

Margaret MacArthur, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, April 9, 1971  
David Amram, Phillips ~~Gallery~~ Gallery, May 3, 1971 (Cancelled)  
Buckminster Fuller on Spaceship Earth, Smithsonian, MNH, May 4, 1971  
Jean Hakes, Brooklyn College Graduate Collegium, Smithsonian, MHT, May 14, 1971  
John Shortridge Harpsichord Studio, Middleburg, Va., May 15, 1971

On Dr. Ripley, a film about Buckminster Fuller and Folk --  
Music and People with Charm -- Documentary and Imaginative --  
Mostly ~~Music~~ at or through the Smithsonian . . . . .

By Walter B. Smalley, <sup>alias</sup> ~~admiral~~/Snoopy, Jr.  
IDEAS \* P-O-P \* TV-SHOWCASE

When Sidney Dillon Ripley arrived in February, 1964, to take over the Smithsonian it didn't dawn on the unsuspecting politicians and other forms of erudite humanity cluttering the D.C. environment that a competitive spirit was among them. It didn't take them long, however, to find out that this ornithologist was out to conquer worlds other than the bird kingdom in particular, wild life generally and scientific circles galore. Yale bulldogs are taught to pursue game tenaciously and this spirited lad was both pupil and teacher at New Haven and other places all over the planet known as Earth before taking on the Federal Capital. This tall and harmless appearing gentleman is called the Secretary and, at times, one wonders if he isn't partly Sagittarius serpentarius. In case anyone doesn't know, that is a Secretary bird -- tall, rangy, raptorial, having a crest which resembles quill pens neatly perched near the ears. Dr. Ripley, however, if the description still eludes you, is not raptorial per se. But he does know how to "rap" if called upon to do so. He does it with charm, wit and talent. Before a mere Homo sapiens knows it the creature has been taken, and, it might be added, is better off for it. What is more, this ~~mixed~~ mixed-up bird-human more often than not gets others on his staff to ape him. This chain reaction has spread all over the mighty and sprawling Smithy for over seven years until it has become the top "in" place in Washington and ~~where~~ wherever the Smithsonian has people working for it, which includes people and places all over the world. Dr. Ripley's definition of "In" relates primarily to a continuing education for all living creatures and keeping them

in proper balance. It has been quite an undertaking for a mere Yale bulldog, pursuing both birds and humans. It has brought human animals galore to the Smithsonian to see, hear, gawk, smell, taste, gorge on the phenomena. And it has made good copy. Full experience is the thing in continuing education at the museum level as conceived by Dr. Ripley and his staff. But it does not end at the museum level as it used to do. It continues to regenerate itself as new discoveries implement the old, all of which proves that this recycling biz is old as the hills, part of them, even as the animals that range the hills. Food, shelter and recreation --- all basics --- are part of the environmental scene. Avant garde Homo sapiens, the most wide <sup>ranging</sup> ~~spanning~~ of all the creatures is the most difficult to understand, especially if you have to be one. Every tabula rasa of every human is also a mirror image asking of the viewer the most important question of his or her life, "What and who am I?" Man has always had his work cut out for him and no one knows the importance of this question and the difficulties of finding the right answers than Dr. Ripley.

Recreation certainly is an important part of the ~~Smithsonian~~ Smithsonian these days. ~~With~~ Singers of all kinds grace the Ripley Birdcages. When they are human it is really something. Song birds are extra special, for they awaken you with joyous cries ~~about~~ about the good life around you. In human form, as the Secretary can tell you, they are very unusual. The rarer ones who can carry an air with a special flair are to be sought after. The Ripley menage has been finding them with regularity in all shapes, ages and colors.

When the Smithsonian Division of Performing Arts and the Folklore Society of Greater Washington both sponsored Margaret MacArthur of Western ~~Kentucky~~ Kentucky, now of Vermont, for a performance on April 9, they picked a winner. She's an unassuming lady with a teacher husband named John and five children. She gives one the impression that she works around the

clock, never sleeps, because she would rather sing folk music. With no slur intended, it might be said that on the evening she was playing she resembled slightly an unmade bed, that is, until she started performing. All of a sudden her image was beautiful as she made the Museum of Natural History ~~auditorium~~ auditorium come alive -- despite the fact that she was ~~slight~~ slightly annoyed, and rightly so, over the mikes and recorders that were bugging her thing. She not only plays and sings with distinction, but she talks about what she is doing with knowledge in depth. Obviously she grew up with folk music, began to recognize its potentials and significance to our times, has expanded on it, and is now making it heard all over the U.S.A. To her credit, she names her sources, which are excellent. One of her better sources is Helen Flanders, the wife of the late Senator Ralph Flanders of Vermont. Having known this lady, her husband and sister, this critic knew she had tapped a good source, for Mrs. Flanders has spent many years collecting and publishing folk material. Mrs. MacArthur lives in Marlboro, Vermont, and has recorded for Folkways. A new recording will be released soon.

The singer accompanied herself on a dulcimer, a guitar and a folk harp she said she ~~discovered~~ discovered in an old barn and restored. She opened her performance with four songs about the devil. Each tells a story putting the scoundrel in a different light. It is significant that hill and country folk have been singing and adding to these tales for years. The devil has many meanings. By the time Margaret plays and sings about one who cries out, "If I don't get rye whiskey, I surely will die," one knows the devil is holding his own once he gets it, if ever. When a lady with a different viewpoint asks the devil impossible questions in another song, you can see the devil being conned by female guile. He's really uptight.

She quickly switched her locale to the far West and <sup>sings</sup> sings about two

cowhands in the Sierras, a tune she got from Bill James in Aspen, Colorado, who, in turn, she believes, got it from Carl Sandburg. It was way out lore. Then Mike Rivers joined her on the stage and they did another switch, "Let The Sunshine In." Everyone beamed. On the dulcimer ~~theme~~ she returns to the devil ~~theme~~ <sup>theme</sup> with a number about a tailor, again with Mike on guitar, but it is entirely instrumental. She then proves her ability with a folk song without instruments with a Flanders' story, "The Major Live In York." As other numbers follow the knowing audience is invited to sing the more familiar items. Togetherness is easy at this level, <sup>for</sup> ~~but~~ <sup>it</sup> that is what/is all about.

After the intermission Mrs. MacArthur does some numbers to show her range -- "The Boston Burglar" and a ballad about murder, "For My Offense I Must Die." There is a song of the sea and one about a wicked young man entitled "Raspberry Lane." One of her better items was a contemporary one which she found out in Arizona. Called "Home, Dearie, Home," it is about truckers on the run between Wilcox and Globe. There were still other ~~numbers~~ numbers as she switched from one theme to another. Both she and her audience could have ~~stayed~~ stayed on forever. It was an ~~auspicious~~ auspicious and exciting beginning for the spring folk season leading up to Ralph Rinzler's big bash, come July.

In between this magic moment and more to follow at the Smithsonian, this critic had heard from David Amram. He was going to perform, along with others, some of his latest works at the Phillips Gallery on May 3. Inclosed were rave notices from all over. But the revolutions came on like rain (morning, matinee and evening performances by this time) and there was a hurried cancellation. Too bad, for this critic had met David through the Smithsonian in the first place at a moment when his old Goliath didn't realize what was hitting him. This critic was stoned, but good,

with a book and still later was charmed by his music. Now this fabulous David is taking on a whole nation of Goliaths up "Nawth" where the big time is. It couldn't happen to a nicer young man, but he'll just have to talk to his revolutionaries and those scared generation gap types about rearranging the gaps, else he become a cropper.

Meanwhile in another part of the big time "Nawth," over in Brooklyn, there is another Yale bulldog making history ~~with~~ with the Brooklyn College Graduate Collegium. At the instigation of one James Weaver, she was invited with 19 of her singers, mostly girls, to appear at the Smithsonian on Friday evening, May 14, the ~~same~~ same evening this critic was tempted by three other showbiz events, including a folk concert of blues, street and gospel at the Museum of Natural History, again jointly sponsored by the Folklore Society and the Division of Performing Arts. "UNFAIR," screamed this critic with only one body against all their hundreds. It was worse <sup>than</sup> ~~that~~ trying to cope with David Amram. When I heard Jean Hakes of that Brooklyn clan scream the first time I was almost ready to go screaming out into the night myself. But I hung in there. There were plenty of good reasons. Does this lady leader know how to get the attention of an unruly mob of singers and musicians in a hurry!

Mr. Weaver had invited all the baroque and ~~medieval~~ medieval choir singers to bring all the faithful and join in. Despite the utter confusion, Jean soon had all her own charges and Weaver's <sup>also</sup> ~~own~~ rans scrambling for places. As a warmer, the voices did the Salve Regina by William Cornysh from the Eton Choir Book twice. After that a switch was made to Heinrich Schutz for four numbers with tenor sackbuts (16th Century trombones), Baroque bowed violins, ~~violas~~ violas da gamba (leg viols) -- and then there was Jim Weaver at times on the organ and other assorted instruments of terror -- mostly people trying to be heard and seen. Fortunately for this critic

there ~~was~~ was a nice assortment of ladies on hand to aid and abet this critic in handling the swift flow of traffic as Jean Hakes moved singers and instrumentalists alike into cozy spots to her liking. By the time they got ~~to~~ to "Fili mi, Absalon," the great 17th Century ~~Man~~ Heinrich Schutz, a German lawyer, composer and court organist, was dominating the scene. The stirring lament by David for his son had three male ~~parts~~ voices instead of the one called for in the score -- an improvisation to lend more power or maybe to be all inclusive -- arrangement, of course, courtesy Jean Hakes. It was stunningly beautiful. And it was quickly followed by the 116th Psalm, also by Schutz, with all of the deadbeat non-singers, including this critic, banned to the inner circle to get the full feeling <sup>while</sup> ~~and~~ the singers poured it on. Not since I was spelled by "Belshazzar's Feast" by Sir William Walton and the ~~King~~ London Philharmonic Choir had I <sup>had</sup> such an empathic feeling of being "in."

The two portions of "L'hommes Armees Mass" by Guillaume Dufay that followed were anticlimactic, ~~xxxx~~ but fitting. Jean Hakes stopped yelling and this critic told her she was a divine nut. She had a lot of divine help, too, including that Mr. Weaver.

The following morning Mr. Weaver took a whole busload of Smithsonian Associates and assorted buffs on an outing to meet John Shortridge and his wife in their studio-home in Middleburg, Va. They build harpsichords, in fact, famous reproductions -- to order, of course. Children came along on the trip, ~~xxxx~~ including one bright moppet fittingly enough named David, escorted by his ~~xxxx~~ lawyer father, Jim Morris. Also a former Yale law professor was on hand to help prime the whole biz. It was a fitting postlude to the night before, ~~what~~ with Mr. Weaver telling about the music revolution in instrument making going on in Boston and spreading all over. This, too, is a form of recycling. What, with Yale bulldogs popping up all over, there is no telling where it may lead.

All of this got this critic to thinking about that great performance out at the Washington Cathedral when Warner Lawson of Howard University led choirs from all over the world in a benefit for the John F. Kennedy Center. Music is still one of the prime universal languages, used too little to expand man's better self and ends. Maybe that Yale professor and all the other lawyers have thought about this, but not enough -- that is, using music more creatively. Aspiring power players need a restraining force on all sides and at all levels.

Creativity at many levels, particularly the booming level of documentary film -- the media with the best possible chances of being the media of accomplishment of the future (with bows in the direction of famed Canadian, Marshall McLuhan) -- is the alternative <sup>to</sup> ~~the~~ the power obsessions of men.

On May 4, 1971, three weeks after the world premiere in California, the Smithsonian Associates and the Washington-Metropolitan Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Inc., presented jointly a 100-minute film by Academy Award winning producer-director Robert Snyder. After its premiere the film was released for viewing throughout the country in connection with Earth Week which nearly everyone is celebrating now after the youngsters all over the country made it clear that this should go on forever unless, of course, you are one of those who are planning on leaving for another planet or are still set on polluting and dirtying up the Mother of us all as much as possible before settling for final reunion with the Ultimate Womb. There are plenty of tired humans in both categories.

Having joined in the celebrating of Earth Day last year on April 22 (with the Smithsonian, the college kids and all the Wild Life and Conservation people galore) both before and after the big day, this critic <sup>is</sup> quite happy to join in wishing Buckminster Fuller a "fuller" celebration of a lifetime of dedication to making this a better Earth to live on.

Buckminster Fuller <sup>is</sup> the man whom Marshall McLuhan has called the Leonardo da Vinci of the 20th Century. If you weren't already convinced of this beforehand, seeing this film might help. It was made in a number of places as Snyder followed Bucky around like a faithful dog grabbing the morsels that fall off of the <sup>Master's</sup> ~~Master's~~ tongue morning, noon and night. Bucky is quite prepared to discuss almost anything. He succeeds admirably in ~~discussing~~ talking about most of the things that concern him most in this stimulating "think tank" film.

Most of Mr. Fuller's 75 creative years have been spent trying to arouse humans out of their lethargy and inability to use their Earth in a way conducive to complete living. Whereas once, as a young man, Bucky smoked and drank, lived beyond his means and was considered a crackpot, he finally gave up the smoking and drinking and high living in favor of concentrating on his ~~own~~ crackpot ideas. They ~~were~~ weren't so crackpot as they were ahead of their time. He finally made it big with his famed geodesic dome. By concentrating on the structures all around us in nature he dared to apply these same principles to architecture and became gradually the most influential architect of our time -- quite an accomplishment for a man who, at the age of 31, in 1927, was on the brink of suicide.

This film consists of the better part of Bucky's history, not the dark days of distress. It is a film that also includes sequences about his many inventions, such as the spectacular Dymaxion Car of the thirties. Mostly it is about the good years after Bucky got a partial claim on the Garden of Eden around us with U.S. Patent No. 2,682,235 in June, 1954. It is Bucky <sup>lecturing</sup> talking to his friends, ~~lecturing~~ to students, sometimes merely standing by the edge of the sea. The mike catches his words as the camera beams in on his own fabulous personal dome. There are discussions about the basic interlocking tetrahedrons, the meanings of concave and convex and how one generalization leads to two and on and on, and on geometry and closed systems. He makes clear what bugs too many of us, that we like to think our limited little home, town or country is the confines of existence. Existentially, yes, but in the realities of inter-relationships, extra-relationships and ETP (to use this critic's way of putting it), extra territorial perception, ~~not~~ R. Buckminster Fuller is an extraordinary man, a visionary who is inspiring others, the wave of the future. As he put it himself, "Every wave in the Universe has its own integrity."