

The "Oop Goopie"... "a goofy instrument."



Mary Buchen is explaining the fall show at the American Craft Museum. "A Celebration Of Musical Instruments And Their Makers" is what it's called, and the shrill shrieks, the low wails, the wa-was, the boings and the pings are all heard on the ground floor of the museum building at 29 West 53rd Street in New York City. The instruments, she announces, have been assembled from a show of traditional and experimental musical instruments made by 20th Century craftsmen, organized by the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washing-

ton, and from makers of innovative instruments, selected by Paul J. Smith, the director of the museum. They range from old and beautiful violins, flutes, harps, lutes and harmonicas to the skull, gourd and bone instruments that the dual artists-in-residence, Bill and Mary Buchen, have made.

When she finishes her account of the museum, Mrs. Buchen tells the children and the wives of United Nations' and Consular Corps' members about the instruments that are made of found materials.

"Skip LaPlant devised his horn and

With beauty and ingenuity there is also magic.



wind chimes from cardboard tubing, vacuum cleaner hose, metal crating, screws and curtain brackets," she said.

"Bob Hanson found a tobacco can with the word 'Symphony' branded on it. He attached strings to other tin can lids, arranged them on edge, and has given us his 'Symphony Instrument.'

"This is Uba Waugh's box of soft, green stones," she continued, pointing to the next exhibit. "They are designed for only one performance and are called 'A Box For One Hundred Discreet-Sounding Stones From Puget Sound.' They have been tuned by hav-

ing grooves cut out and slats cut in—and because the artist has chosen different sizes, he is able to make each stone resonate with a different tone as it strikes the water.

"Echo Chasers is another exhibit for only a single performance. Created by Norman Torheim, it is made of clay and glass objects and when thrown into a chasm, it whistles all the way to the bottom."

Mrs. Buchen points out Bob Natilini's "Electric Jawbone," wired to emit tonal sequences, and Jim Turner's framed array of "Wrench Harps" on

From the sublime to the tintinnabulous: UN ladies and skulls and gourds.



which he taps out Bach with a hammer.

The focal exhibit of the show, however, is Robert Rutman's majestic "Stainless Steel Single String Cello." It is a massive sheet of stainless steel that resembles the mainsail of a boat going before the wind and has a string, which when bowed, sounds like a booming fog horn.

But with beauty and ingenuity there is also magic—and some of the most magical instruments have been created

by the Buchens. From the "Oop Goopie" made with a coffee can, thread and spool and which Mrs. Buchen calls "a goofy instrument," to the "Bull Roarer" (which made one of the frightened UN ladies remark, "Why, it could have been a Hitchcock character chasing evil spirits!") to the "Friction Drums" (while the boy with the dark circles said meaningfully, although not necessarily logically, "friction is fate, friction is fate"), the Buchen artistry is full of whimsy and enchantment and

fun.

Still what everyone liked best were the "Mariachi," because after a few hours of atonal sounds, these were soft and gentle ones and, besides, there was popcorn inside. How did it get in the gourds?

As he was leaving, the nameless boy with the inquiring eyes summed it up.

"Man," he said to his friend, "We could make a whole orchestra!" □

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANIEL QUAT