



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

The Wisdom of Sun Ra Collection

circa 1950s

Sc MG 942

Processed by Barrye Brown, 2019.

Summary

Creator: Sun Ra

Title: The Wisdom of Sun Ra Collection

Date: circa 1950s

Size: 0.42 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Purchased in 2017 from Kenneth Mallory ABAA/ILAB. Provenance: The Estate of Pat Patrick.

Abstract: The Wisdom of Sun Ra collection consists of jazz musician Sun Ra's typed writings in the form of streetcorner leaflets printed on goldenrod paper. These writings provide insight into his philosophical vision and cosmic worldview. In 2006, a selection of these writings was published in a book titled, *The Wisdom of Sun Ra: Sun Ra's Polemical Broadsheets and Streetcorner Leaflets*, by John Corbett. The Wisdom of Sun Ra collection contains some of these published works, as well as unpublished writings.

Preferred citation: [Item], The Wisdom of Sun Ra collection, Sc MG 942, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English English

Processing note: Processed by Barrye Brown, 2019.

Creator History

Le Sony'r Ra, popularly known as Sun Ra, was an American jazz pianist, organist, and synthesizer player, composer, bandleader, and poet best known for his avant garde and experimental musical style, cosmic philosophies, and theatrical performances with his band, the Arkestra. He is also recognized as one of the early pioneers of Afrofuturism. Sun Ra, born Herman Poole Blount on May 22, 1914 in Birmingham, Alabama, was regarded as a skilled pianist and composer by his early teenage years. Although Blount based his musical activities in Birmingham until 1945, his big band toured extensively. In 1945 Blount relocated to Chicago where he registered with the local musicians union under the name Sonny Blount. During his Chicago years (1945 - 1961), Blount read extensively, researching mystical

and occult practices, ancient culture, biblical history, and contemporary developments in science and space exploration. He formed a reading group called Thmei Research which included his manager, Alton Abraham, and a small group of intellectuals from the South Side of Chicago. On October 20, 1952, Blount changed his legal name to Le Sony'r Ra, later shortened to Sun Ra, which is a reference to the Egyptian God of the Sun, Ra. Many of the writings featured in this collection provide a glimpse into the early formations of Sun Ra's philosophical worldview, where he creatively reinterprets biblical history and scripture, explores and creates new etymologies, and utilizes divine mathematical equations to unlock the hidden wisdom of the universe. After his time in Chicago, Sun Ra relocated to New York City (1961 - 1968), Philadelphia (1968), and California (1969 - 1993). He and the Arkestra continued to tour until his death in May 30, 1993.

Scope and Content Note

The Wisdom of Sun Ra collection consists of 46 unpublished and 23 published writings from Sun Ra, typescript copies on goldenrod paper.

Arrangement: The Wisdom of Sun Ra collection is arranged into one series of Writings and further divided into two sub-series: Unpublished and Published. Published titles can be found in The Wisdom of Sun Ra: Sun Ra's Polemical Broadshhets and Streetcorner Leaflets, compiled by John Corbett (Chicago, IL:WhiteWalls, Inc., 2006).

Key Terms

Subjects

African Americans -- South Chicago (Chicago, Ill.) -- Intellectual life -- History and criticism --
Philosophy
Afrofuturism.
Jazz musicians

Names

Sun Ra

Container List

- b. 1 Writings
 - Unpublished
 - b. 1 f. 1 are you a hopeless case?
 - b. 1 f. 2 mystery babylon is the negro
 - b. 1 f. 3 judgement day continued for the negro
 - b. 1 f. 4 there are two ways in the bible
 - b. 1 f. 5 confessing is not repenting
 - b. 1 f. 6 humans all
 - b. 1 f. 7 the kingdom of heaven is now
 - b. 1 f. 8 message from the god of israel to negroes only
 - b. 1 f. 9 to the hypocrites!!
 - b. 1 f. 10 israel is the negro
 - b. 1 f. 11 the great sabbath-breaker
 - b. 1 f. 12 there is war in heaven!
 - b. 1 f. 13 the truth shall make you free
 - b. 1 f. 14 negro, an emblem of suffering and shame
 - b. 1 f. 15 the true origin of the so-called negro (god's chosen people)
 - b. 1 f. 16 god says, "choose life!"
 - b. 1 f. 17 the days of a tree
 - b. 1 f. 18 wisdom from god
 - b. 1 f. 19 salvation is of the jews
 - b. 1 f. 20 question: why do white people separate themselves from negroes?
 - b. 1 f. 21 the real truth
 - b. 1 f. 22 timely questions
 - b. 1 f. 23 all the gates are here!
 - b. 1 f. 24 let there be light!
 - b. 1 f. 25 israel, the son of god
 - b. 1 f. 25 the land of nod
 - b. 1 f. 26 jesus sentenced capernaum to hell...also, his enemies
 - b. 1 f. 27 sinners will enter first in the kingdom of heaven
 - b. 1 f. 27 judgement day...be careful what you say
 - b. 1 f. 28 jesus is called the prince of peace
 - b. 1 f. 29 ...the truth about jesus
 - b. 1 f. 30 there's death on the cross
 - b. 1 f. 31 hi ho silver
 - b. 1 f. 32 how to live forever and never die
 - b. 1 f. 33 should cause every being upon this planet to hide in shame
 - b. 1 f. 34 the worship of the word "one" is a covenant with death
 - b. 1 f. 35 mesh/net/sieve

Writings (cont.)

Unpublished (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 36 only true wisdom can save america
- b. 1 f. 37 there are two jesus in the bible i, jesus and jesus
- b. 1 f. 38 how the ethiopians deceived the world
- b. 1 f. 39 the way
- b. 1 f. 39 "The Solaristic Precept"
- b. 1 f. 40 [illegible] of china, japan, asia, and africa
- b. 1 f. 41 according the the bible: The negro is a beast
- b. 1 f. 42 the black curse
- b. 1 f. 43 [illegible title]

Published

- b. 1 f. 44 why don't you turn again!
- b. 1 f. 45 ...there are two ethiopias
- b. 1 f. 46 "a nigger is a mess"
- b. 1 f. 47 johnny one note
- b. 1 f. 48 big brother left you holding the bag!
- b. 1 f. 49 i have set before you life and death - choose life
- b. 1 f. 50 message to the spook
- b. 1 f. 50 the great whore
- b. 1 f. 50 the way of the cross
- b. 1 f. 51 the true way to life
- b. 1 f. 52 i don't give a hoot
- b. 1 f. 52 days of vengeance
- b. 1 f. 53 the stumbling block
- b. 1 f. 53 little i's i love you
- b. 1 f. 54 moms and pops
- b. 1 f. 54 the language of the gods
- b. 1 f. 55 ...spo de o de...hoc way
- b. 1 f. 55 neptune is rex...the ruler with the iron fork
- b. 1 f. 56 satan is the god of the spooks, negroes are the children of the devil
- b. 1 f. 56 a spook sho is a dragg, man...he's a dragg
- b. 1 f. 57 the poor little rich one; the prince of this world
- b. 1 f. 58 lucifer means light bearer
- b. 1 f. 59 jesus said, "let the negro bury the negro"