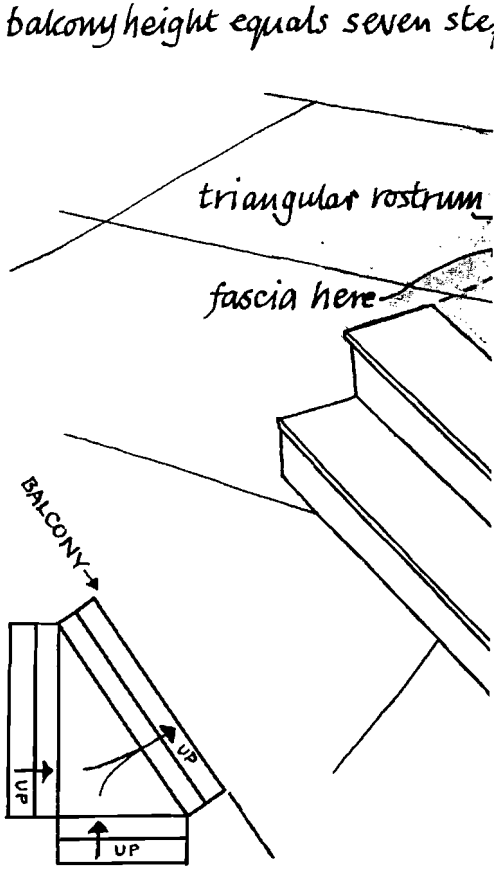
Steps – 2: Staircases

This flight of steps is built in two sections, each constructed over a well-braced framework.



Staircase with a landing

When more complex stair arrangements are required and a landing or balcony is to be the focal point of the scene, a construction similar to this may be attempted.



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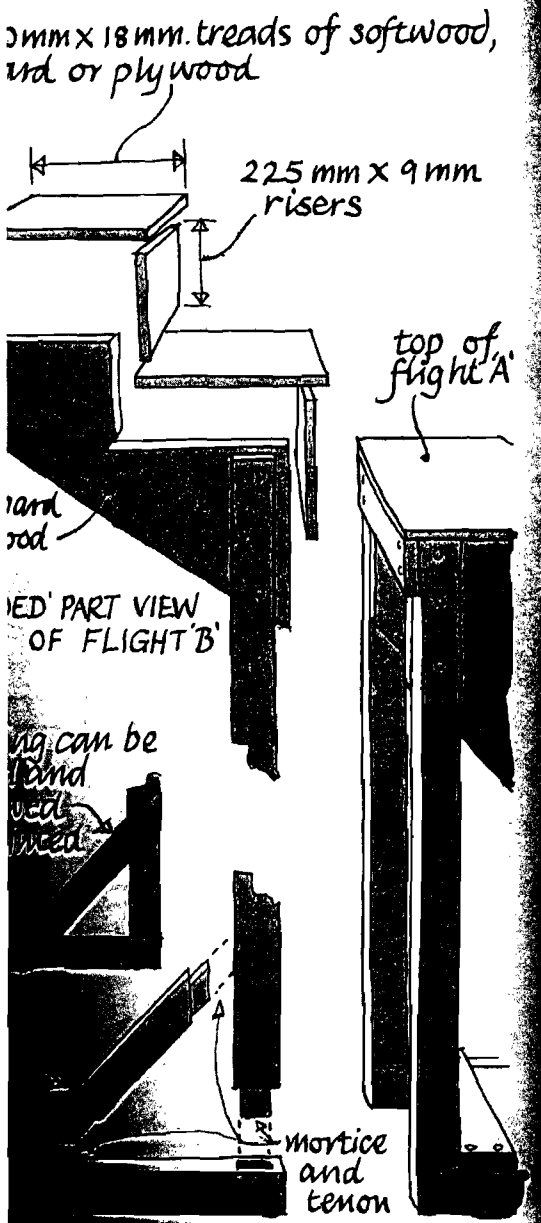

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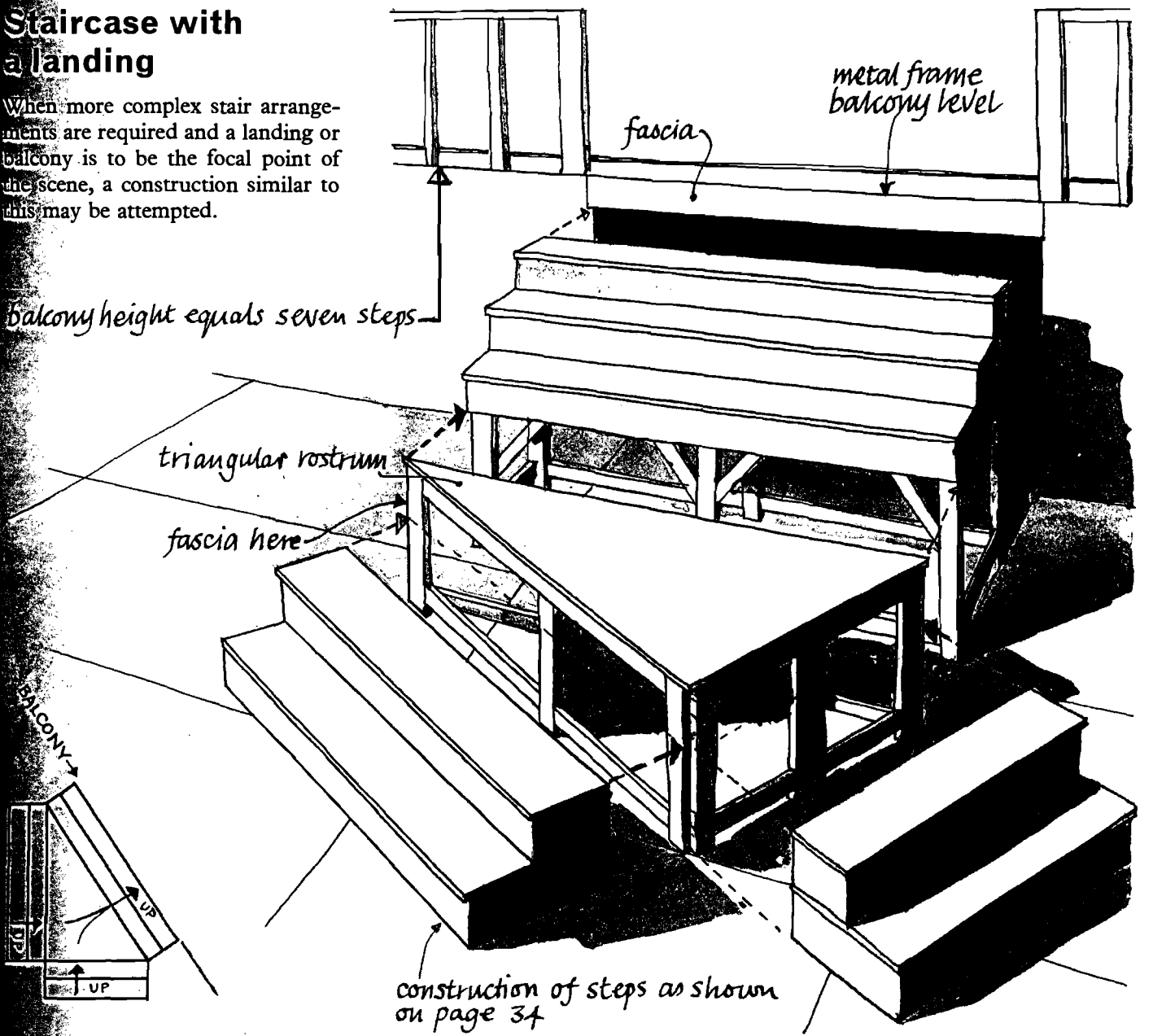
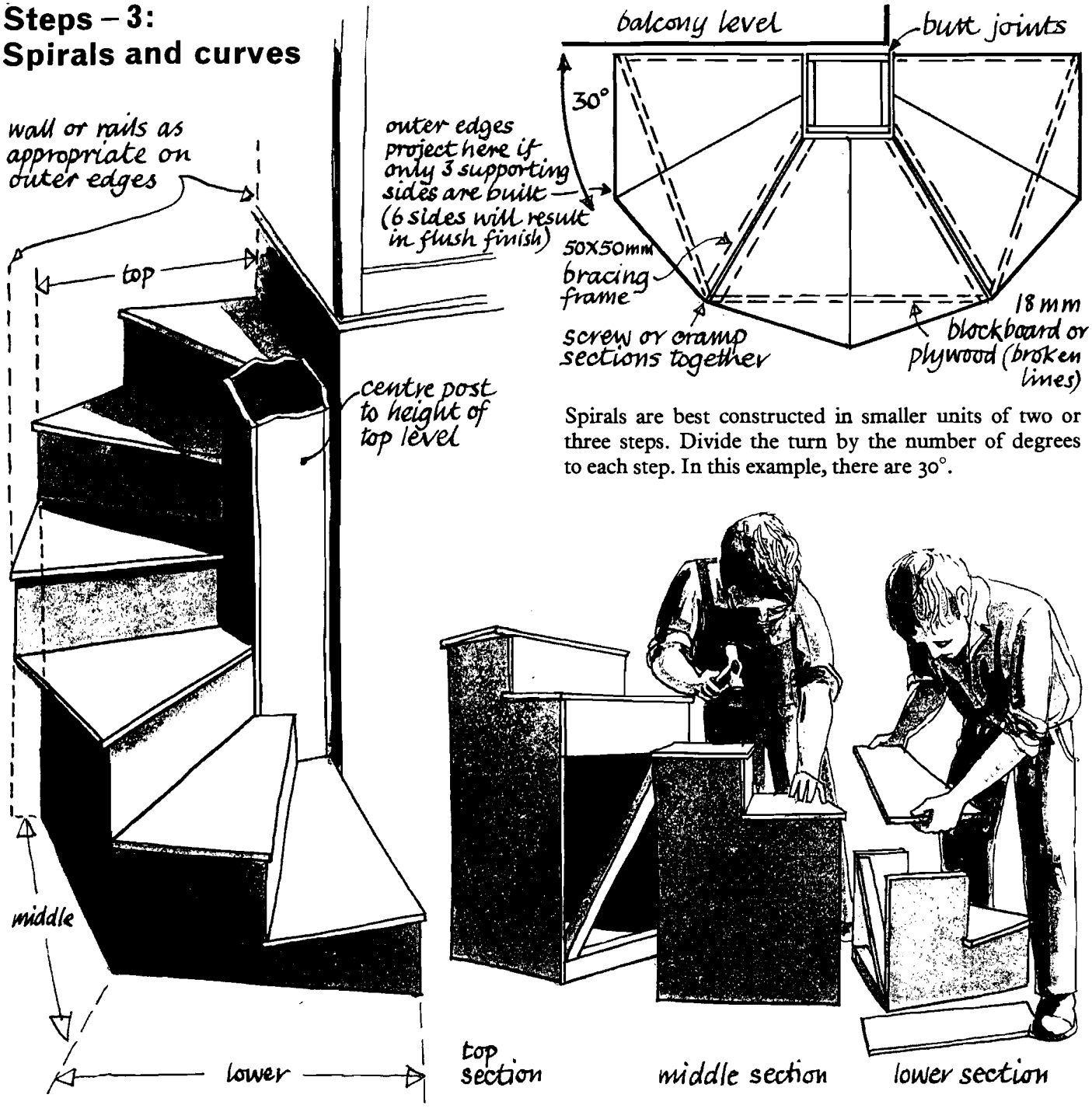


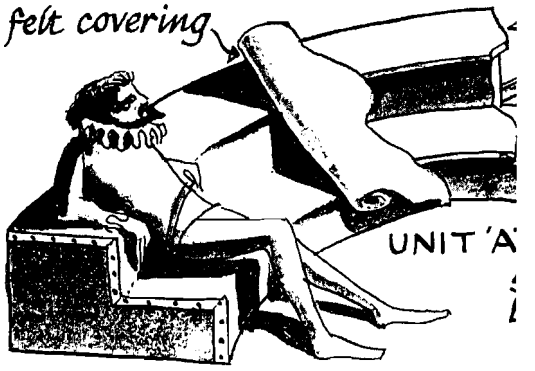
This group of stairs shows two directions down from a balcony. The central triangular rostrum serves as a resting point and a possible change of direction. The smaller steps have solid sides of composition board. The risers are not weight-bearing and can be made from hardboard.

Photographs on pages 96–99 show one way of using this type of staircase in a setting.

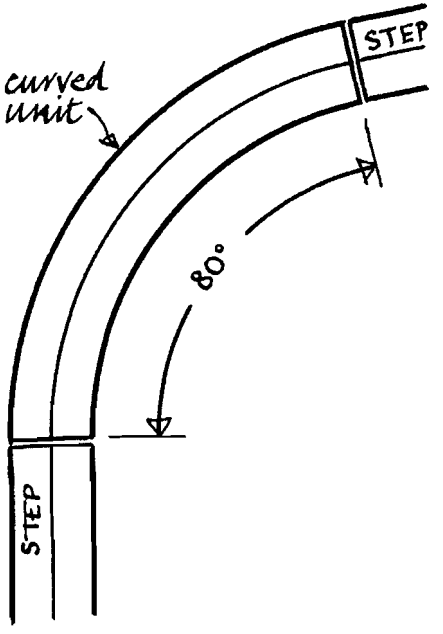
Steps – 3: Spirals and curves



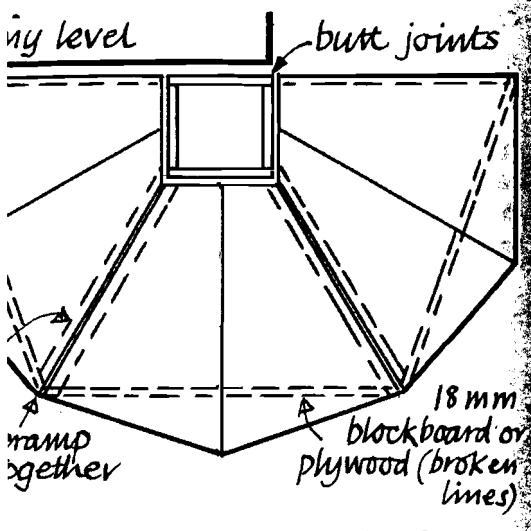
Spirals are best constructed in smaller units of two or three steps. Divide the turn by the number of degrees to each step. In this example, there are 30°.



Curved staircases are a pleasing variation from the angular units. They can be constructed in concave (**A**) or convex (**B**) curves.



Curved unit **A** above can be linked into other sets of straight steps as shown here. The amount of turn is dependent on the shape of the scene. Here there is a turn of approximately 80°.



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Divide the turn by the number of degrees
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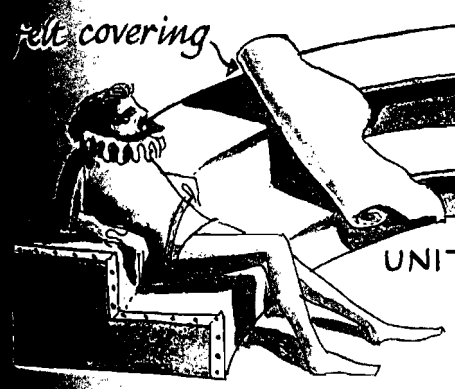
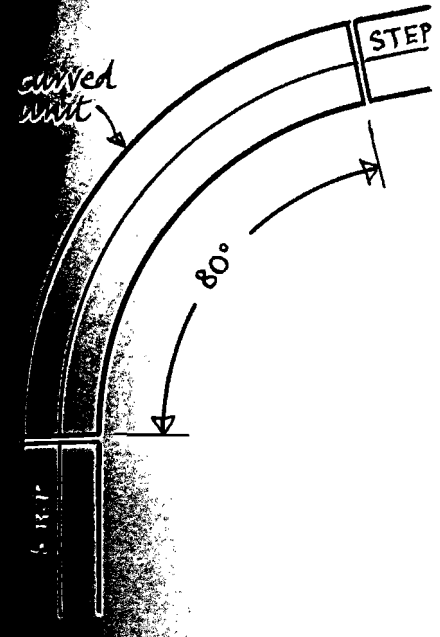
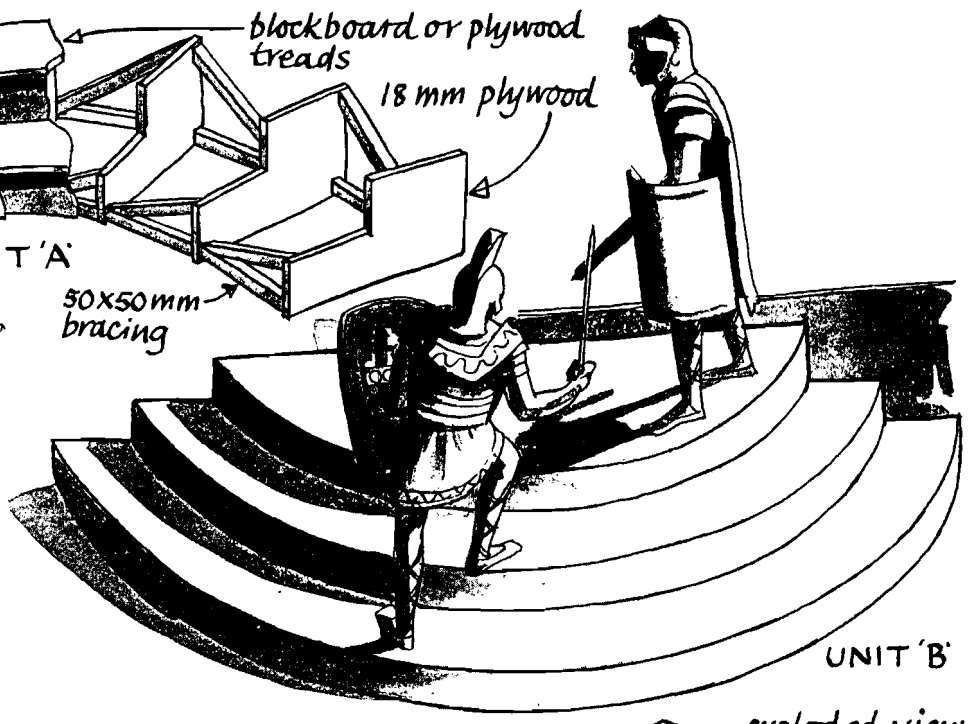
…iddle section lower section

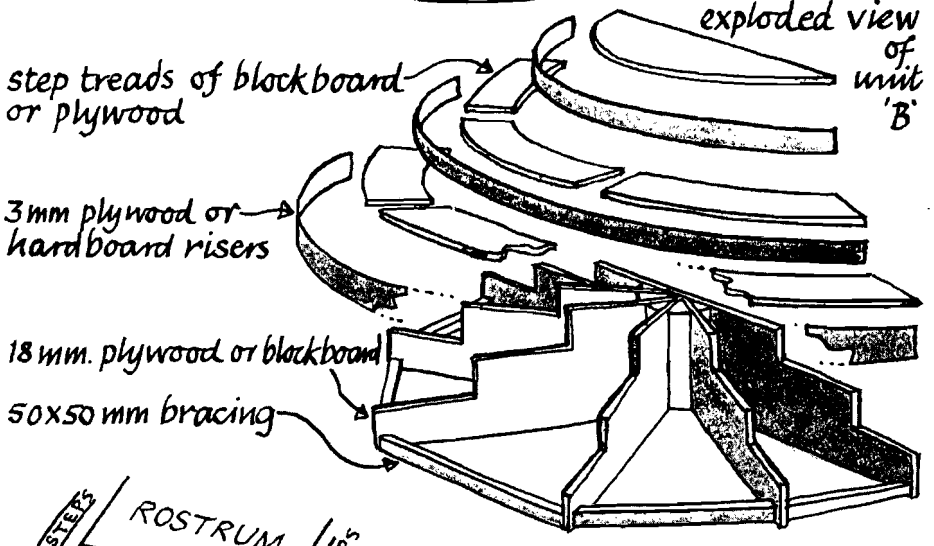


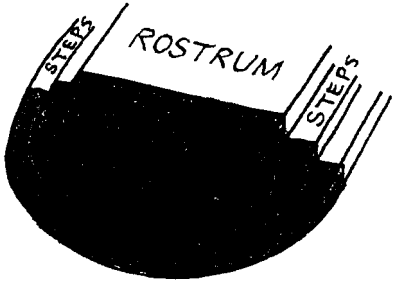
Curved staircases are a pleasing variation from the angular units. They can be constructed in concave (**A**) or convex (**B**) curves.



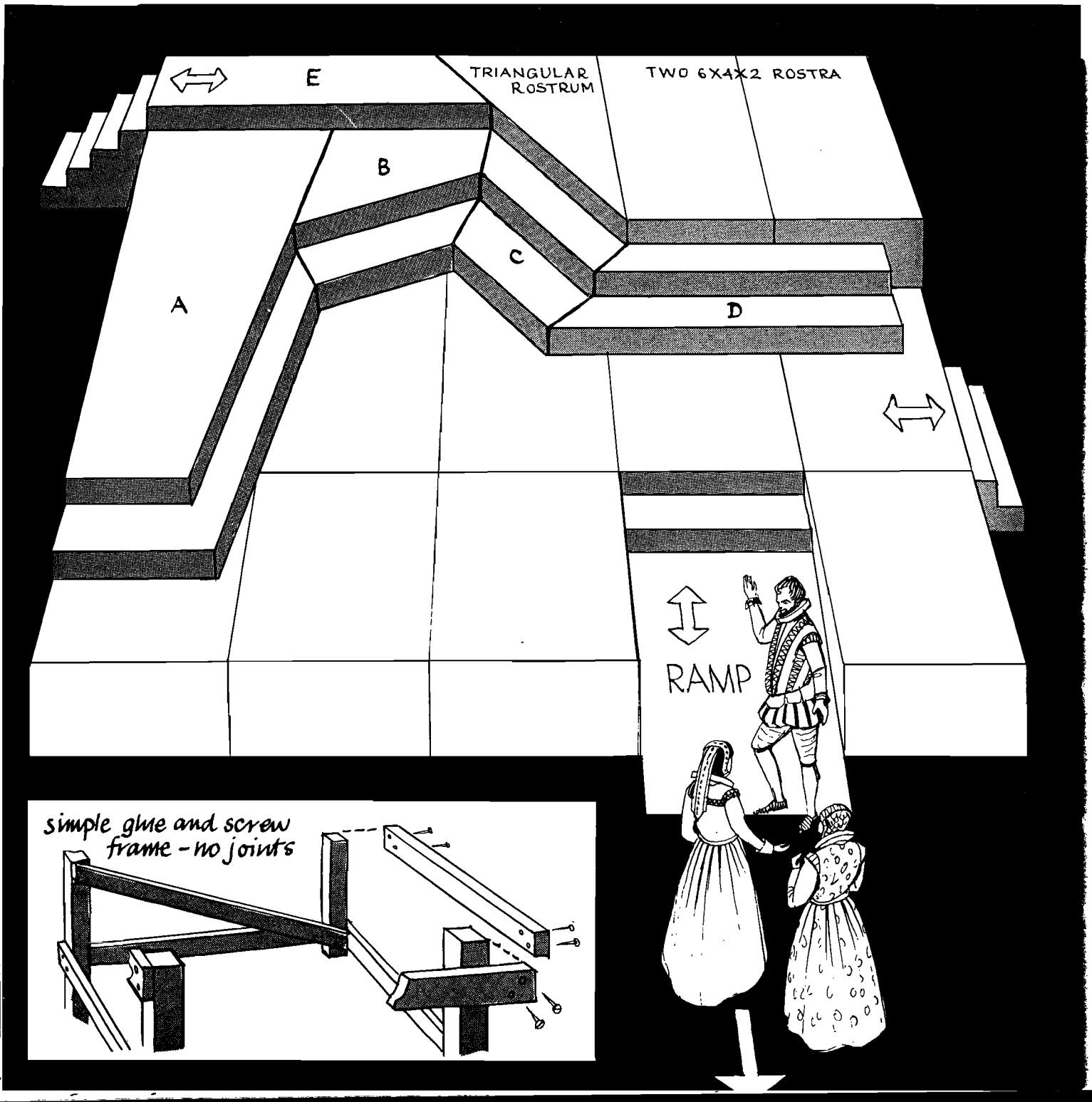
Curved unit **A** above can be linked into other sets of straight steps as shown here. The amount of turn is dependent on the shape of the scene. Here there is a turn of approximately 80°.

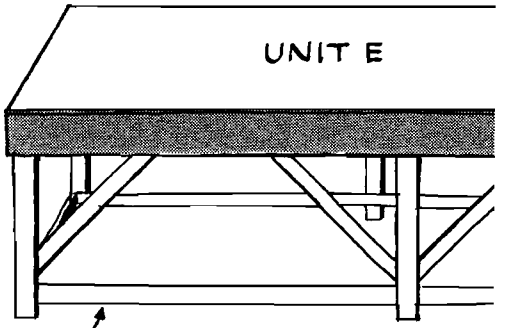




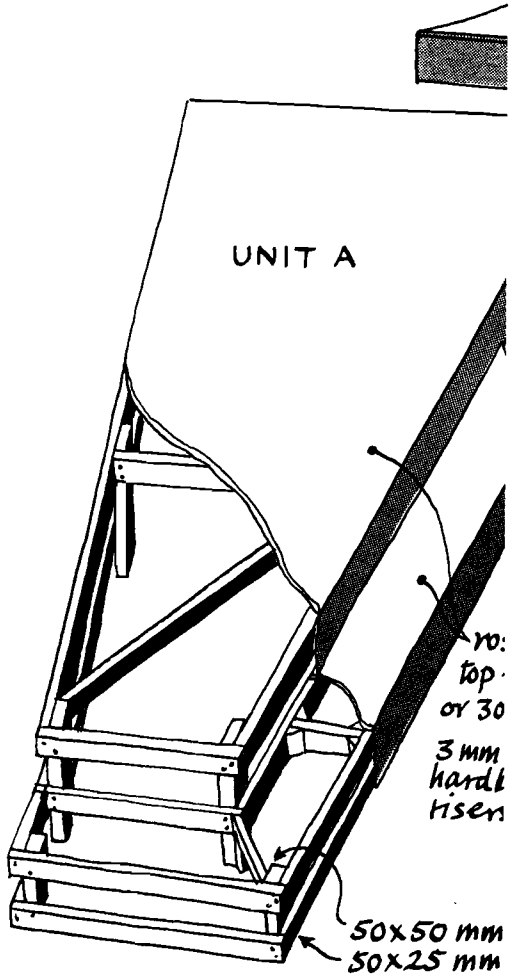


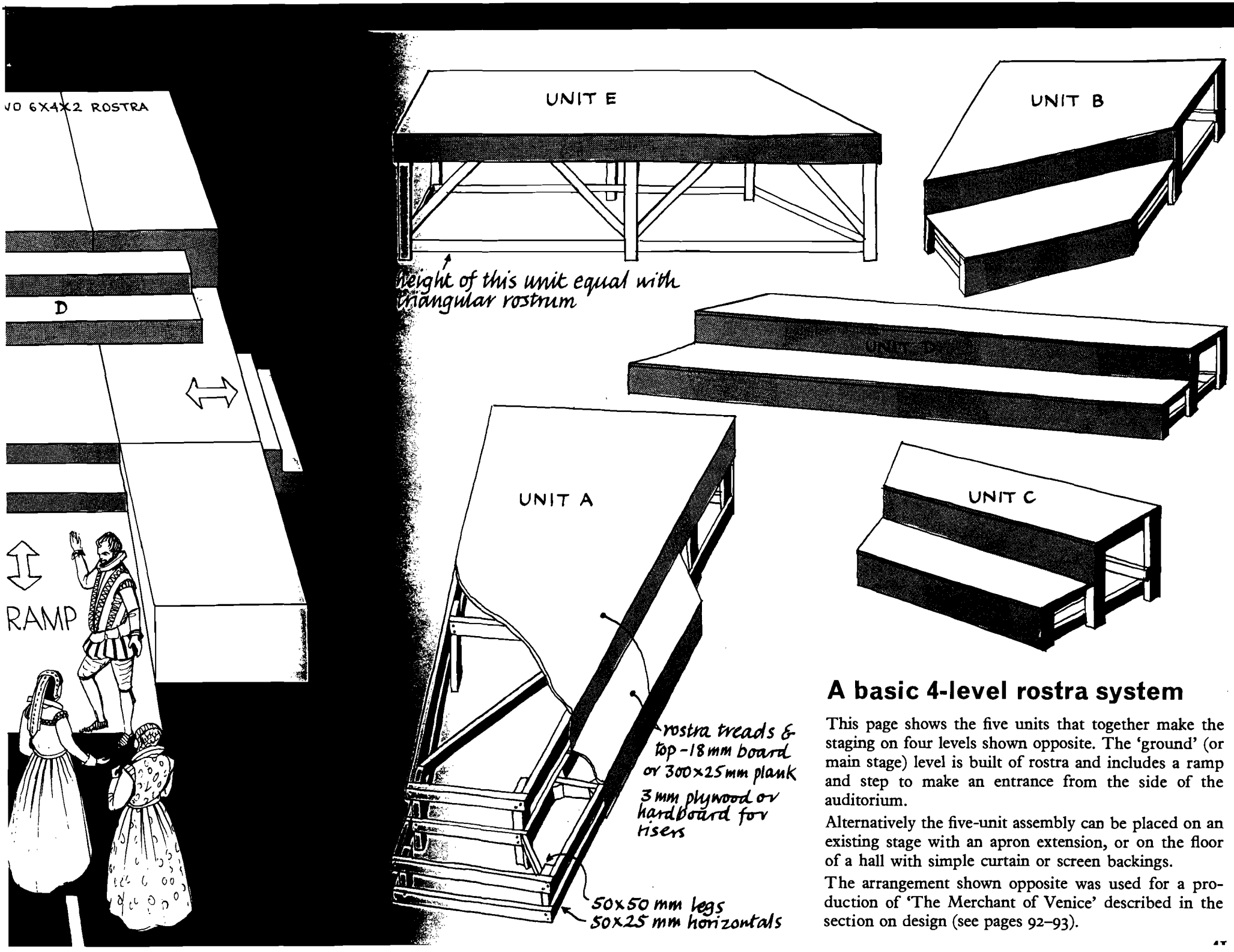
The convex unit **B** is designed to fit against an apron or wall but can also be linked to steps on one or both sides. This would make an interesting end to a 'thrust' or projecting stage.





height of this unit equal with triangular rostrum





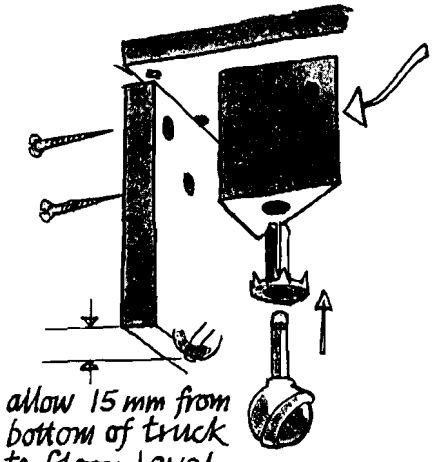
A basic 4-level rostra system

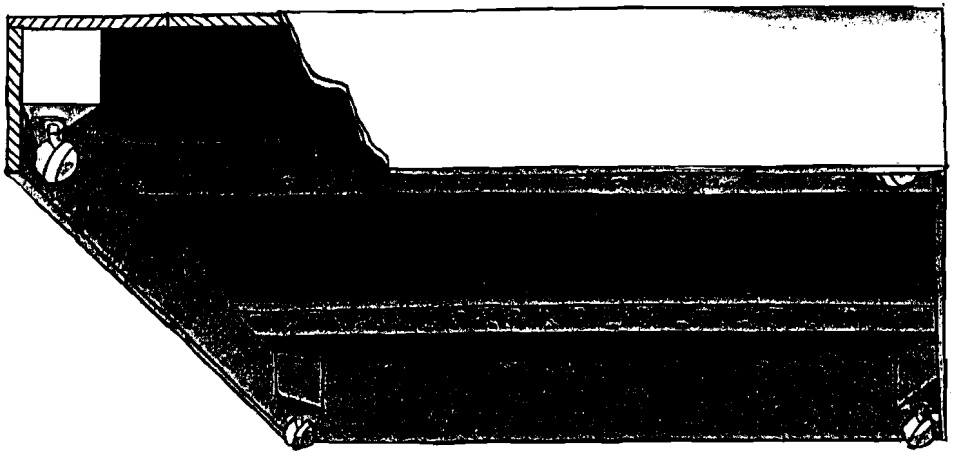
This page shows the five units that together make the staging on four levels shown opposite. The 'ground' (or main stage) level is built of rostra and includes a ramp and step to make an entrance from the side of the auditorium.

Alternatively the five-unit assembly can be placed on an existing stage with an apron extension, or on the floor of a hall with simple curtain or screen backings.

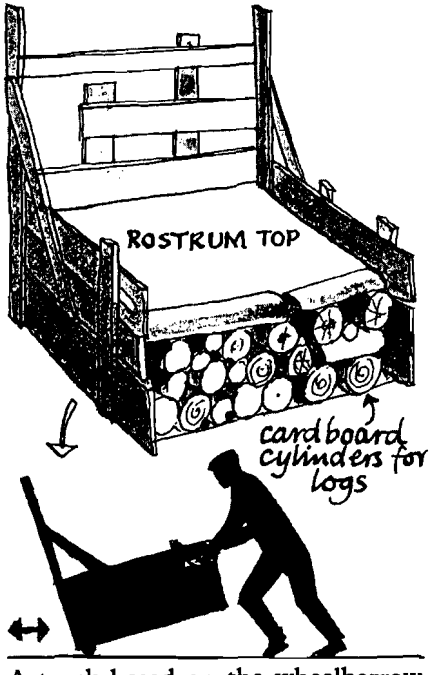
The arrangement shown opposite was used for a production of 'The Merchant of Venice' described in the section on design (see pages 92–93).

Trucks – 1

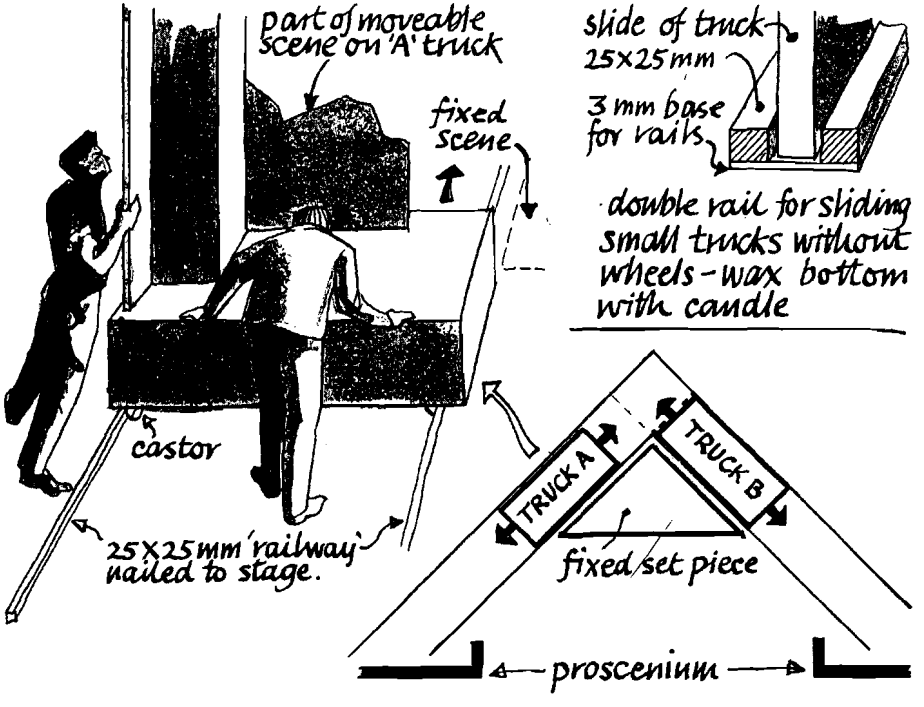




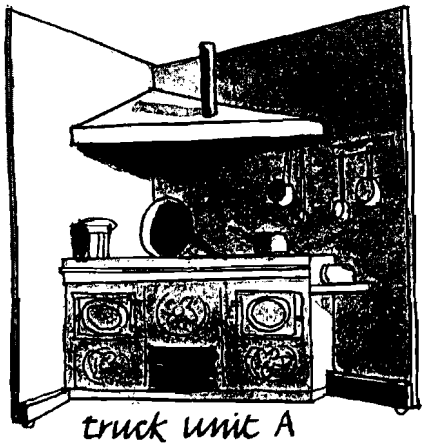
Trucks (in effect rostra on wheels) are highly adaptable scenic devices, allowing quick changes of scene. They can be run on rails, as shown below, be independent on castors, as illustrated opposite, or be revolved on a hinge as shown on the ground plan and photographs on pages 103 and 106.

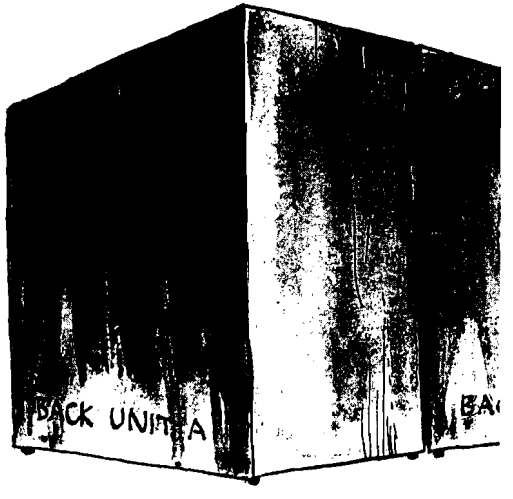


A truck based on the wheelbarrow principle. Two wheel or ball castors fixed to the rear of the truck with two hand grips at the front. Lift to push into position, lower to achieve stability. Illustrated on page 70.

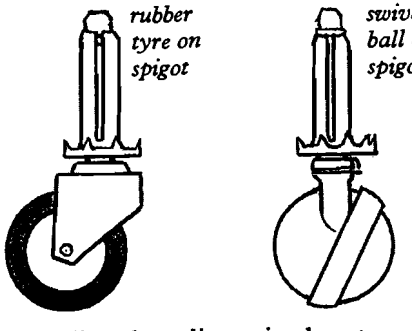


Two trucks – or more if required – can be used in conjunction with a set piece, allowing a wide range of quick scene changes.

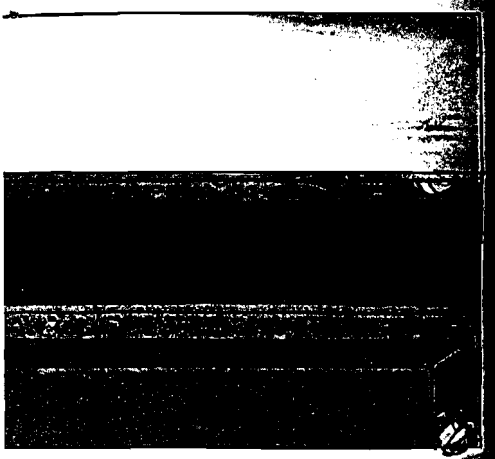




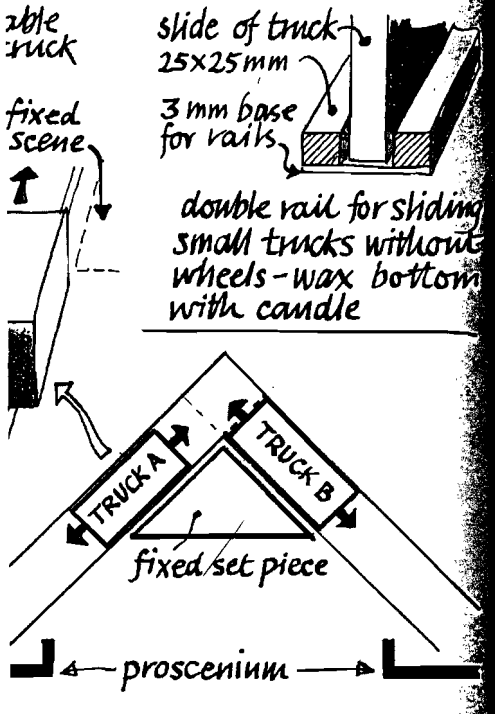
Castors – Various kinds of castor are av



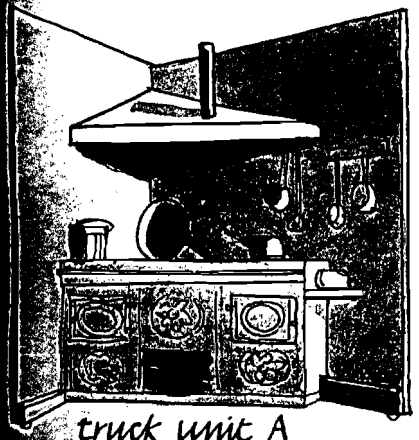
Small and medium-sized castors for re

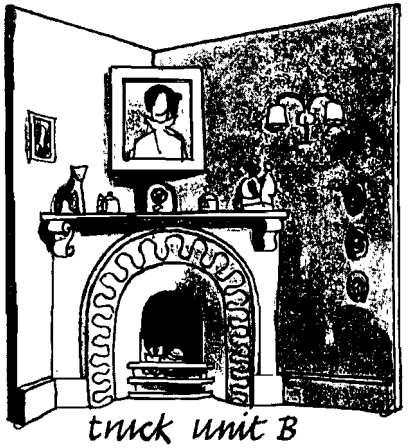


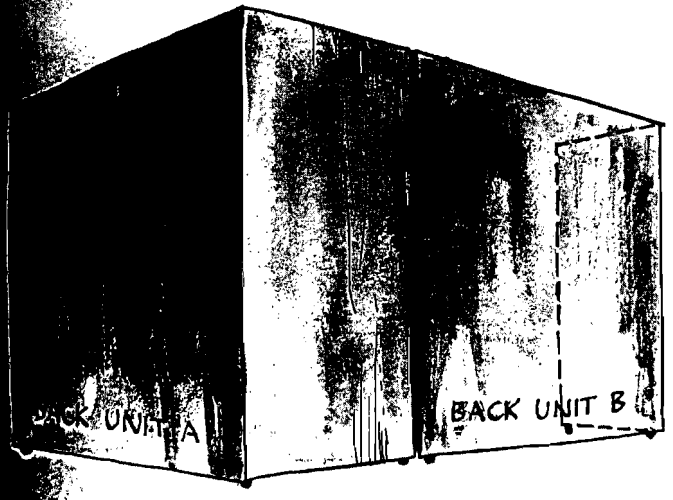
;) are highly adaptable scenic devices;
ıey can be run on rails, as shown below;
ated opposite, or be revolved on a hinge
ıotographs on pages 103 and 106.

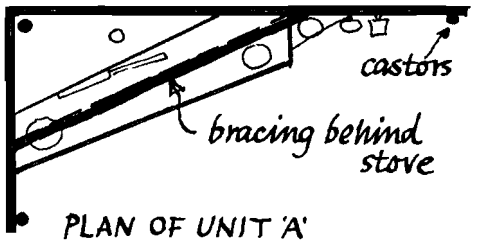


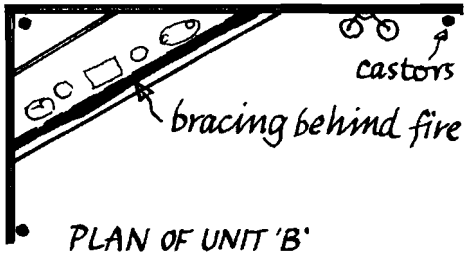
· can be used in conjunction with a set
k scene changes.







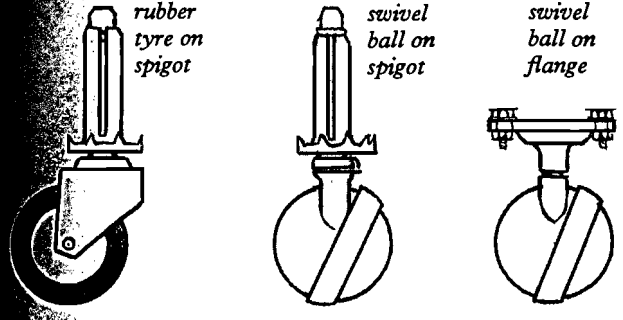




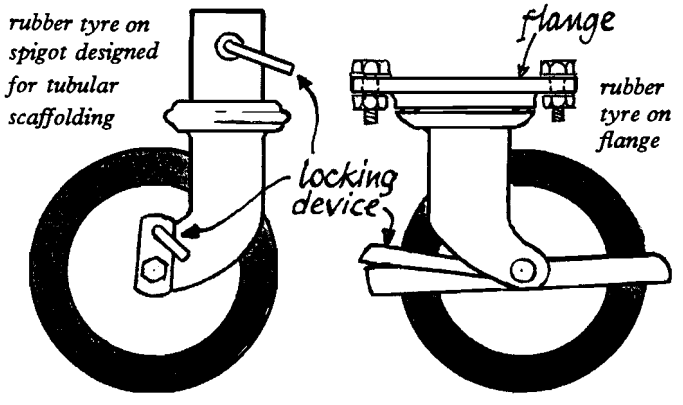
Two free-moving units

The two fireplaces shown above reveal, when reversed, either a long high wall or two smaller walls. Alternatively, another scene could be built and painted on the reverse sides. The fireplaces are made with thin plywood or hardboard on a 50×25 mm timber frame. See page 131 for an illustration showing 'wall' sides.

Castors Various kinds of castor are available:



Small and medium-sized castors for revolving flats.



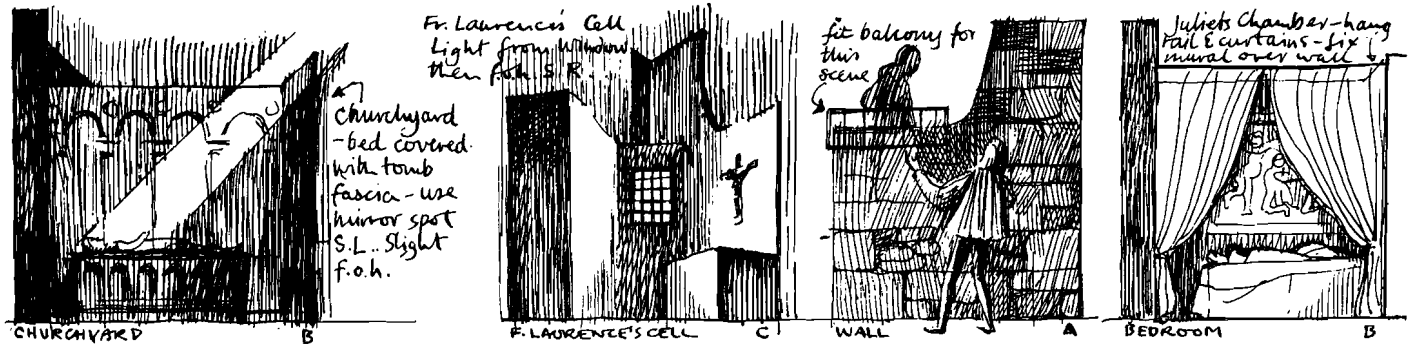
Heavy-duty castors, suitable for trucks and large mobiles.

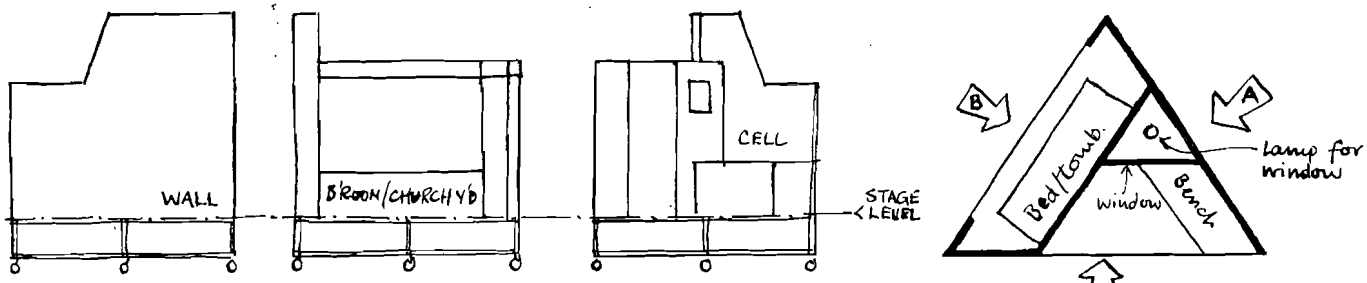
Trucks – 2: Revolving, free-turning

Sketch designs for a revolving truck

These small 'thumb-nail' sketches may serve as one method of thinking out an idea for scenic and constructional devices. A cardboard scale model should then be prepared to test the theory.

The example shown on these pages is based on a production of 'Romeo and Juliet' – see also the section on painting (page 129) for a method of treating the wall side of this mobile rostrum.



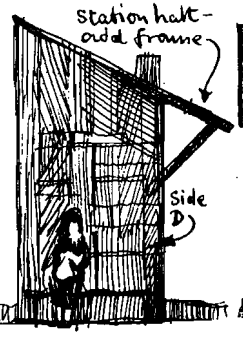


elevation A elevation B elevation C

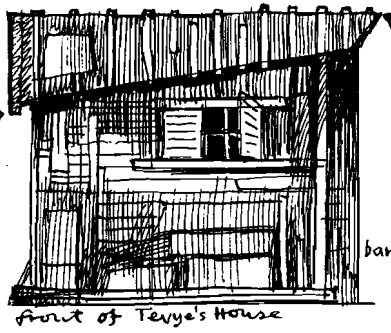
ground plan

A small house for 'Fiddler on the Roof'. These small sketches illustrate ideas for the numerous scenes demanded by the text. The construction of this large revolving truck is shown on page 46. Photographs on pages 26, 70 and 282.

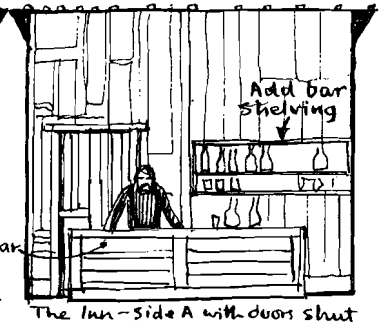
elevation A – doors open



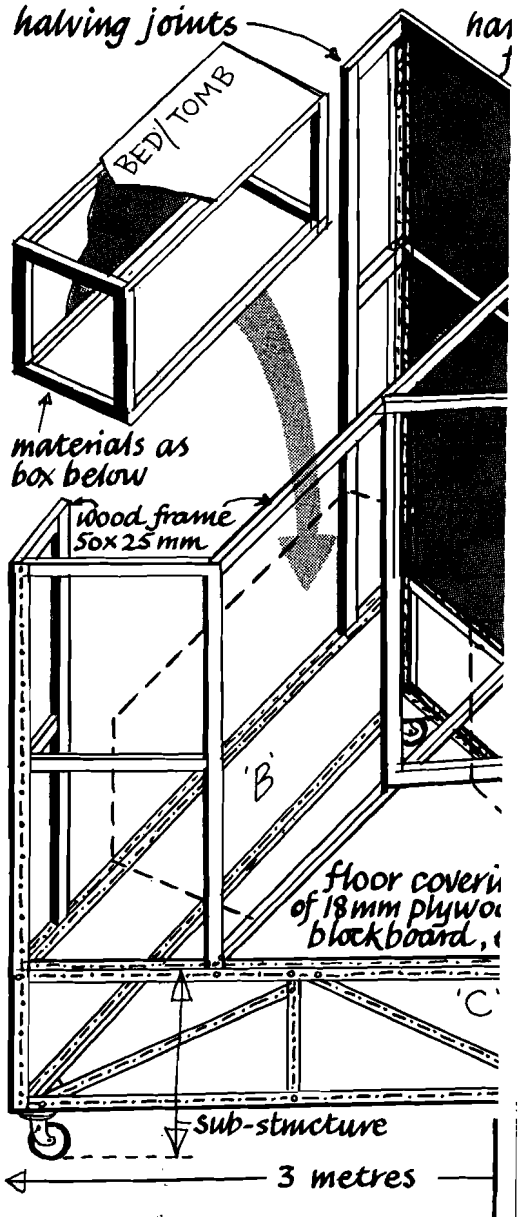
elevation B



elevation C

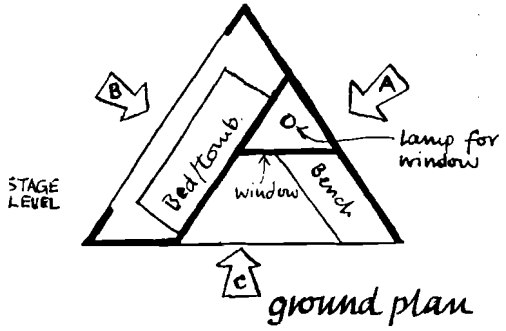


elevation A – doors shut



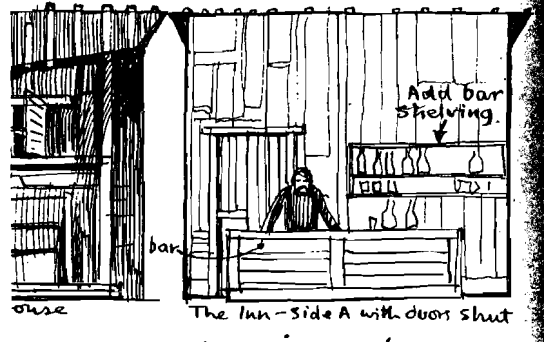
an idea for scenic and constructional devices.

ınd Juliet' – see also the section on painting

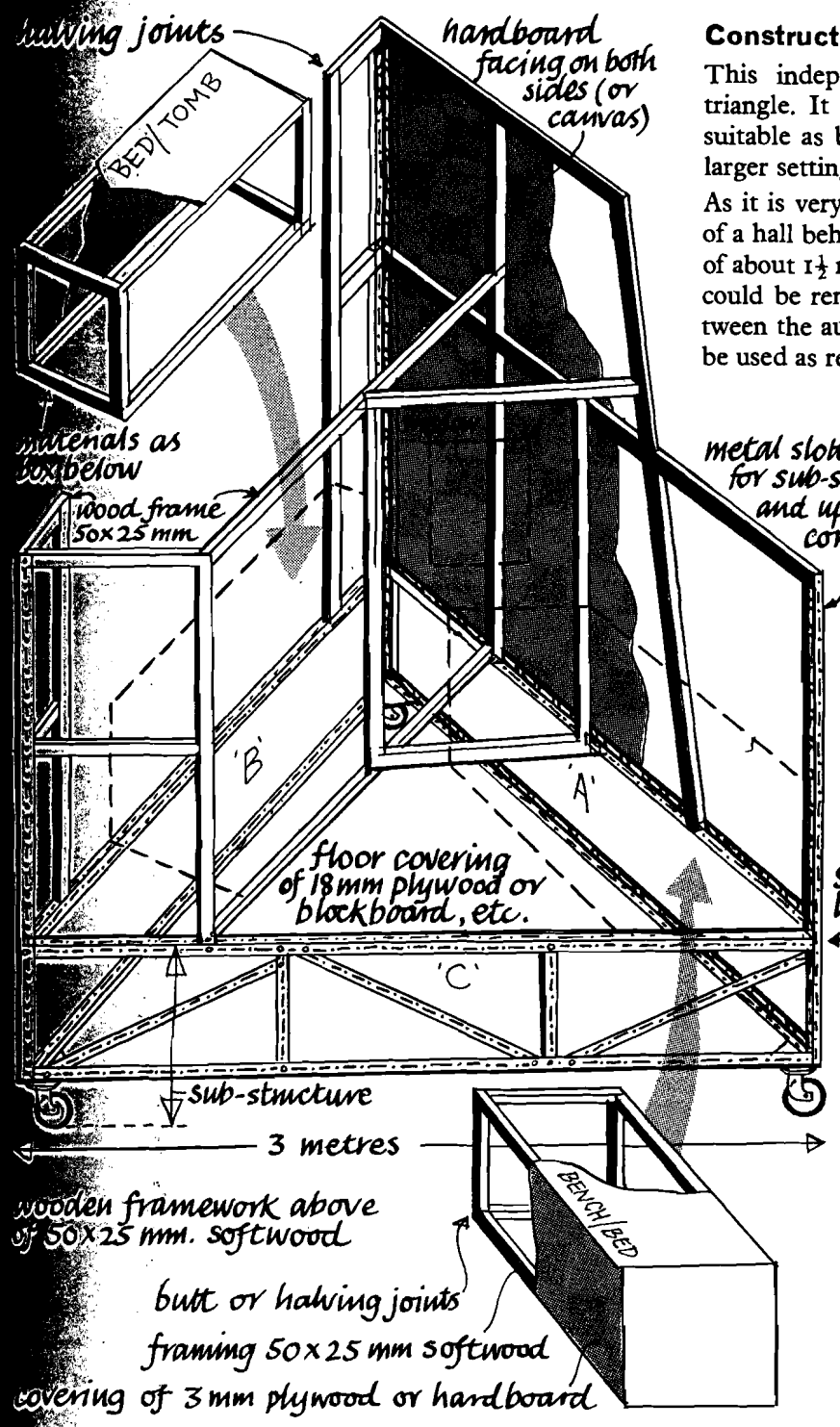


ground plan

:as for the numerous scenes demanded by the
ıotographs on pages 26, 70 and 282.



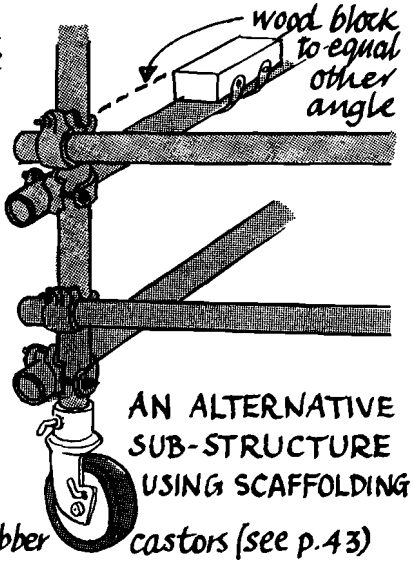
C elevation A - doors shut



Construction of revolving truck - 1

This independent truck has as base an equilateral triangle. It offers a wall face and two interior settings suitable as backings to the acting area or as parts of a larger setting.

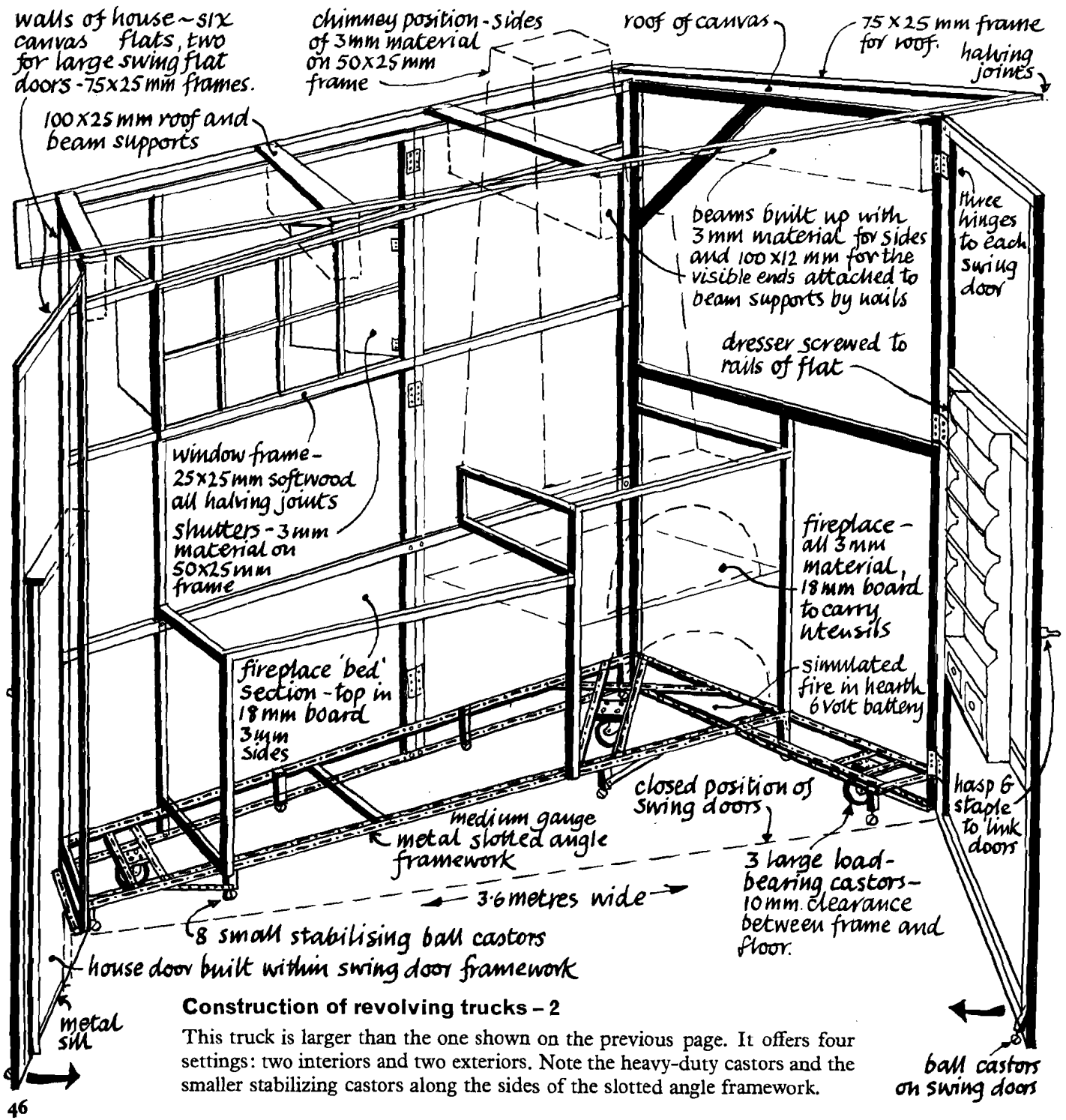
As it is very heavy, this mobile unit stands on the floor of a hall behind an area of rostrum staging, at a distance of about 1½ metres from the rear wall. The sub-structure could be removed if there were no rostrum staging between the audience and the truck. The three scenes can be used as required, possibly with flats or wing curtains.



Home-made turntables

Use can be found for this type of device where a dramatist demands many changes of scene. Turntables carrying three scenes allow one to face the audience while the others are being changed. The sides could fit into a gap formed by flats or curtains.

Alternatively, the sides can be left unmasked and two-part scenes shown by pointing a corner towards the audience.



Construction of revolving trucks – 2

This truck is larger than the one shown on the previous page. It offers four settings: two interiors and two exteriors. Note the heavy-duty castors and the smaller stabilizing castors along the sides of the slotted angle framework.