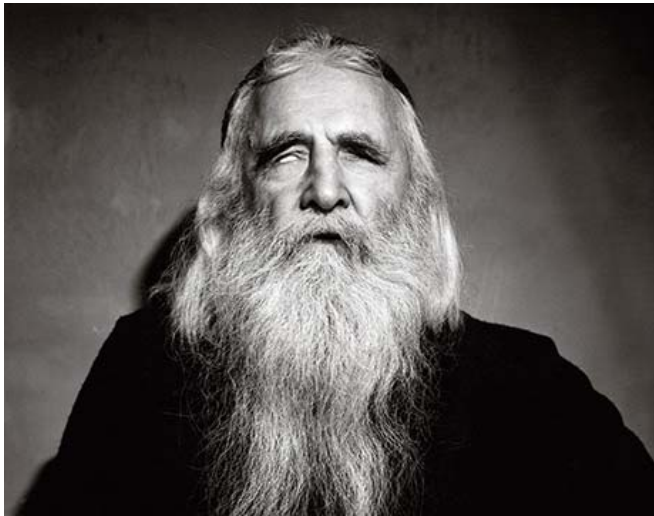

Pamphlet of Moondog's rhymes published

26|02|2016



The French imprint Lenka Lente has published a slim volume of poetic couplets by the late US composer, instrument inventor and street musician Louis Hardin aka Moondog. Called *50 Couplets*, the 40 page bilingual pamphlet includes the original English and French translations of Moondog's words of wisdom, which he typically expressed in two line rhymes.

"I discovered Moondog's poetry for the first time by listening to his first recordings, especially *More Moondog*, which contains the "Moondog Monologue",” says Lenka Lente's Guillaume Belhomme via email. "I found more about his poetry on Moondog's Corner, the great website run by Wolfgang Gnida, including the original version of *50 Couplets*, and I thought it would be great to translate it into French." Moondog's *50 Couplets* is the latest in Lenka Lente's series of French language texts of 20th century avant garde writings, which ranges from Italian futurist Francesco Balilla Pratella to US saxophone pioneer Jackie McLean.

Moondog's discography is relatively small but his music grabbed the imaginations of wildly different musicians, including US minimalists like Steve Reich and Philip Glass, and UK jazz

composer Kenny Graham. However, his poetry preceded his music records. “We always read about Moondog as a poet – blind and dressed like a Viking, of course, to catch the attention of possible new listeners,” states Belhomme. “In the 1940s, about ten years before Tony Schwartz first recorded him, he used to photocopy and sell his sarcastic poems in the streets of New York – he had some problems with the police for that.” The pieces making up *50 Couplets* mark a progression from those earlier writings. Belhomme calls them “small fairy tales, love stories or even insults that tell about philosophy, history, environment, politics, economy... We could think of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, as Moondog often refers to nature – reminiscences of his childhood maybe, fishing, hunting, riding horses in Wyoming. But, indeed, it’s possible too that Moondog had one and only one influence: himself.

“Poetry and his music share a same interest for rhythm,” he argues. “That said, his couplets – a poem of two lines, of the same meter, that rhyme – can remind of the canons he has been inspired by for his music. As one of the couplets declares: *‘I find the greatest freedom in the stricture of a form/That paradoxes abnormality within a norm’.*” *50 Couplets* is published by Lenka Lente.
